# Special Module with Workshop: First Pleasure Then Duty: Philosophical Reflections on Well-being

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COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

*Course aims*: The fundamental aim of the course is to clarify the concept of well-being, to reconstruct its multiplicity of meanings, and to define it in a contrastive way to other different but related concepts.

*Knowledge and understanding*: at the end of the course, students will be able to masterfully present the concepts of well-being discussed, demonstrating an ability to grasp the essential traits in order to compare and evaluate them.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*: students will be able to understand the many meanings of the concept of well-being that underlie the studies dedicated by psychologists to this construct.

COURSE CONTENT

MODULE 1: *presentation of the Special Module with Workshop topics and distribution of materials*

MODULE 2: *Hedonism*

Unit 1: A description of hedonism

Unit 2: Arguments in favour of hedonism:

• Paradigmatic cases and correlation arguments

• Overlap between the subjects of well-being and of pleasure and pain

• Motivational arguments

• Experiential requirement and hedonism

Unit 3: Objections to hedonism and counter-objections from hedonists:

• The experience machine

• Base pleasures1

• Base pleasures2

• Qualitative hedonism

MODULE 3: *Desire-fulfilment theory (DFT)*

Unit 1: A description of DFT

Unit 2: Arguments in favour of DFT:

• Correlations between things we desire and things that are good for us

• DFT is less susceptible than hedonism to the experience machine objection

• It makes the agent's good depend on his attitudes

• It suggests the reason for doing what is good for us

Unit 3: Objections to DFT and counter-objections from its supporters:

• Merely wanting an outcome does not make the fulfilment of the desire good for us (the scope problem). Examples.

MODULE 4: *Objective List Theory (OLT)*

Unit 1: A description of OLT

Unit 2: Arguments in favour of OLT:

• Avoids the experience machine problems

• Avoids the scope problem

• Corresponds to the common sense view of well-being

• Topics referring to particular examples of OLT

Unit 3: Objections to OLT and counter-objections from its supporters:

• It is arbitrary and powerless from an explanatory point of view

• It is alienating or lacking in sensitivity towards the agent's interests

MODULE 5: *Perfectionist theories of well-being*

Unit 1: A description of perfectionism

Unit 2: Arguments in favour of perfectionism:

• Paradigmatic cases of lives with very high levels of well-being involve the exercise and development of human skills

• Perfectionism is flexible because it allows the deriving of well-being theories for non-human animals and other things with levels of well-being

• It corresponds to our tendency to think that something is good for a creature if it fits its nature

Unit 3: Objections to Perfectionism:

• It does not give a clear idea of how something can be bad for someone

• It is too restrictive in reference to the abilities that should be part of a human being's nature.

MODULE 6: *The happiness theory of well-being*

Unit 1: Happiness and well-being are not the same; two points of view on their relationship

Unit 2: Pleasure theories of happiness + happiness theories of well-being

Unit 3: Theory of happiness as satisfaction with one's life in its totality + happiness theory of well-being

Objections: Both theories are no longer plausible (or perhaps less so).

MODULE 7: *Hybrid theories of well-being*

Unit 1: Does the combination of the former theories put them in a better light than the criticisms addressed to them individually? Let's look at two cases.

Unit 2: Hybrid Theory 1: Pleasure and Desire (P&D) Fulfilment

Problems:

- Is P&D better able to respond to the objections to hedonism and DFT?

- What are P&D's strengths and weaknesses?

Unit 3: Hybrid theory 2: Objective List Theory and Desire (TGHT = Three Goods Hybrid Theory)

Problems:

- Is TGHT better than P&D?

- Is TGHT better than its non-hybrid equivalent?

MODULE 8: *Well-being and the shape of a life*

Unit 1: Momentary well-being vs. lifetime well-being; additivism about lifetime well-being.

Unit 2: Holism based on the shape of life hypothesis.

Unit 3: Three additivist objections to the shape of life hypothesis.

MODULE 9: *Well-being and death*

Unit 1: Is death bad for us?

Unit 2: Differentiated conceptions of death and damage.

Unit 3: Three objections to the thesis that death is bad for us.

MODULE 10: *Life as a Stoic*

The concept of well-being and contemporary stoicism.

READING LIST

G. Fletcher (2016) *The Philosophy of Well-being. An Introduction*, London and New York: Routledge.

M. Pigliucci (2017) *Come essere Stoici*, Milan: Garzanti.

TEACHING METHOD

Group seminars

ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA

During the course, students will present - individually or in groups - one of the topics included in the programme, and will discuss it together with the other students and the lecturer. Students will be assessed on their ability to critically present the chosen topic and to interact with their colleagues and the lecturer during the discussion. Those who follow the study path based on the reading list texts will be asked to submit a short discussion report (about 1200 words) on one of the topics mentioned.

NOTES AND PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites.

Should the current Covid-19 health emergency not allow face-to-face teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be communicated in good time to students.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.