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# HUMAN NATURE, FLOURISHING, AND HAPPINESS: TOWARD A SYNTHESIS OF ARISTOTELIANISM, AUSTRIAN ECONOMICS, POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY, AND AYN RAND'S OBJECTIVISM

EDWARD W. YOUNKINS\*

THE QUESTION OF WHAT LEADS TO or makes up a flourishing and happy human life has been debated throughout the entire history of political and moral philosophy and, more recently, in the social sciences such as economics<sup>1</sup> and positive psychology.<sup>2</sup> There have been numerous attempts to define, analyze, and even measure human flourishing and happiness in a wide range of disciplines. This current article presents a tentative plan that conceptualizes a number of pertinent topics, links them together, and integrates them into a framework of human flourishing and happiness. This paper represents an exploratory attempt to construct an understanding from various disciplines (most importantly philosophy) and to integrate them into a systematic whole.

The natural teleological perspective taken in this paper is that there is an inextricable connection between human nature and human flourishing.<sup>3</sup> It

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\*Edward W. Younkings ([younkins@wju.edu](mailto:younkins@wju.edu)) is Professor of Accountancy and Business Administration in the Department of Business at Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia. This article is based on a chapter in his forthcoming book, *Flourishing and Happiness in a Free Society: Toward a Synthesis of Aristotelianism, Austrian Economics, and Ayn Rand's Objectivism*, to be published by University Press of America.

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<sup>1</sup> For literature on economics and happiness, see Bruni 2006; Frey 2008; Frey and Stutzer 2002; and Bruni and Stutzer 2002.

<sup>2</sup> For valuable discussions of the emerging area of positive psychology, see Carr 2004; Diener et al 1999; Diener et al 2003; Gable and Haidt 2005; Kahemann et al 2005; and Snyder and Lopez 2002.

<sup>3</sup> The perspective taken in this essay draws heavily from the ideas of Aristotle and Ayn Rand. Arguably, the most scholarly-productive neo-Aristotelian or post-Randian

follows that we need to have a valid naturalistic understanding of what the good amounts to for individual human beings. There are properties central to human nature that establish the general parameters as to what is included in any legitimate account of human flourishing.<sup>4</sup> In addition to generic potentialities, there are also individualistic potentialities. This makes human flourishing always unique to a specific human person. Each person's life to live is his own. To seek a good human life is to seek self-fulfillment through the actualization of one's potentialities, personal endowments, and energies.

Human flourishing comprises and requires a number of generic goods and virtues. Each of the abstract, substantive goods and virtues will apply differently and contextually to each specific individual person. The human good is plural, objective, and agent-relative. It follows that the proper application of the generic goods and virtues is unique to each person. It is up to each individual to make this determination based on the particular circumstances, potentialities, and capacities of his life.

The facets or elements of reality exist apart from a man's consciousness, but they have identities or natures that can be known by him. Of course, there is a difference between reality and the products of a man's consciousness and it is imperative that this distinction be recognized.

What constitutes flourishing for a specific individual is objective. It is not simply determined by what that individual thinks, wills, or desires. Realism is both conceptually and instrumentally required for a person to flourish. What is good for, or valuable for, an individual has an objective status whether or not it is perceived by, evaluated by, or desired by, the individual who has the ability to attain that good or value. There are objective values and disvalues whether or not a person understands them as such. It follows that a moral agent needs to perceive the salient aspects of a situation and to apply right reason in order to act in a manner that promotes his flourishing and happiness.

This article discusses the fact that there are some features (i.e., rationality and free will) that are common to each person's life that ought to be protected. A moral space or jurisdiction is needed within which each

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contemporary writer is Tibor R. Machan 1975; 1989; 1990; and 1998a. Not far behind are Douglas B. Rasmussen and Douglas J. Den Uyl 1991; 2005. Some others contributing to this worldview are: Neera K. Badhwar 1997; 2001; David Kelley 1992; Roderick Long 2000; Fred D. Miller, Jr. 1995; 2002; 2005; Chris Matthew Sciabarra 2000; and Jack Wheeler 1984.

<sup>4</sup> For some relevant discussions of human flourishing, see Annas 1993; 1998; Cooper 1975; Hunt 1997; 1999; Hurka 1993; 1999; 2001; Machan 1975; 1989; 1990; Norton 1976; Nussbaum and Sen 1993; Paul et al 1999; Rasmussen and Den Uyl 1991; 2005; Sen 1993; and Veatch 1962.

individual is free to employ his practical wisdom to make choices in the pursuit of his own happiness. The principle of natural rights defines the moral space but is not descriptive or prescriptive of any person's particular good. The proper role of the state is to protect natural rights thereby preserving self-direction or autonomy for every individual under its jurisdiction. Self-direction involves a moral prohibition against other people violating one's self-directedness. In addition, consistency requires that others are due this same respect. Rights both personally entitle an individual and interpersonally restrict him with regard to the types of actions he can take.

A theory of rights that protects individual self-directedness is grounded in a solid moral framework. Rasmussen and Den Uyl (2005) explain that rights are metanorms that establish the conditions for protecting the possibility of the pursuit of a person's interests but not the achievement of flourishing itself. Ethics are not all at the same level. A two-level ethical system consists of metanorms (i.e., political norms) and personal ethical norms. These two levels of ethical principles are split because of their different relationships to human flourishing. Metanorms apply to the political/legal order and norms apply to the personal/ethical order. Whereas metanorms are both legally and morally binding, personal ethical norms are only morally binding. Metanorms establish the conditions for the exercise of personal moral norms.

A political/legal structure that protects individual rights can be seen as a necessary prerequisite for the possibility that human flourishing can occur in a social setting without favoring the flourishing of one individual over the flourishing of any other individual. In such a system of compossible rights, the possibility exists that people might flourish in diverse ways in a variety of communities and cultures without requiring that the possible flourishing of any other person be diminished.

This article explains that one's human flourishing leads to one's happiness—the good life leads to or constitutes the happy life. Happiness, a normative concept, is decomposable into cognitive and affective components. We could say that people enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities and that this enjoyment increases the more that their capacities are realized. Happiness can be viewed as a result and a condition of living right. Flourishing is distinct from, but related to, happiness. Success in living makes people happy and this happiness tends to foster more success. Happiness is linked to the notions of self-esteem and flow. Self-esteem involves one's agency and competence and flow describes the state of being deeply involved and absorbed in meaningful and valuable activities.

To flourish and to be happy involves an individual's interpretation and application of the generic goods and virtues. These goods and virtues are valuable not solely as means to one's flourishing but also as partial realizations of one's flourishing. Human flourishing attains actuality only through the joint employment of the generic virtues with a person's unique potentialities, talents, contexts, and circumstances.

This paper goes on to discuss the interrelationships among one's needs, values, goals, and emotions. People have inborn physical, psychological, and conceptual objective needs as individuals. The fulfillment of these needs leads to a person's flourishing and happiness. Value derives to the extent that something satisfies a human need. Needs lead to values and values, in turn, lead to goals. A person uses his rationality and free will to value or prioritize his needs. An objective value is an aspect of reality that exists in a factual positive relationship to a particular human being. Values are more general than goals—goals can be viewed as values applied in specific circumstances. We could say that value achievement requires the selection and pursuit of goals. It follows that happiness can be viewed as the cognitive and affective state of consciousness that stems from the attainment of one's values and goals.

Values, goals, and emotions help a person to identify what motivates him to act. Some emotions present value appraisals to an individual. To some extent, emotions are the automatic result of a man's value judgments. Such emotions can be explained in terms of the value significance of something to a given individual. It can be postulated that these emotions are produced by a man's value premises and fundamental view of life. This notion associates emotions with a person's values, volitional desires, and choices. Emotions can direct a person's thinking—they are tools of recognition. Many emotions are learned, thought-dependent, and can be either correct or mistaken. Because a man is a being of volitional consciousness, it can be said that emotions may motivate but they do not determine what actions are taken.

There is an inextricable connection between action and virtues and living virtuously is a requirement of human flourishing. It requires practical wisdom to take virtuous actions aimed at organizing and guiding one's life toward excellence or perfection in the sense of one's best possible in the context and particular circumstances of his life. A virtuous person is realistic and consistently acts in a manner that fits the circumstances. Virtue involves the cognitive and affective (i.e., emotional) disposition to value, want, and act to gain what is actually of value to one's life. A virtue can be viewed as a principle that guides a person's choices in accordance with the conclusions of his reason.

Virtue is required for practical efficacy and practical efficacy is required for one's flourishing and happiness. Virtues can be viewed as moral principles that make it possible to attain particular values. A virtuous person acts properly in a wide variety of contexts and situations—his actions fit the circumstances. It takes practical rationality to assess the relevance of principles within the particularities of circumstances. Reason is the critical link between virtues and well-being.

Living a virtuous life is required for one's self-interest and one's self-interest is a necessity for one's flourishing and happiness. Virtuous conduct is justified because of its contributions to a person's own good. Virtue is about how one's character as a whole is constructed. Every virtuous action benefits the individual who performs the virtuous action.

This article argues for the supreme moral importance of the individual. Accordingly, virtues can be viewed in terms of their contributions to the well-being of the virtuous agent. Ayn Rand's Objectivist ethics is a good example of contemporary virtue ethics which makes this case succinctly and clearly. The seven Objectivist virtues (i.e., rationality, honesty, independence, justice, integrity, productiveness, and pride) entail one another and are systematically related to one another. The Objectivist virtues are logically connected both in theory and in practice. One's purpose in exercising the virtues is to generate appropriate individual human actions.

### **Human Nature and Human Flourishing**

The elements, facets, and beings of existence have identities or natures independent or separate from anyone's cognition.<sup>5</sup> People must respect certain facts that are not of their choosing. This independent character of reality can be referred to as metaphysical objectivity and sets the standard for epistemological objectivity. Reality can be known but such knowledge requires mental work, proper cognitive processes, and logical adherence to the relevant facts and aspects of reality. Propositions or concepts are true or objective if they correspond to reality. According to Rasmussen (2006, 309–28; 2007, 33–45), reality, the standard for evaluation, does not depend upon its cognition to exist. He cautions that the products of consciousness should not be confused with reality, the existential content—cognition is of reality, but it is not reality. There is a difference between something as it exists independently of cognition and as it exists in cognition.

Rasmussen (1999, 1–43; 2002, 173–85; 2006, 309–28) explains the Aristotelian idea that the teleological nature of individual living beings

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<sup>5</sup> For detailed explanations of this, see Buchanan 1962; Gierke 1957; Gilson 1986; Joseph 1916; and Pols 1992.

involves their potential to develop to maturity. All human persons have the inherent potentiality for their mature state (i.e., to flourish). To live one's life as a flourishing rational animal is one's *telos*, ultimate goal, end, or final value. This final value establishes the standard by which all subordinate goals are means. The *telos* or natural function of human beings is morally important. Each person is free to choose to attempt to flourish or not to try to flourish, but he is not free to change the reality that he has that potential due to the type of living being that he is. Whether or not it is chosen or even conceptually understood, flourishing exists as a potentiality for human persons. A man must accept his nature as a rational being with volitional consciousness.

Humans, as rational purposive creatures, are living beings of a distinctive class who have the ability to initiate their cognition and to select and direct their actions. Human beings are the only meaning-seeking species and can choose and create distinctive ways of living. It is the nature of the human person to have a directional process of conscious striving and self-improvement. There are ethical obligations that stem from the facts that apply to the person as the type of living being that one is. Some facts are moral-laden. Moral realism holds that there are moral facts and that there are ways of acting that are good for a human being. Such actions can be considered to be choice-worthy. Some things are such that individuals should choose them. Of course, nothing can be actually good for a person separate from his having in fact chosen it and attained it.

Human nature implies the individuality of each human person.<sup>6</sup> Because all individual human beings are individualized, each human person needs to live in a manner congruent with the individual person that he is. Individual humans are so varied that very different life plans will be appropriate for different individuals. Whereas human nature sets the general parameters of human flourishing, actual individual human flourishing is personal and diverse. The generic goods and virtues establish general guidelines for human flourishing, but the determination of what form of flourishing is most desirable for a particular human being necessitates consideration of what is unique and contextual to that individual. Whereas the inherent potentiality to flourish as a human being determines man's obligation, this responsibility differs in specificity for each person. Many different specific things can be objective life-enhancing factors in some individuals' lives without being so in others.

A rational choice is a moral choice. Morality is rooted in the nature of rationality. Human choice has the inherent potential for life as a flourishing

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<sup>6</sup> For elucidation on the notion of individualism, see Machan 1989; 1990.

human being. The choice to live is a rational choice because of what is the ultimate end for a human person. Rasmussen (2002, 173-85) explains that life is choiceworthy and that people choose life because it is a value. Life is a value because of what it is. It is such that a person ought to choose to live. An individual chooses life because he values life. It is the inherent potentiality for human flourishing that determines an individual's obligation.

Rasmussen (2006, 301-28) maintains that the individual human good or *telos* exists as a potentiality that does not depend upon it being cognized to exist or to be what it is. The "good for" exists in reality apart from and independent of human cognition. He contends that there is a difference between one's knowledge of what is good and the reality that supplies the basis for that knowledge. Whether conceptually grasped or not, there is a realistic basis for one's responsibility to choose to live as the potential flourishing rational being that he is.

The good is a feature of reality in relation to an individual human person. Values are relational facts of existence. The relationship between a potential value and an agent's life is metaphysically given. It is necessary to differentiate one person's moral goodness from that of another person. It is essential for each individual to give his own interpretation and application to objectively identified virtues and generic goods. To be objective in morality or ethics does not imply neutrality or impartiality. Smith (2008, 126-48) emphasizes the importance of the subject in objective morality. She says that an objective value is relational and must be beneficial to a person. An individual must identify or recognize the things that are potentially valuable to him and then he must take appropriate actions to pursue those things. All of a person's natural and other conditions and circumstances are things for his rationality to consider and to work on as he attempts to live a good life.

In addition to providing the means to maintain one's life, moral values also make one's life worth living. The good or the right with respect to human actions is the fact that they are contributive to the self-interest of the agent who has performed them. "Good for" is a relational term that refers to what is valuable, desirable, worth-wanting, or worth-doing for the sake of an individual person. A person's well-being depends on relational facts. There is a close relationship between a person's well-being and his effective functionings (i.e., his doings and beings). A good life is one in which a person develops his strengths, realizes his potential, and becomes what is in his nature to become. What matters is how a person manages and employs his own individual scope of potentialities rather than the range of the propensities that he has been dealt.

There is an innate inequality of men with respect to their mental and physical abilities. People are individuals with respect to their minds and bodies. Each member of the human community possesses inborn differences. It follows that, because every person is unique, they gravitate in different directions in their pursuit of flourishing and happiness. It is also clear that individuals can flourish and realize their individual potentialities only if they are permitted to control their own lives free of outside coercion. Capitalism and democracy have emerged as means for creating the conditions required for personal flourishing.

A legitimate political and economic system must be firmly based on human nature. A limited “night watchman” government is consistent with man’s diversity, rationality, and need for personal freedom. A limited government is consistent with the nature of man and the world, recognizes the variety and diversity of man and his talents, and gives that diversity the opportunity for full expression. A society of free and responsible individuals includes a diversity of tastes, values, desires, and visions of happiness. People should have the maximum chance to select their own way of life, within the constraints of resource scarcity, according to each person’s structure of desires and without value judgments regarding the decisions made by each individual, as long as a person does not encroach on the freedom of others to make their own life choices.

A capitalist system is not egalitarian. People cannot achieve excellence and progress unless there is inequality and diversity. Division of labor and specialization are natural outcomes of the multiplicity of natural conditions. Progress requires the freedom of individuals to use the diverse talents and localized information that only they can possess. Limited government and decentralized markets permit more freedom and foster more prosperity than do state-dominated and centralized bureaucracies.

A proper and rational understanding of human flourishing depends upon an individual’s biological nature, capabilities, circumstances, beliefs, interests, desires, past choices, and social influences. The human *telos* embodies the actualization of human potentialities and capacities whose particular form is individualized by each man’s own characteristics, context, and interests. Rasmussen and Den Uyl (1991; 2005) have argued that human flourishing is objective, inclusive, individualized, agent-relative, self-directed, and social.

A human being’s flourishing requires the rational use of his individual human potentialities, including his talents, abilities, and virtues in the pursuit of his freely and rationally chosen values and goals. An action is considered to be proper if it leads to the flourishing of the person performing the action.



A person's flourishing leads to his happiness. Each person is responsible for voluntarily choosing, creating, and entering relationships in civil society that contribute toward his flourishing. Civil society, a spontaneous order, is based on voluntary participation and is made up of natural and voluntary associations such as families, private businesses, voluntary unions, private schools, churches, clubs, charities, and so on. The related notions of subsidiarity and of a pluralistic society spring from the reality of human nature.

An individual's flourishing and maturation include a life with, and concern for, others. One's values include the good of at least certain other people. Other people can become values when they are vital ingredients of one's happiness. In a sense, the good of a person's friends can be said to be partially constitutive of the person's own good. The flourishing of a person who is a value strengthens an agent's own capacity to flourish. Sociality is an ingredient of one's flourishing because the maturation of one's potentiality for affiliation requires a life with others. Other-regarding goods such as egoistic friendship and personal justice are constituents of flourishing. Badhwar (2008, 85–107) explains that one's good functioning requires realism which is both instrumental to, and constitutive of, happiness. She argues that, if a person aspires to reach his full potential, he must appraise himself and others by realistic standards. Along the same lines, Fowers (2008, 629–53) contends that one needs to appraise and judge his own character and the character of others. It is necessary to regularly make judgments about others' character in order to know what can be expected from them and to decide how best to live with, work with, and interact with them. It is imperative to evaluate other people's objectivity by reason and to treat them accordingly.

### **Individual Rights**

Autonomy (i.e., self-direction) is a required condition of one's flourishing.<sup>7</sup> An agent chooses autonomously to the extent that he selects his actions from a set of alternatives that has not been decreased by the coercive actions of others. Such self-direction upholds only the possibility that an agent may flourish. It is only force that can prevent human beings from choosing to act rationally in their own best interests.

A proper political and economic philosophy demands an account of man's nature as determined by reason. Man is a rational agent with a free and self-determinative will who is capable of deliberation and choice. A human

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<sup>7</sup> See Christman and Anderson 2005; Mele 2001; Miller 2002; Spector 1992; and Taylor 2005 for some interesting discussions of autonomy.

being has metaphysical liberty and can therefore initiate, by his mental activity, much of what he does in life. Thinking is not automatic, but human beings can use their free will to focus, to think, and to initiate. It follows that human beings make choices about right and wrong, that they are self-responsible to do the right thing, and that they require a private domain that others must respect. The idea of metaphysical freedom is connected to responsibility and with the related notions of virtues, vices, and human flourishing. It follows that mutual noninterference is primary regarding both freedom and the demands of moral virtues. Mutual non-interference is a required condition for both a free society and for a virtuous society.

Natural rights are metanormative principles that regulate the conditions under which moral conduct and human flourishing can take place.<sup>8</sup> The individual right to liberty secures the possibility of self-direction in a social context. To secure individuals' natural rights, men must seek to establish the structural political conditions that protect that possibility. Each person must be accorded a secure moral space over which he has freedom to act and to pursue his personal flourishing. Individual human flourishing is the standard underpinning the assessment that a goal is rational and should be sought. People are moral agents whose project it is to excel at being the particular human being that one is.

Human flourishing must be achieved through a person's own efforts. Each person has reason and free will and the capacity to initiate conduct that will enhance or inhibit his flourishing. Rationality, the cardinal virtue for human flourishing, can only gain expression when a man has responsibility for his own choices. A person's flourishing depends upon his cognition at a conceptual level. Individuals must be free to discern, select, and pursue their own goals and to form their own groups and associations. Each person must be free to choose to initiate the mental processes of focusing and thinking on becoming the best person he can be as the context of his own existence.

The justification of rights requires the idea of a human being at a very general level of abstraction. Haddow (2007, 171-93) argues that rights are not principles about how a person should live his life. The concepts of values and human flourishing have agent-relative characters and perform a different function than the concept of rights. Rights are a separate type of moral claim not open to trade-offs or to value talk. Rights are restrictions on individuals' actions when they are attempting to promote their own good. They set

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<sup>8</sup> For a number of rival explanations of individual rights, see Finnis 1980; Lomasky 1987; Machan 1975; 1989; Mack 1998a; 1998b; Nozick 1974; Rasmussen and Den Uyl 1991; 2005; Shue 1980; Smith 1995; Strauss 1953; Sumner 1987; Tuck 1979; and Veatch 1985.

boundaries on how people can promote their own lives in a social setting. Haddow explains that abiding by rights is both part of what constitutes an agent's (who is subject to abiding by rights) well-being and of what constitutes part of the recipient's (who has rights) well-being. People desire rights for themselves because these rights further their own good. In addition, rights benefit the recipient of the correlative duties of the agent to respect the rights of others.

Natural rights are universal, are good for human beings in general, and are based on the common attributes of human beings. As political principles, they are general and uniform and establish proper rules of social interaction. Once they are secured, what is good for the life of each man in his individual instantiation becomes a possibility—the notions of morality and human flourishing apply only to individual human beings whose *telos* it is to develop their virtues and potentialities in accordance with their facticity.

A proper political and legal system is not totally separated from the realm of ethics based on the nature of man and the world. However, ethics are not all of one kind nor at the same level. Some directly prescribe moral conduct and others regulate the conditions under which moral conduct may occur. A political and legal system regulates such conditions and should be concerned only with rights as universal metanormative principles and not with the promotion of personal virtue, morality, or flourishing. Political life is properly concerned solely with peace and security. Such a distinction between politics and morality makes great sense. It follows that the minimal state is only concerned with justice in a metanormative sense—not as a personal virtue.

Rasmussen and Den Uyl (2005) distinguish between the functions of ethical theory and the functions of political theory. They do not want to include a normative account of human beings into a theory of political organization. They distinguish between the domain of normative principles (which should direct personal behavior) and the domain of metanormative principles (which should determine proper legislation). A proper political theory provides a description of the nature of the state that employs a separate standard of value than what is employed in the lives of individuals. Liberalism is not an equinormative system.

Virtue is not the end of the state. Rather, the state should be concerned with self-directedness. Rights protect the possibility of individual self-directedness in a social setting. Rights, as a type of metanormative ethical principle, are not intended to guide individual moral conduct, but instead to regulate the conditions under which moral conduct could occur. Rights specify the conditions under which the pursuit of personal projects is

legitimate. Rights make possible and protect the necessary conditions of personal flourishing.

Rasmussen and Den Uyl note that different persons are able to flourish and to achieve moral virtue in many different ways. There exists diversity among human beings added on top of the generic identicalness of their human nature. Self-directedness is universally necessary and central to all manifestations of human flourishing. Rights create a space for each person to pursue a different and distinct form of life subject to the constraint of permitting the same space for other people.

Human beings have a natural function or *telos* that is morally important. Rights are a precondition for moral activity because coerced action can never constitute a moral good. It follows that rights are metanormative principles that are concerned with creating the political and legal conditions that make moral action possible. Individual agency is required to discern the specific combination of goods and virtues that comprise the moral flourishing of any particular person as well as to attain and integrate that combination. The legitimate role of the state is to ensure the compossible and equal freedom for each person to evaluatively rank and pursue the various goods and virtues.

Unlike Rasmussen and Den Uyl, prominent philosopher of human flourishing, Tibor R. Machan, approaches the derivation of natural rights by way of ethical egoism. For Machan, rights are a moral concept rather than a metanormative one. His strong case for natural rights and the legitimacy of the minimal state rests on a classical egoist account of morality. Building upon the thought of Ayn Rand and Aristotle, Machan argues persuasively in a series of books that each person should pursue his rational self-interest as a matter of his primary moral responsibility (1975; 1989; 1990). He explains that it is from this responsibility that every other moral principle, including the principle of natural rights, gains its justification. Rights are identified by an understanding of human nature as having a moral dimension.

Machan argues that human beings are moral agents who ought to live to attain their flourishing and happiness—this involves success as a rational and unique human person. A person should live rationally according to reason within the context of his own situation and potentialities. Each human being is responsible for doing well at living his own life. The implications are that morally each individual should be left free from, and should seek protection from, interferences by others. Natural rights specify such conditions which all people ought to provide for themselves and for other human beings. Given that each person is responsible to achieve his own human flourishing, the society that is proper for him is one in which his

individual freedom is secured. Natural rights specify what social conditions are right or good for people by virtue of their human nature.

Secure natural rights are essential to living a moral life within a human community. Machan explains that, if a person chooses to be part of a human community, he is implicitly agreeing to the required conditions for such an association. These conditions include respect for the sovereignty of enforceable natural rights. Each person is an individual capable of rational choice. This requires the type of political community in which individual human beings may flourish. This type of community is one that upholds individual rights. These rights are moral principles applicable to all human beings.

Machan's vision of natural rights rests on ethical egoism's view that human beings ought to pursue their flourishing and happiness. He observes that natural rights are determined by the fact that a person is a human being who has morally chosen to pursue a good and happy social and political life. From the fact of one's moral responsibility to live a flourishing life and from one's choice to do so in a social context, it follows that he is obligated to respect others' rights. He must do this in order to fulfill his initially chosen responsibility to develop himself to the fullest extent as dictated by his human nature and his individual facticity.

Rasmussen and Den Uyl agree with Machan that, based on the nature of man and the world, certain natural rights can be identified and an appropriate political order can be instituted. Rasmussen and Den Uyl base their view of natural rights as metanormative principles on the universal characteristics of human nature that call for the protection and preservation of the possibility of self-directedness in society regardless of the situation. Because they do not base natural rights on human flourishing, they believe they have formulated a strong argument for a non-perfectionist and non-moralistic minimal-state politics. Machan, on the other hand, bases his argument for natural rights as normative principles on the premise that the moral task of each person is his flourishing as a human being and as the unique individual that he is. For him, rights are moral principles which apply to people within a social context and which are protected by the minimal state. Rasmussen and Den Uyl see a problem in putting what Machan has called a moral principle (i.e., natural rights) as the subject of political action or control. Their goal is to abandon the idea that politics is institutionalized ethics. They say that statecraft is not soulcraft and that politics is not appropriate to make men moral. Although Rasmussen and Den Uyl and Machan have addressed the idea of natural rights from different directions and perspectives, they have supplied us with two excellent derivations of the powerful idea of natural rights.

### Happiness and Its Pursuit

Happiness can be defined as the positive conscious and emotional experience that accompanies or follows from attaining one's values and goals and exercising one's individual human potentialities, including talents, abilities, and virtues.<sup>9</sup> In other words, personal flourishing leads to happiness. We could say that human flourishing is determinant and that happiness is derivative. Flourishing is a richer and more fundamental property than is happiness. Human flourishing is not conceptually identical with happiness.

Happiness may be viewed as a complex mental state that is partly cognitive and partly affective. The cognitive component of happiness is a judgmental process that consists of a positive evaluation of the conditions of one's life. The cognitive aspect of happiness must be autonomous and informed. This involves the judgment that one's life is measuring up favorably against his rational standards or expectations for it. The emotional aspect of happiness involves a feeling state regarding the preponderance of positive affect over negative affect. The affective side of happiness involves a man's sense of well-being (i.e., finding one's life or some portions of it fulfilling, rewarding, or satisfying). One's happiness is authentic if his value judgments are based on objective and true beliefs. Legitimate or appropriate affect may be viewed as a byproduct of *eudaimonic* living.

Although happiness resists measurement, it is more important than anything that can be measured. Desired by all, happiness can be interpreted narrowly or comprehensively, foolishly or wisely, and may be either a conscious goal or an unconscious desire. The pursuit of happiness is something real, individualized, contingent, highly personal, diverse, and self-directed through the use of practical reason. Material wealth may provide the means of achieving happiness, just as it may, in part, represent the condition itself. Happiness is always being attained and is never totally attained—the pursuit of happiness is a goal that continues to the end of life with new contingencies, problems, and opportunities always arising.

Happiness in a comprehensive sense applies to one's life taken as a whole and thus arises from having a coherent, rationally chosen stance regarding the proper way to spend one's life. This is not the happiness we experience when we have obtained a particular goal or object. Rather, such metalevel happiness is evident through the holding of rational values with respect to the kind of life that is worth living and is characterized by a feeling of tranquility regarding the way one has lived and will continue to live his life.

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<sup>9</sup> Happiness has never had a uniform definition. For literature on this see Annas 1993, Diener et al 1999; Griffin 2006; Kahneman et al 1999; McGill 1967; and Ryan and Deci 2001.

Metalevel happiness and object-level perturbation are compatible. Happiness at a metalevel provides a stable framework within which activity and striving are situated. A man who holds rational values and who selects ends and means consonant with the nature of existence and with the integrity of his own consciousness has achieved his values—not his existential values, but the philosophical values that are their precondition.

Happiness has an integral connection with one's life as a whole. A person attains happiness to the extent that his capabilities are rationally employed over his lifetime. It is the total pattern of an individual's life that determines the degree, intensity, and quality of his happiness. There is a conceptual core of happiness that relates to a person's life in its entirety. Each person has the project of building his life as a whole by the ways that he acts. Happiness can be viewed as a byproduct of the virtuous engagement in worthwhile activities and projects.

Happiness is an achievement that comes from living in some ways and not in other ways. It involves enduring and justified contentment with one's life as a whole. Authentic happiness is grounded in one's objective life conditions and rational values. To be truly happy, a person must affirm his life based on evaluative standards that are congruent with his objectively important life conditions. There are such things as objectively right or good and objectively wrong or bad. Properly specifying and pursuing one's aims and goals in life will promote his happiness.

Metalevel happiness requires a proper perspective that comes from the serenity or peace of mind one gets from knowing that: (1) one is free to rationally choose among alternatives; (2) a person's potential for happiness is created in some particular way and with some particular nature which is not a matter of choice; and (3) nothing external can harm the core of one's self. Serenity requires wisdom, a sense of proportion, and the ability to deal with pain and emotions in a balanced and rational manner. Happiness means being serene in the face of the unchangeable, courageous before the changeable, and wise enough to determine which is which.

Many people attribute their happiness or unhappiness to the external events and conditions of their lives. It is likely that a person's perspective regarding the core of his existence has much more to do with his level of happiness than do any external circumstances. When something unfortunate (e.g., losing a job or loved one, suffering a physical injury or illness, etc.) happens to an individual who is basically disposed to be happy, he will certainly be sad or upset for a period of time (depending upon the gravity of the problem) but before long he will return to happiness as his overall state. On the other hand, when something positive (e.g., love, money, recognition

or promotion at work, etc.) happens to a person who is disposed to unhappiness, he will be happy for a time but will very likely shortly become unhappy. Rather than evade negative experiences, happy people tend to take every feasible action to deal with the misfortune, and then shift their focus by placing positive aspects in the foreground and relegating negative ones to the background. They also tend to interpret daily situations and life events in ways that maintain their happiness. They view everyday problems as a natural and integral component of the life process.

Metalevel happiness provides the confidence and peace of mind that enables us to enjoy our everyday pursuits (i.e., our passions). Whereas the serenity of metalevel happiness is unitary, our projects are many, diverse, and complex. Unlike metalevel tranquility that potentially can be the same for all, passions are different and unique for each person. Serenity results from the possession of a consistent and hierarchical system of beliefs, values, and emotions. Our passions involve our desires to satisfy, through action, the values to which we are committed. Finding and developing a meaningful purpose to one's life leads to passions and passions increase the frequency and intensity of his actions. There are reciprocal and synergistic effects between one's metalevel happiness and happiness that is experienced when one has achieved or passionately attempted to achieve a particular goal. Happiness is an effect of having meaning and purpose in one's life.

Lyubomirsky et al (2005a, 803-55) explain that happy people are successful across multiple life domains—work performance, marriage, friendships, health, and so on. Happy people tend to think, feel, and act in ways that promote resource building and involvement with approach goals. They “broaden and build” by expanding their resources, friendships, and skills for use in the future. Happiness promotes the tendency to actively approach, rather than to avoid, goal pursuits. Success leads to happiness and happiness leads to success. There is a “spiral of happiness” in which happiness is both an outcome and a predictor of success.

Lyubomirsky et al (2005b, 111-31) identify self-concordant intentional activities as extremely happiness-relevant activities. Intentional activities are those discrete cognitive and behavioral practices or actions in which individuals can choose to engage. The activities chosen should fit the person and his goals and should be enjoyable and conducive to rewarding flow experiences. Intentional activities include: engaging in meaningful work, socializing, exercising, participating in cultural life, etc. It is important to develop one's potential through engaging in meaningful endeavors that are congruent with one's objective values. It is important to view things according to their relative level of importance, avoid dispersed attention, and spend time with people who add value to one's life. People need to



participate voluntarily in activities that permit the actualization of their talents, skills, and potential. Voluntary activities present great opportunities for increasing happiness without adaptation effects.

For example, when a person's work involves rational activity and agency (i.e., intentional engaged activity) it can be viewed as an ingredient of happiness. Work provides opportunities for people to: earn income, match meaningful activities with their abilities, produce goods and services, focus their attention, aim for and reach goals, face challenges, relate to other employees, increase their self-esteem, and so on. A happy person tends to be one who knows that the money he has earned is an appropriate reward for his efforts and achievements.

Self-esteem (including self-efficacy and self-respect) is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of happiness. Self-esteem, the best predictor of happiness, is the disposition to experience oneself as competent to cope with the fundamental challenges of life and as worthy of happiness and success. A person of high self-esteem believes himself to be entitled to assert his needs and wants, achieve his values, and enjoy the fruits of his efforts.

Self-esteem and happiness are inextricably linked. Self-esteem is related to one's sense of agency, motivation, optimism, hopefulness, mastery, competence, and control of one's environment. It is a person's general cognitive assessment and feeling of his self-worth, self-respect, self-accomplishment, and adequacy as a human being. A competent agent who has succeeded in past endeavors is likely to set and attain higher future goals and standards and to adopt more effective task strategies (Lyubomirsky, 2006, 363-404).

### **Flow**

The concept of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, 1997; Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2003, 83-104) may be viewed as a connecting link between the ideas of human flourishing and happiness. Flow is the psychological state that accompanies highly engaging activities. To flourish and to be happy a person needs to live a life that successfully strives for meaningful involvement, engagement, and absorption in various life dimensions such as work, interpersonal relations, leisure, and so on. Happiness with major domains of life typically adds to happiness with one's life as a whole. Happiness with the aspects of one's life tends to contribute to one's happiness with respect to his life as a whole and happiness regarding one's life as a whole tends to foster happiness derived from his various life aspects.

Meaningful activity, vital engagement, and intense participation with the projects one undertakes are required for the state of flow.

A state of flow occurs when a person is totally absorbed in an interactive experience between person and object (i.e., activity). In such a state a person is “in the zone,” unconscious of himself, loses a sense of agency or separateness, and seems to merge with the activity. Time passes quickly and there is an intense and focused concentration on the here and now. Action is joined with awareness and there is a sense of competence, control, clarity, and creative discovery. The individual finds the activity itself to be rewarding regardless of the outcome. Feedback with respect to one’s performance is also an important ingredient of flow.

A true sense of flow is more than a subjective state of mind. It involves the use of one’s reason to actively set meaningful goals and to invest his attention properly and selectively. It involves people developing what is best within themselves. Flow can involve conquering challenges and resolving difficulties. It is inextricably related to the engagement of one’s interests and the exercise of one’s capacities. Flow is connected to the work of being virtuous (i.e., to rising to one’s moral potential.) There needs to be coincidences of talent, enjoyment, and meaning (i.e., relevant skills, positive emotions, and objective evaluation). Flow involves a state of immersion in a challenging pursuit that matches one’s abilities and passions. When a person has experienced flow with respect to a given activity, he tends to persist at it and return to it. This promotes the growth of his skills over a period of time.

### **Generic Goods and Virtues**

Generic (also known as basic, conventional, or primary) goods and virtues lead to and comprise human flourishing. Examples of such goods are: knowledge, health, physical pursuits, friendship and social relations, beauty, pleasure, intellectual development, creative development, achievement, safety, and so on. Throughout history, the virtues have been said to include qualities such as: rationality, honesty, independence, justice, integrity, courage, temperance, benevolence, trustworthiness, productiveness, pride, prudence, etc. These can be viewed as not only means to one’s personal flourishing but also as partial realizations or constituents of it. Rasmussen (1999, 6) has explained that the generic goods and virtues become real only when a person’s specific talents, potentials, and circumstances are mutually engaged. We could say that goods and virtues are the means to values and that the goods, virtues, and values together enable human beings to attain their flourishing and happiness. In order to decide what are the desirable and choiceworthy elements of an individual’s flourishing requires the use of one’s

practical wisdom in appraising relevant generic, individuated, and circumstantial factors.

Den Uyl (1991, 213) views the basic or generic goods and virtues as a bundle of capabilities the realization of which is needed for personal flourishing but the form of which is individuated by each man's characteristics, interests, and circumstances. He explains that these generic capabilities provide the skeletal structure of a person's life, but do not supply that particular life with specific direction or content. Although generic capacities are components of a framework, they are not able to identify the specific forms of expression called for. Whereas human nature supplies the general parameters required for human flourishing, it takes a person's practical wisdom to discern at the time of action in specific and contingent situations what is morally required for that individual to do. In other words, abstractly understood conventional or constitutive goods and virtues are worthless when practical wisdom is absent.

Virtues can be viewed as appropriate attitudes toward generic goods. Annas (2003, 20-34) explains that a virtue is a disposition to act that is exercised through an agent's practical reasoning. One's way of living can be transformed by his rationality. These dispositions involve both the intellectual and affective aspects of a person and are built up as a result of making choices that endorse and strengthen the various virtues. Virtues are sensitive to the demands of each new context. It follows that a man's moral life is always in the process of development as he employs his reason and dispositions to do the right thing for the right reason in the right manner and at the right time. A person should attempt to understand his life as a whole, the virtue being considered, and other virtues to which the situational context is relevant. One's life as a whole should be thought of in terms of one's needs, values, goals, and virtues and the way they should all fit together overall. Whereas the moral virtues should be practiced by each person in order to live a morally good life, there will be many different ways of exercising them. The virtues permit wide variations in the lifestyles within which people develop their characters. Any person can live virtuously given the circumstances of the only life that he has to live.

Aristotle has suggested that virtuous activity is pleasant or enjoyable to the virtuous person. In turn, Annas (2008, 21-34) has proposed that engagement (i.e., Csikszentmihalyi's "flow experience") can be used analogously to describe the experience of a virtuous person acting virtuously. She suggests that the idea of a flow experience can contribute to our understanding of the distinctive experience of the virtuous person. For the virtuous person, the experience of acting virtuously is harmonious, effortless, and enjoyable. A virtuous person focuses his attention, is oblivious to

distractions, and experiences the activity as being its own end as well as a means to one's flourishing. The virtuous activity, as an example of flow, is a pleasant and unimpeded expression of the person's reasoning and feelings. Flow is a circumstance of being unimpeded in virtuous deliberation and action.

Jacobs (1985, 171–82) has observed that whether or not a person is moral is up to the individual in a way that the pursuit of other ends is not. He explains that an individual has greater means of control over being moral or not being moral than over any other end he may have. The end over which a person has the greatest potential for self-determination and causality is the choice to be moral and virtuous. In addition, enjoyment is critically dependent upon a person's self-determination and causality. Jacobs concludes that the pursuit of virtues as an end and the self-enjoyment that accompanies such pursuit are maximally up to the individual. This unique relationship between virtues and self-enjoyment thus provides a reason for any person to be moral and virtuous. A dominant source of one's enjoyment is under one's control.

Annas explains that, because virtue is a disposition built up through intelligent practice, the virtuous person does not have to be thinking about virtue as they act. The virtuous person has practiced the exercise of deliberations, has trained his feelings, and acts from, and in accordance with, his character. A virtuous person performing a virtuous activity involves a harmony of deliberation and feeling rather than the desire to overcome inclinations or to exercise self-control. A virtuous person is not a continent person. Naturally, the virtuous person will be able to justify and explain his actions if he is asked to do so.

During the performance of the virtuous activity, the person engaged in the activity loses consciousness of the concept of the self. The activity is experienced as unselfconscious, effortless, and unhindered. The virtuous activity is experienced as intrinsically enjoyable and worthwhile. At the same time, it involves complex concentration and thought. A virtuous activity requires a person to focus and to pay attention to what he is doing. The virtuous person needs to exercise his intelligence to handle difficulties, to solve problems, and to respond to challenges.

The virtues can be viewed as contributory means to personal flourishing and happiness. Conventional goods also contribute to personal flourishing and happiness, but a case can be made that the virtues are more important because they control the value that other things in life have for you. The virtues can transform a man's life because they can transform his view of what happiness is. A person will continue to seek happiness, but his

ideas of where to look for it and how he has to act to attain it can be reconfigured through virtue.

According to Rasmussen (41):

A consideration of human nature does allow one to make a list of generic goods. These goods form a cluster concept that is open-ended and subject to revision. Such a list is not intended to be exhaustive; nor is the list particularly novel. Indeed, it is not meant to be. It involves knowledge, friendship, justice, creative work., leisure, pleasure, health, aesthetic appreciation, honor, self-esteem, and moral virtue. These seem to be goods that no one, as Aristotle states, would choose to be without. They are, however, wide abstractions that help to outline the general character of human flourishing; they take on actuality and value only in relation to and because of the efforts of individual human beings. It is thus an error to suppose that they can be fulfilled in any manner apart from individuated and agent-relative considerations. These goods are manifested in various activities in individual lives and take diverse forms in different cultures.

De Ruyter (2004, 377-89; 2007, 23-35) observes that there are many ways in which individuals can interpret and combine the various generic goods. A person must discern his own meaning of objective goods and produce his own interpretations and applications of them. Although the generic goods are too general and abstract in themselves, they can become specific and individuated when a person assigns them purpose and meaning. As reflective actors, individuals weigh the goods and interpret them. It takes practical wisdom to determine what is good for oneself. Goods can be potentially beneficial for an individual even if he does not conceptually and/or emotionally endorse them. What is ideal for one man will not be ideal for another man. Each individual must create his own interpretations and applications of the goods. There are many discrete ways in which a person can assign meaning to the conventional goods. A strong sense of meaning is associated with a person's happiness and life satisfaction.

Virtues and goods are the means to values and the virtues, goods, and values together enable human beings to attain their flourishing and happiness. Virtues must be applied, although differentially, by each individual in his task of human flourishing. The pursuit of one's flourishing is driven by reason and reason requires the consistent practice of the virtues. Such a "virtue ethics" is agent-centered, agent-based, agent-relative, and contextual. Choosing and making the proper response in particular concrete circumstances is the concern of moral living. A person must identify and abide by rational principles if he is to flourish. The major virtues provide these rational principles.

Badhwar (1999; 2001) has emphasized the Aristotelian view that a virtuous life is partly constitutive of the happy life. She explains that virtuous activity is both a means to, and realization of, an important part of happiness. However, she goes on to argue that virtue itself is never fully sufficient for full happiness—it is possible to act virtuously but fail to attain one's most important goals and values.

Wiggins (1989, 127-65) has stated that the question of life's meaning is a fundamental question of moral philosophy. Life's having a point (i.e., its meaningfulness) may depend as much upon what is contributed by the experiencing individual whose life it is as it depends upon what is discovered in the world. It may be based on what the person brings to the objective world (i.e., his reason, potentialities, motivation, etc.) in such a manner as to discover and invent values and meaning. Values and meaning are relational and contextual for the individual. The finding of meaning in one's life is a valuable indicator of his flourishing and happiness. We could say that the person and the world are reciprocally suited to one another. Machan (2008, 100-25) has explained that particular ways of acting advance a person's good while other ways hinder it. He goes on to say that, once a person has initiated his rational capability, results will occur that expand the individuation process even further in a variety of ways. A person's plans and actions actively shape and organize what is going to occur in his life.

### **Needs, Values, and Goals**

When a person chooses to live, this choice implies that he will attempt to obtain the means to fulfill the requirements and needs of his life. A need is a condition whose presence improves a person's ability to survive or flourish or whose absence hinders that ability. Needs arise from a man's nature and thus have a natural foundation. It is natural to satisfy one's needs. In fact, a person's needs can be viewed as the bridge between the natural sciences (especially biology) and the human sciences. Whatever satisfies a need can be deemed to be a value. Value depends on man's needs.

Human needs are the beginning and the end of human activity because nothing would take place without human needs and the requirements of satisfying them. A person's biological and intellectual needs have to be met if he is to survive and prosper. Attempts to provide for the satisfaction of a man's needs are synonymous with efforts to provide for his life and well-being. Human beings have needs embedded in their nature and these needs are reflected in the actions of human agents to satisfy them. A given person's needs and wants are determined by his human nature and his individuality. While some needs are biologically and genetically linked to sustaining human life in general, other needs of a given person are relevant to the individual

facticity of the agent, including his potentialities and previous development. One's needs are not arbitrary—they are the real needs the satisfaction of which forms the basis of valuation. The value of something emerges from its relation to one's needs and context—it is not inherent in the thing itself.

Locke (2002, 299-301) explains that to attain happiness a person must understand his own nature including and especially his physical, psychological, and philosophical needs. He must discover through reason his needs, the proper ways to meet them, and how to anticipate them.

A person properly starts with the specific needs of human life, examines his own capacities, and then determines what values are proper for him. Next, in order to achieve values, a person needs to gain and use conceptual knowledge. Action is required to reach one's values. However, before one acts in his efforts to gain a value, he should use his reason to identify pertinent causal factors and means-ends relationships. A human being freely chooses to initiate his own actions. He is the fundamental cause of his own behavior.

Ayn Rand (1964, 27) defines value as “that which one acts to gain and/or keep.” A value is an object of goal-directed action. In this sense we can say that everyone pursues values. The term “value” thus can refer in a descriptive sense to what is observable. We see people going after things. Initially, we do not consider whether or not people are choosing properly when they pursue their values. As children, we first get the idea of value implicitly from observation and introspection. We then move from an initial descriptive idea of value toward a normative idea of value that includes the notion that a real value serves one's life.

Each derivative value exists in a value chain or network in which every value (except for the ultimate value) leads to other values and thus serves both as an end and as a means to other values. A biological ends-means process leads to the ultimate end of the chain, which, for a living entity, is its life. For a human individual, the end is survival and happiness, and the means are values and virtues that serve that end. Values and virtues are common to, and necessary for, the flourishing of every human person. However, each individual will require them to a different degree. Each man employs his individual judgments to determine the amount of time and effort that should go into the pursuit of various values and virtues. Finding the proper combination and proportion is the task for each person in view of his own talents, potentialities, and circumstances. Values and virtues are necessary for a flourishing life and are objectively discernable, but the exact weighting of them for a specific person is highly individualized.

In order for a chain of values to make sense, there must be some end in itself and ultimate value for which all other values are means. “An infinite progression” or chain of ends and means “toward a nonexistent end is a metaphysical and epistemological impossibility” (17). All must converge on an ultimate value.

Each component of action of one’s life (i.e., one’s work life, love life, home life, social life, and so on) is an end in itself and a means to the end of one’s life in total. It is possible for something to be sought for its own sake and also to be considered a constituent of human flourishing. What is in a person’s self-interest is not solely because it causes flourishing but also because it partly constitutes flourishing. “Man’s life is a continuous whole”(26). One’s life in total is an end in itself and an ultimate value. An ultimate value is required for a person to rationally decide how to act. Evaluation necessitates teleological measurement in order to make our potential values comparable. When different values come into conflict a person refers to a higher value in order to resolve the conflict.

An individual’s task is to choose from among numerous values to find the most appropriate for himself. A person must make specific choices with respect to his career, his relationships, and so on. A hierarchy of values helps people make judgments regarding what to do or to pursue. To do this, an individual must assign a weight, either explicitly or implicitly, to his values. Values need to be weighted or ranked in terms of ordinal numbers. He must judge the ultimate contribution to the value of his life that exists at the apex of his hierarchy.

A value is an object of goal-directed behavior. Values and goals exist in an hierarchical context. The fact that a person has values implies the existence of his goal-directed actions. Values are distinct from goals despite the fact that in general parlance goals and values are often used interchangeably. Actions are performed in response to one’s values and are undertaken to achieve some goal or end. Annas (2004, 44-51) explains that a person’s goals and values are nested and are constrained by reflective examination of factors such as consistency and one’s available time, resources, energy, and so on.

Locke (300-304) differentiates among needs, values, and goals. Whereas needs are inborn, values are acquired. Values prioritize needs. He explains that people require a value hierarchy in order to be able to make choices. Individuals are unique regarding their values and motivations. Values operate to prioritize needs and to attain what is required to meet needs. Locke notes that that values and goals are similar concepts but that they can be distinguished from one another with respect to their level of generality. Goals



are values applied to particular circumstances—they are specific forms of values. Goals achieve values and values fulfill needs. A person's goals and values should be consistent with his needs. Values are translated into reality through the means of goals. Value attainment requires setting and pursuing goals. Needs lead to values, values lead to goals, and goals lead to action. The ideas of need and value are more basic concepts than the notion of goal.

Goals provide order and structure to a person's life. They are integral parts of one's experience of his life as meaningful. Individual flourishing and happiness requires the setting of goals followed by the energetic and active pursuit of these goals through the choice of the means that are best suited for attaining them. The goals pursued should be congruent with a person's core values and interests—those that make one feel alive, engaged, and fulfilled. People tend to gain more pleasure from making progress toward goals than from attaining them. In addition, whatever the outcomes, an individual is apt to adapt to them. People adjust, reevaluate, and create a new set of goals.

Where do emotions fit in? According to Rand (30-32), an emotion is an automatic response to a situation based on a person's perception, identification, and evaluation of the situation. Emotions are states of consciousness with bodily accompaniments and intellectual causes. Different from sensations, emotions are caused by what a person thinks. Emotions are the result of a man's value premises that result from the thinking that one has done in response to situations he has met in life. After a person has made a range of value judgments, he makes them automatic. Emotions are the form in which men experience automatized, subconscious, value judgments. Present in one's unconscious, value judgments affect man's evaluative and affective experiences. Every emotion reflects a particular type of value appraisal. Emotions are reactions to a person's perceptions and are the automatic results of a mind's previous conclusions. The intensity of the emotion, whether positive or negative, reflects the importance of the value in one's value hierarchy. Emotions are not tools of thinking—they are not a substitute for reason. Truth cannot be attained through one's feelings. However, emotions do play a key role in one's life. They contain automatic action tendencies and provide the means for enjoying life. Emotions can provide a stimulus to act, a reward for successful action, or a penalty for unsuccessful action. A person could not achieve happiness without them. However, it is important to realize that an individual's feelings may or may not reflect genuine flourishing depending upon the correctness and incorrectness of his previous thinking.

Rand contends that people are born conceptually and emotionally *tabula rasa*. For her, emotions are dependent phenomena and are the automatic products of a man's value judgments. Rand believes that reason

must program emotions properly if a person is to achieve happiness. It is essential for the emotions accompanying one's behavior to be in the direction of, and consonant with, the person's objective or true behavior. She sees man with no inborn instincts and views reason as a person's only guide to knowledge. According to Rand, people do not have inborn emotions, temperaments, desires, personality characteristics, or ingrained behavior of any kind. She says that men's brains are not hardwired and that all human behavior is learned behavior.

Most contemporary philosophers, biologists, and evolutionary psychologists reject Rand's *tabula rasa* view of human emotions, urges, desires, and interests. They believe that many of a person's predispositions, desires, interests, etc., are natural and stem from biological or genetic characteristics held in common by all people, most people, a segment of the population, or that distinguish one man's individual personality. It follows that people have individual propensities and personalities and that men are genetically influenced in what they do. A person has specific predispositions and traits that delimit what he can do and offer guidance with respect as to what he should do.

Man is born with an emotional mechanism that has evolved throughout the ages. Enright (2002, 25–67) notes that people are born with needs specific to them as human beings and explains that emotions help an individual to discover his needs and to choose what specific values to pursue. Emotions facilitate action and help to connect a person's conscious reasoning mind to his basic biological needs. They are the means of effecting the identification of facts by bringing relevant information to the attention of his conscious mind. Enright explains that emotions can provide automatic and timely information on some aspect of the world to an individual. Emotions can affect motivation, are frequently directed toward the past, and can influence a person's action in the future. DeSousa (1990, xv–xviii) has argued that reason and emotions are not natural antagonists and that, in fact, the faculty of emotion is needed for the mechanism of rationality to operate. A person's emotional reactions can often highlight the ethically important aspects of a situation. Emotions play an important role in assessing one's well-being. Of course, we need to recognize that both our emotions and our conscious decisions can be in error.

Today, there is general agreement that men have instinctual drives and emotions that influence (but do not determine) their behavior. Many of these instincts are generally beneficial, guide a person, and encourage his flourishing and happiness. Because a man has free will, he can choose to follow his direction-giving instincts and emotions or attempt to change or override them. By employing reason, a person can validate his instincts and

emotions or he can identify them as personally destructive and/or in conflict with his chosen values and goals. In other words, a person's predispositions can be a proper and valid motivation if acting in accordance with furthers his life and happiness. Furthermore, a person does not always have to depend on his will. His habitual, instinctual and emotional responses may oftentimes be appropriate and only occasionally may have to be overridden. Valuations can be automatic or can be based on value judgments. When necessary a person can correct and override his instinctual and emotional responses by acting on an intellectual or rational level. The key is awareness of situations in which rational deliberation is called for.

Ayn Rand (16–18) explains that to be a value means to be good for someone and for something. Life is one's fundamental value because life is conditional and requires a particular course of action to maintain it. Something can be good or bad only to a living organism, such as a human being, acting to survive. Man's life is the ultimate value and the standard of value for a human being. A value exists in a chain of values and must have some ending point. There must be some "fundamental alternative" that marks the cessation of one's value chain. It is his life, "a process of self-sustaining and self-generated action," that is the fundamental alternative at the end of a person's value chain. One's life is the alternative that underpins all of his evaluative judgments.

Ethics, a code of values to rationally guide man's choices and actions, is an objective, metaphysical necessity of man's survival" (24). A proper ethics gives practical guidance to help people think and direct their lives. Ethics aids a man in defining and attaining his values, goals, and happiness. A man needs ethics because he requires values to survive. The *telos* of ethics is a person's own survival and happiness. The realm of ethics includes those matters that are potentially under a man's control. A man's uncoerced volition is necessary to have an objective theory of morality. He can discover values only through a volitional process of reason.

Rand's ethics identifies the good and bad according to the rational standard of value of "man's life *qua* man." Her Objectivist ethics focuses on what is, in reality, good or best for each unique individual human being. Such an ethics is rational, objective, and personal. Accordingly, a man's goal should be to become the best possible person in the context of whom and what he is and of what is possible for him.

A person requires moral knowledge in the form of abstractions to guide his actions. Moral concepts necessarily come into play when one acts. A man needs an adequate set of general evaluative principles to provide basic

guidance in living well. He must consciously identify the principles he wants to live by and must critically evaluate his values and principles.

Rational moral principles guide us toward values and are essential for achieving moral integrity, character, and happiness. When we habitually act on sound moral principles, we develop virtues and incorporate our moral orientation into our character. Rand connects virtues to the objective requirements of man's survival and flourishing. Moral principles are needed because the standard of survival and flourishing is too abstract. Acting on principles cultivates corresponding virtues which, in turn, leads to value attainment, flourishing, and happiness. According to Rand (27), "value is that which one acts to gain and/or keep—virtue is the act by which one gains and/or keeps it."

Focus, a quality of alertness, involves a man's primary free will decision to activate his mind. It takes effort to stay in focus by using one's volition to activate his consciousness and mental resources. Although focus is not automatic and takes effort, it is rewarding and natural (221). Focus enters in the development of one's ideas, in the choice of his values, and in the selection of his moral principles. In addition, when one acts, he needs to focus in order to keep his ideas, values, and moral principles in his consciousness. A person must be alert for opportunities to form one's ideas, values, and principles and he must also use his free will to be in focus for his thinking to guide his actions. A person can be in focus, passively out of focus, or he can actively evade particular mental content. Rand (1957, 944) says that "evasion is . . . the willful suspension of one's consciousness, the refusal to think . . . the refusal to know."

Moral principles are true or absolute in a given context. A person needs to recognize the moral context of a situation. A man should not evade relevant knowledge nor drop context when he acts. Some cases will fall outside the context in which they are defined and applicable. Thinking is needed in order to understand the facts of a situation and to apply appropriate principles to the circumstances. For example, honesty, as a principle, states that it is immoral to misrepresent the truth in a context in which a person's goal is to "attain values" from others. It follows that in a different context in which someone is attempting to use deceit or force in order to gain values from an individual, it is appropriate for the wronged individual to choose self-defense (e.g., dishonesty) as the applicable principle instead of honesty. The context is different from one calling for honesty on his part. In this case, the person who is properly lying is not trying to gain a value. Instead, he is rationally acting in his own interest to protect a value that is being threatened.

In Rand's biocentric ethics, moral behavior is judged in relation to achieving specific ends, with the final end being an individual's life or flourishing. The act of deciding necessitates the investigation of how an action pertains to what is best for one's own life. This is not done in a duty-based ethic that is limited to precepts and rules that are placed between a person and reality. In a biocentric ethics what is moral is the understood and the chosen rather than the imposed and the obeyed. Principles are valuable ethical concepts that do not require imperatives or obligations as their justification.

Altruist moralities hold that morality is difficult and involves ideas such as self-abnegation and self-sacrifice. Contrariwise, an egoist morality, such as the one found in Objectivism, maintains that morality is natural and enjoyable. Of course, there is work involved in staying in focus, acquiring knowledge, formulating moral principles, and applying them in the appropriate contexts. Morality is demanding but it is also indispensable and rewarding.

### **Values and Virtues**

Virtues are required for one's personal flourishing not simply because they can lead to it but also because they are, in part, constitutive of it. Virtues are constitutive of the way a man lives his life as a result of his own decisions. A person's character reflects the cumulative effect of his life choices. Living according to the virtues will benefit a person as an individual human being. There is considerable diversity among virtuous agents. Virtuous lives are not likely to be lived equally.

Virtues require an agent's practical reasoning and are not merely mindless habits. It takes practical wisdom to apply and to translate virtues into action in any given situation. The proper amount and application of any of the virtues is context-specific. Judgment is needed to decide what to do in any specific situation. We can learn from observing others and from our own experiences. That is how we attain the ability to think, understand, judge, and decide what to do for ourselves.

Virtues can distinguish between successful and unsuccessful goal-strivers and self-improvers. Virtue ethics involves the aspiration to be better than one currently is. Self-improving action is a type of virtuous action that is performed in accordance with one's value hierarchy. Virtue-based actions translate into added value in the marketplace as well as in the rest of an agent's life.

A virtue is a disposition to do the proper thing, for the right reasons, in a befitting way, and at the appropriate time. Virtues are developed and

strengthened through experience and intelligent habits. It is not sufficient simply to know the proper thing to do. A person must also want to do it and then actually do it. A virtuous action is much more than merely self-control or self-restraint. It involves the agent taking pleasure in the activity. The engaged virtuous person experiences the virtuous action as a harmonious expression of his character including his reasoning and his feelings.

Virtues have both intellectual and affective aspects. When a person thinks about the virtues he tends to think about his life as a whole and the integration of his values and goals. A whole-time perspective leads to the continual assessment of one's life in terms of past, present, and future time perspectives. Because we are rational creatures, we can imagine, evaluate, and attempt to create various ways of living. The whole of one's life can be viewed as a project of becoming and living a flourishing life. The virtues are needed to live a flourishing life.

There have been a number of contemporary virtue ethicists but none has done more to present a unified picture of virtue ethics than has Ayn Rand.<sup>10</sup> Through her philosophy of Objectivism she has made a conducive and rational case for putting individual moral judgments on an objective basis.<sup>11</sup> Rand's method of moral reasoning aptly permits an individual to decide what he should morally do given the existence of particular metaphysically objective natural facts. Rand demonstrates how virtues and values can play essential roles in unifying the study of morality, flourishing, and happiness. She bases each virtue on the foundation of the values that the virtues bring forth and the functions that the virtues and values perform with respect to the individual's flourishing and happiness. She explains that rationality is the master virtue and that all of the derivative virtues are integrated, interdependent, and aspects of rationality applied and viewed within more limited contexts. Rationality, the primary virtue, has differing applications in different situations. The various virtues are logically interconnected both in theory and in practice.

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<sup>10</sup> For a variety of perspectives on virtue ethics see: Annas 1993; 1998; 2003; Crisp and Slote 1997; Darwall 2006; Dent 1984; Foot 1978; 2001; Gaut 1997; Hunt 1997; Hursthouse 1999; Korsgaard 1996; MacIntyre 1997; McDowell 1978; Slote 1992; 2001; Statman 1997; Swanton 1995; 2003; Wallace 1978; and Zagzebski 1996. In addition, Tara Smith (2006) has provided a detailed explanation of the virtues in the context of Rand's normative ethics.

<sup>11</sup> Ayn Rand did not produce a comprehensive, systematic, and detailed work regarding the virtues. However, Tara Smith (2006) has provided an excellent and detailed explanation of the virtues in the context of Rand's Objectivism. Readers interested in greater elucidation of the Randian virtues are encouraged to read Smith's book.

Rand (1957; 1964; [1966-67] 1990) explains that to live, men must hold three ruling values—“reason, purpose, and self-esteem.” These values imply all of the virtues required by a man’s life. “Rationality,” the primary virtue, is the recognition of objective reality, commitment to its perception, and the “acceptance of reason as one’s source of knowledge, one’s only judge of values, and one’s only guide to action.” “Independence,” the acceptance of one’s intellectual responsibility for one’s own existence, requires that a man form his own judgments and that he support himself by the work of his own mind. “Honesty,” the selfish refusal to seek values by faking reality, recognizes that the unreal can have no value. “Integrity,” the refusal to permit a breach between thought and action, acknowledges the fact that man is an indivisible, integrated entity of mind and body. “Justice,” a form of faithfulness to reality, is the virtue of granting to each man that which he objectively deserves. Justice is the expression of man’s rationality in his dealings with other men and involves seeking and granting the earned. A trader, a man of justice, “earns what he gets and does not give or take the undeserved.” Just as he does not work except in exchange for something of economic value, he also does not give his love, friendship, or esteem except in trade for the pleasure he receives from the virtues of individuals he respects. Love, friendship, and esteem, as moral tributes, are caused and must be earned. “Productiveness,” the virtue of creating material values, is the art of translating one’s thoughts and goals into reality. “Pride,” the total of the preceding virtues, can be thought of as “moral ambitiousness.”

For Ayn Rand, moral perfection requires unbreached rationality (i.e., the consistent commitment to think). To be rational means to accept reason as one’s only source of knowledge and guide to action. Rationality is the primary virtue and the precondition for all the other virtues. It follows that the virtues are open to any person who thinks. An individual who is irrational (i.e., one who evades facts and contexts or who is guided by his emotions) cannot practice the Randian virtues. Conclusions reached via a rational method of thought must be applied in action in order for a person to work toward the goal of his personal flourishing. Rationality is at the root of moral action (Smith 2006, 48-74).

Rand’s understanding of honesty is mainly as a relationship to reality rather than to other people. An honest person refuses to fake reality or to pretend that facts are other than what they are. Such a person faces the facts and rejects any form of unreality. He understands that values can be created only by a devotion to reality rather than by fraud or deception. Honesty requires the renunciation of distortion, evasion, misrepresentation, or artifice. An honest person focuses on reality instead of on what other people think. It can be honest to lie in a context in which a person needs to protect a value

from a person who has no right to that value. Of course, lying is wrong when a person does it in his attempts to gain a value. An honest man is truthful both with himself and with others.

Dishonesty involves subjecting oneself to the standards of others. The act of dishonesty raises others' standards above one's own and changes facts into his betrayers. A dishonest person depends upon the ignorance, gullibility and lack of knowledge, insight, and judgment of others and he must constantly work to keep them in the dark. In addition, although it is possible to deceive some people, at least for a short period of time, it is impossible to deceive reality. Because an individual tends to benefit the most from other people's rationality and knowledge of the truth, it follows that dishonesty inclines one individual to sanction characteristics in others that make them less beneficial to him. In addition, dishonesty is certainly detrimental to one's self-esteem and pride (75-105).

Independence involves recognition of the fact that it is each person's responsibility to form his own judgments and to live by the work of his own mind. An independent person's primary or foundational sense of direction is toward reality rather than to the ideas of other people. An independent person accepts the primacy of existence and his responsibility to form his own value judgments. To be truly independent, a man must follow through and act on his first-handed judgment of reality.

Independence does not mean isolation from others. A man can learn from others and he can decide to work jointly with them. An individual can learn from others and still be intellectually independent as long as he validates the ideas for himself. In a society based on the division of intellectual labor it is proper to consult or learn from others such as experts, specialists, and teachers. Of course, it is important to bring one's own judgment to assess their ideas. A man should judge independently the logic of others' ideas and should not accept them unquestioningly. One should not merely substitute the judgments of experts for one's own. To the best of one's ability, a person should attempt to understand, seek clarification, ask questions, and assess the expert's education, qualifications, and relevant experience (106-34).

Rand explains that justice is rationality in the evaluation of men. It is necessary to judge each man's character and to grant to each person what he deserves in a given context. Justice involves recognition of the fact that an individual must judge all men as conscientiously as he judges inanimate objects. Justice requires rewarding people whose actions objectively advance or preserve men's lives and punishing those whose actions diminish their lives. It is essential to use one's reason to reach moral estimates and to pronounce moral judgments. A man following Rand's value-oriented



approach to justice would grant moral sanction to the virtuous but not to the malevolent. It is also important to judge oneself according to the same rational standards that he uses to judge other people. A just man is an honest man who does not cheat on himself.

It is necessary to judge other people because individuals have the potential to be values or disvalues to others. According to Rand, the ultimate purpose of pronouncing moral judgment is the enhancement of the agent's own life. It is proper and practical to encourage qualities in other people that promote one's own life and to discourage qualities that are injurious to it. Rewarding and punishing appropriately encourages the good and discourages the bad. Treating individuals as they deserve to be treated demonstrates regard for causality because specific causes warrant particular effects. A just man lives according to the trader principle bestowing rewards and punishments as "payments" dispensed in exchange for others' virtues and vices.

It is rational and just to reward and celebrate the good and to punish and oppose the bad as merited. Good and bad actions have natural consequences. Injustice breaks the natural causal chain by disconnecting effects from their causes. Examples of injustices include altruism, egalitarianism, welfare statism, moral indifference, and mercy (i.e., unearned leniency). The failure to condemn evil practices and irrational, unprincipled, unproductive, or dishonest people requires one to act as if they are harmless. In order to further one's own rational self-interest, a person needs to distinguish between the good and bad in other people and then to treat them appropriately (135–75).

Human flourishing depends upon fidelity in action to rational moral principles. Integrity is the policy of acting in accordance with one's objective values and ideals. It involves expressing, upholding, and making or transforming them into practical reality. There should be no gap between one's mind and body and between his values and his actions. A man of integrity is a man of principle who is loyal in action with his values and convictions. In order to have integrity, a person must have rational principles and must consistently abide by them. Rand is against a person compromising on principles but there is one type of compromise that she does not disparage. A compromise on details (such as one finds in a trade) is not a philosophical or moral compromise. A trade oftentimes includes price negotiations and the final agreed-upon price does not represent a breach of the principle of trade (176–97).

Through the virtue of productiveness, people transform or adjust their natural surroundings to meet their needs. According to Rand, productiveness

is fundamental to human life and productive work should be the central purpose of each person's life. Because a man must either produce or perish, he must apply his reason to the problem of survival. Productive work is the process through which a man's mind sustains his life. Ideas must be translated into the form of material values. Both intellectual and physical work are necessary to produce the knowledge and material wealth required to sustain human life. Rather than appropriate values, a person should create them. A man should specialize and capitalize on his own unique resources. He should work to the fullest of his mental and physical abilities in the job that he performs. The rewards of being productive are both material and spiritual. One's career can be the principal integrating component of his life (195-220).

A person who has the virtue of pride is committed to attaining his own moral perfection. He is rational with respect to the forming of his own character. Moral perfection involves unbreached rationality. Pride, also called moral ambitiousness, requires that a man perform the intellectual work to identify proper moral principles throughout his life. Rand explains that moral perfection is open to any person capable of protracted rational thought. Pride involves self-respect, self-esteem, and the desire to improve. Pride is required for one to have self-esteem and self-esteem is essential for a flourishing life. A person with pride regularly pursues evermore challenging goals and constantly strives to improve in all areas of his life (221-46).

### **Action**

Praxeology is the general theoretical science of human action. Mises (1949) grounds economics upon the action axiom that states that men exist and act by making purposive choices. Misesian praxeology refers to the set of sciences that derive by logical inference exclusively from the axiom of human action. Economics is thus a division of praxeology and is made up of apodictically true statements that are not empirically testable. Praxeological laws are universal doctrines whose applicability is independent of any particular empirical circumstances. Praxeology is a unifying framework that unites all types of human decisions, actions, and interactions.

Mises explains that a man's introspective knowledge that he is conscious and acts is a fact of reality and is independent of external experience. Mises deduced the principles of economics and the complete structure of economic theory entirely through the analysis of the introspectively derived, a priori idea of human action. While it is certainly important to understand and acknowledge the useful role of introspection in one's life, it is also necessary to realize that its role is limited, secondary, and

adjunct to the empirical observation and logical analysis of empirical reality. It would have been better if Mises had said that external observation and introspection combine to reveal that people act and employ means to achieve ends. Introspection aids or supplements external observation and induction in disclosing to a man the fundamental purposefulness of human action.

Murray Rothbard (1957, 314-20; 1962; 1976, 89-111; 1982) defends Mises's methodology but goes on to construct his own edifice of Austrian economic theory. Although he embraced nearly all of Mises's economics, Rothbard could not accept Mises's Kantian extreme aprioristic position in epistemology. Mises held that the axiom of human action was true a priori to human experience and was, in fact, a synthetic a priori category. Mises considered the action axiom to be a law of thought and thus a categorical truth prior to all human experience.

Rothbard, working within an Aristotelian, Thomistic, or Mengerian tradition, justified the praxeological action axiom as a law of reality that is empirical rather than a priori. Of course, this is not the empiricism embraced by positivists. This kind of empirical knowledge rests on universal inner or reflective experience in addition to external physical experience. This type of empirical knowledge consist of a general knowledge of human action that would be considered to be antecedent to the complex historical events that mainstream economists try to explain. The action axiom is empirical in the sense that it is self-evidently true once stated. It is not empirically falsifiable in the positivist sense. It is empirical, but it is not based on empiricism as practiced by today's economics profession. Praxeological statements cannot be subjected to any empirical assessment whether it is falsificationist or verificationist.

Both induction and deduction are required. Initially, the concept of action is formally and inductively derived from perceptual data. Next, the whole systematic structure of economic theory would be deduced from the notion of human action. The categories, theorems, and laws implied in the idea of action include, but are not limited to, value, causality, ends, means, preference, cost, profit and loss, opportunities, scarcity, choice, marginal utility, marginal costs, opportunity cost, time preference, originary interest, association, etc.

There is a dimension of interiority for human beings who have the ability to imagine new futures for themselves and to invent projects and paths for their personal development. Each person is responsible for, and provident over, his own actions and identity. The human person, the acting person, can reflect, deliberate, choose, initiate action, and assume responsibility for his own actions.

Introspection is a reasonably reliable but ancillary source of evidence and knowledge with respect to what it means to be a rational, purposeful, volitional, and acting human being. Each person knows universally from introspection that he chooses. In other words, observation is introspective in the case of free will. Universal inner or reflective experience is an important adjunct to external, empirical, physical experience.

Free will means that a person is able to perform actions that are not determined by forces outside of his control.<sup>12</sup> This means that at least some choices and actions are not caused by antecedent factors or governed by physical laws or physical events. A human being has the power to reflect, weigh, arrange, and select from among various courses of behavior. In order for an action to be free, it must be because no antecedent factors were enough to make the person carry out exactly that action. A human action is thus not merely a reaction to some prior force or action. We can say that free will exists if a change in a physical variable or property is not due to a prior change in some other physical variable or property. Because a man has reason and free will, he can create concepts, form values, and develop plans aimed at actualizing those values. A person recognizes opportunities to improve his well-being and pursues actions to attain the preferable state of affairs. Actions are intended mainly because of what is desired and thought to be possible. Means-end rationality presumes that people can imagine futures that are different from the present. In devising a plan, a man imagines the future conditions he believes he would experience if he decides to act.

Physical events cannot cause praxeological events. There is a qualitative difference between human actions and deterministic reactions of totally corporeal objects. Action embodies a forward-looking character. Human beings can cause goal-directed, self-generated behavior. Reaction in a determined entity can theoretically and potentially be followed back in time until the beginning of the universe. It follows that, in the natural sciences, the researcher deals with things and the regular relationships that can be discovered to be functioning between them. While we find determinism in physical nature, we discover that a human being possesses specific, delimited control over his consciousness. Every existent is constrained to be what it is and to not be anything else. Men's thoughts and actions are therefore irrelevant to the natural scientist but crucial to philosophers and economists.

A person discovers relationships between his values and his plans. He also strives to learn the relationships between various pertinent causal variables and strives to create those relationships. He must act to acquire the

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<sup>12</sup> For more on free will and causality see Boyle et al 1976; Branden 1974; Machan 1998a; and O'Connor 2004.

factors or goods he believes are required to accomplish the plans that will achieve his values. Of course, as he gains knowledge, his values may change, which, in turn, may result in a change of his plans. A person is always free to change the significance of his values and plans and may decide to act in a different manner than before. People learn from their experiences, past choices, and discoveries, and revise their plans accordingly.

Ringer (2004) explains that neither success nor happiness is possible without action. Ideas alone are insufficient and must be accompanied by action. It is not what a person has the potential to do that is important, it is what the person does that is important. It follows that the more rational actions that a person takes, the more results he attains. Each person has the capacity to influence the outcomes of his life and can choose to alter the nature of his existence by changing events because he has the ability to conceptualize, plan, will, and do.

Positive long-term results tend to flow from rational truth-based actions. A person's actions have effects that are in accordance with the laws of nature. It follows that each human being requires the ability to interpret events and circumstances correctly and that the person who most often gets positive outcomes is the one who most frequently bases his virtue-based actions on accurate assessments of reality. An individual's long-term happiness is an effect of taking constant rational actions that correspond with universal principles.

Advocating or endorsing the idea of "man's survival *qua* man" or of a good or flourishing life involves value judgments. To make value judgments, one must accept the existence of a comprehensive natural order and the existence of fundamental absolute principles in the universe. Natural laws are neither discovered nor are not arbitrary relationships, but instead are relationships that are already true. A man's human nature, including his attributes of individuality, reason, and free will, is the ultimate source of moral reasoning. Value is meaningless outside the context of man.

Economists, including Austrian praxeological economists, maintain that values are subjectively determined by each individual. By "subjective" they simply mean personally estimated. In a free-market transaction, a buyer and seller agree on a price based on their personally-estimated valuations. Philosophers, especially Objectivist philosophers, explain that there is another level of values that defines value in terms of right preferences. Whether or not a value is objective (i.e., rational) or subjective (i.e., irrational) at that level depends upon its relationship to the end of an individual's life. It follows that a personally-estimated value can be either objective or subjective depending upon whether or not it is truly valuable for the agent. These

different definitions of the term, subjective, have been problematic and puzzling to both philosophers and economists alike.<sup>13</sup>

### Toward an Integrated Framework

In this paper an argument has been made that reality exists independently of our consciousness and that we must apprehend it correctly if we are to flourish as human beings. It follows that reference to human nature is critical for an understanding of what constitutes a moral life. The distinctive human attributes of rationality, free will, and individuality are necessary to engage in ethical evaluation. An individual's primary moral obligation and fundamental interest is to attain his mature state as a flourishing human person. Morality is a functional activity that exists for the sake of the purpose of living a flourishing life. Although there are necessary generic or basic conditions of human flourishing, there are many different ways for individuals to flourish. The possibility of self-directedness is required for any and all of these diverse agent-relative forms of flourishing. The right to autonomy (i.e., self-directedness) applies to every person equally because of the universal human attributes of rationality and free will. This liberal conception of individual rights offers each person the opportunity to attempt to realize a distinctive form of flourishing. The law is properly concerned with rights as values that are universal and necessary. The law has the function of maintaining a political and legal order that simply protects the possibility of self-directedness. It should not be biased toward any particular form of personal flourishing. Rights are political principles that individuals ought to accept no matter what their views of the good might be. The possession of autonomy in no way guarantees that a person will live a good life and flourish. The right to liberty guarantees politically only the possibility of self-directedness which, in turn, maintains the possibility of personal flourishing.

Rights, as metanorms, are not part of personal morality and flourishing. Rights apply the ethical basis to law and guide the creators of a constitution. Ethics are not all at the same level. At the political level, rights regulate the conditions under which personal moral conduct and flourishing may occur. The aim of politics is peace and order. At the level of the individual human person, human flourishing is the *telos* of human conduct.

There are a variety of ways for humans to flourish. Flourishing requires the right use of reason with respect to the evaluative ranking, interpretation, and application of basic goods and virtues that are needed by every person, to

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<sup>13</sup> For more detailed discussions of the nature of values see High 1985; Machan 1998b; and Younkins 2005a, 2005b.

some extent, to flourish. There is no universal formula for ascertaining the proper amount and application of each good and virtue in each person's life. It is the task of each individual to develop practical wisdom and to use it to make proper choices for himself. The generic goods and virtues that make up and lead to human flourishing become real only when they are given specific form by the choices of each unique individual. Each person needs to attain and sustain goods and virtues in an appropriate manner over the course of his life in order to flourish and to be happy.

An individual acts when he is motivated to do so. For a human being, thinking and free will are involved in every stage of the action process. Human needs are the starting point of the motivation sequence, and they have, to a great extent, a biological foundation. These needs give rise to the necessity for a man to choose and to pursue values that are not separate from facts regarding human beings. Because values are objective, contextual, and relational with respect to a given person, we can discuss what would be actually good for an individual if he were to know about, choose, and attain that good. Each person must use his rationality to recognize, identify, and seek things that exist in reality that are potentially beneficial to him. There are things that exist, independently of anyone's thinking, in a positive relationship to each person's life and these things are capable of being known by human beings. It is imperative to apprehend such objective values correctly—a flourishing life depends upon the valid evaluation of, and attainment of, objective values. Value arises out of a relationship between human beings and what they require for their survival and well-being.

An individual's needs, values, and knowledge contribute to his choice of goals to pursue. In particular, values provide a strategic underpinning for goal-setting. A man acts in order to achieve goals that result in his obtaining values. A man's life is his ultimate value. Goals realize values and values satisfy needs. Values give purpose and meaning to a person's goals. We could say that values are distinctive goals about what types of goals to pursue. Goals can be viewed as values implemented in particular contexts and circumstances. Both values and goals exist in hierarchical arrangements. Every individual value or goal can be thought of as an instantiation of a higher-order personal project. One's life as a whole is the base for all other values and goals of an individual. A person needs to discover values which actually are of critical importance to his life. Various things are objectively good for an individual to attain even if he does not realize it or desire them.

To a certain extent, emotions are the automatic results or reflections of a person's value judgments. Such emotions are rational and justified if they are based on objective values. Emotions are thus at times appropriate and, at other times, inappropriate. Strong emotions increase the chances of

something coming to one's consciousness. Of course, it is up to each individual to use his volitional consciousness to select his value and goal hierarchies. While conceptually distinct, values, goals, and emotions are practically integrated in each human being.

Anticipatory or goal-directed emotions can be positive or negative incentives for action. In addition, outcome emotions are related positively to the extent of goal achievement and inversely to negative outcomes. It is important for positive emotions to accompany objectively valuable activities and for negative emotions to occur conjointly with objectively nonvaluable actions. In this way, emotions can play a role in a person's conscious assessment of his well-being.

Human flourishing requires a person to combine a number of particular objectively identifiable generic goods and virtues. Of course, it is up to each person to use his practical wisdom to create the appropriate application of these given his specific circumstances and contexts. This requires the development of a person's capacities for practical reason including the ability to reflect critically upon one's good before he decides how to act. Thinking is initiated and maintained by choice. Correct actions lead to one's flourishing and happiness. Each person must be mindful of the fact that he only has a given amount of time to allocate to his various pursuits.

Virtues are dispositions to act for right reasons that are developed by making choices. People value being virtuous because the virtues are necessary for one's flourishing. The virtues are principles of action that enable individuals to attain values. Virtues may be viewed as proper perspectives toward generic goods such as knowledge, health, friendship, and so on. Proper actions are value-oriented and virtue-oriented. Virtuous activity is in harmony with a person's thoughts, feelings, and objective values. This involves doing the right thing without having material contrary internal inclinations.

Virtuous activities can lead to one's flourishing which, in turn, can lead to his happiness. Oftentimes, becoming deeply involved in one's meaningful actions can be accompanied by a state of flow. This is a condition of focused and engaged involvement or absorption. The state of flow is positively related to a person's existential condition of flourishing, to his experience of happiness, and to his positive emotions.

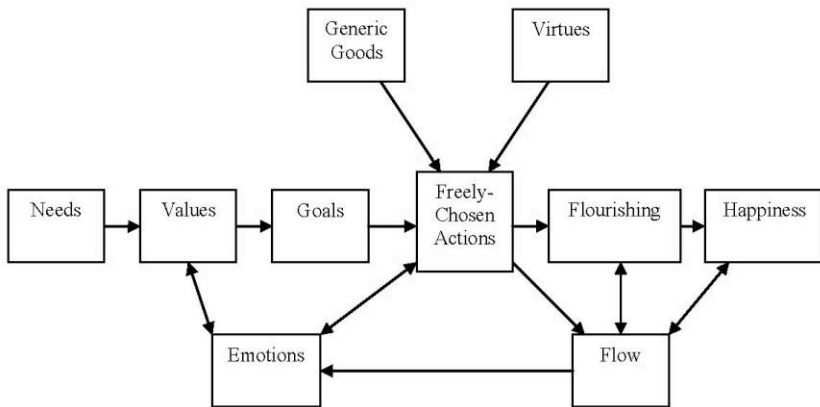
Wisdom involves the convergence of means and ends toward the achievement of one's personal flourishing. Personal flourishing involves living in a manner that brings one happiness (i.e., flourishing leads to happiness). Happiness is the positive conscious and emotional experience



that goes along with or results from one's flourishing. A person can be authentically happy only if he lives in certain ways—his life must contain certain particular elements. True happiness depends upon objective facts about human nature and the specific circumstances of one's life. Success in living makes people happy and this happiness motivates and prepares people for additional future accomplishments and happiness. Happy people are more likely to actively work toward achieving new goals. Success produces happiness and happiness leads to further success. Human persons enjoy the successful use of their realized capacities and their enjoyment increases the greater the extent to which their potentialities are actualized.

To aid the reader, the following diagram depicts the interrelationship among the various components of the motivation-happiness process.

### The Motivation-Happiness Process



The aim of this paper has been to explain that happiness is not something subjective and that there are inextricable connections between human nature, human flourishing, and happiness. We have seen that happiness is an achievement on the part of the individual human person. Not only is happiness an achievement, we have also seen that a person's achievements can lead to his happiness. The philosophical perspective taken in this article argues that there is an essential connection between objective ideas. It follows that systems-building is an important philosophical endeavor.

Philosophy provides the conceptual framework necessary to understand man's behavior. To survive, a person must perceive the world, comprehend it, and act upon it. To survive and flourish, a man must recognize that nature has its own imperatives. He needs to have viable, sound, and proper conceptions of man's nature, knowledge, values, and

action. He must recognize that there is a natural law that derives from the nature of man and the world and that is discoverable through the use of reason.

A sound paradigm requires internal consistency among its components. By properly integrating insights gleaned throughout history, we have the potential to reframe the argument for a free society and elucidate a theory of the best political regime on the basis of man, human action, and society. This natural-law-based paradigm would uphold each man's sovereignty, moral space, and natural rights and accord each person a moral space and natural rights. It would hold that men require a social and political structure that recognizes natural rights and accords each person a moral space over which he has freedom to act and to pursue his personal flourishing. Specifically, it would consist of (1) an objective, realistic, natural-law-oriented metaphysics; (2) a natural rights theory based on the nature of man and the world; (3) an objective epistemology which describes essences or concepts as epistemologically contextual and relational rather than as metaphysical; (4) a biocentric theory of value; (5) praxeology as a tool for understanding how people cooperate and compete and for deducing universal principles of economics; and (6) an ethic of human flourishing based on reason, free will, and individuality.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Younkens 2008 for an elaboration of what may be required to construct a paradigm for human flourishing in a free society.

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