

Happiness

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Preface

Introduction

Today we are overloaded with messages that promote the dream of happiness. Happiness seems to be available in many things, like products, religions, locations, coaching programmes and so on. We are even able to buy happiness in modern consumer society, where happiness is almost the equivalent of salvation (Baudrillard, 1998, 49). Many of us will remember the Coca-Cola commercial of the 1980's with the message "have a Coca-Cola and a smile", or the recent commercials where Coca-Cola even seems to own the "Happiness Factory" where the product is produced and happiness is shared with the whole world by "opening a bottle of happiness". There are certain hours called "happy hours" in café's, where drinks are sold for lower prices. There is Rituals body cream called "touch of happiness". Ever since marketing has discovered the power of selling values attached to a product and ever since brands are build around reputation, and not around a product, a value like happiness being sold as attachment to a product is not that surprising.

However not only products, but also religions promote happiness as a key element for life, like the 20th century new age type of spiritualities. Where in traditional religion, in terms of ultimate salvation, the main focus lies on the afterlife, in most of these new age spiritualities, the ticket to happiness shows that departure and arrival at happiness are in this life (Berg, September 2008, 361).

What is interesting though, is why a specific value is chosen, why happiness?

Happiness is our modern "statement of faith", supported by science, in which we summarize our core believe: "we can, will and should be happy". William James, also referred as "the father of American Psychology and Psychology of Religion", refers to happiness as the ultimate universal human end (McMahon, 2006, xii - xiii). In different areas of human life, the mental state called happiness is communicated as a value that needs to be obtained, a goal that needs to be achieved.

There is a rising demand for aligning policies to what really matters to people. What matters to all of us seems to be happiness, as recent developments show that well-being is acknowledged as a power full tool in human motivation by governments and corporate organisations. Happiness has become a critical component in measuring, the social and economic progress of nations. The *World Happiness Report 2013* is the best example of how happiness is, analysed, measured, compared and integrated in policies by governments. In this second report, published by the United Nations (UN), we see that governments worldwide measuring the subjective well-being are seemingly interested in what affects happiness. According to this report, mental health happens to be the single most important determinant of whether a person is happy or not and that happy people live longer, are more productive, earn more, and are also better citizens ("United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network", 2013). According to the findings of this report, there is enough reason to improve the well-being of individuals there where it is possible.

These developments show that happiness is not a matter of private concern any more, since it is integrated in government policies, but has also become a concern of human resource department of corporate organisations. Happy employees are not only more productive but are also mentally healthy, as the World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as not

just the absence of mental disorder but as: “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community” (“World Health Organization”, 2007).

Although not so popular as in the United States, coaching programmes that encourage subjects to search meaning in their everyday working life through promoting engagement with the inner self, are a major phenomenon in recent years (Auper and Houtman, 2006, 147-156). This discipline of counselling focuses on the interior human that is approached by using certain theories from humanistic and positive psychology, where self-understanding and the search for meaning are closely aligned. Employees are motivated and guided by counsellors in discovering their hidden potentialities as in talents or competences that need to come to the surface in order to be developed. The discipline of counselling offers an expertise, based on models and theories from humanistic and positive psychology, in line with the demands of society and its value system.

In Western culture, the actualization of the self is thought to be the highest transcendent value (Modell, 2003, 158). The actualization of these potentialities of the self is called self-actualization. In this process, the level of connectedness not only to the organisation but also to the self is questioned because the self is presented as the key to personal and corporate salvation (Bell & Taylor, 2004, 442).

Eventually, we can conclude that there is a lot research done nowadays on positive functioning and happiness, and we also see the application in practice. However, in order to effectively benefit from the richness of collective human wisdom, I think it is important to also have a perception of things outside their own cultural framework. So what is this state of mind we call happiness and how can we achieve this? This question is the main subject within humanistic and positive psychology that focuses on positive human behavior. In order to benefit as a whole society from research related to positive functioning, or its application in practice, a cross-cultural comparison could be helpful for societies that are heterogeneous of nature when it comes to value systems. Therefore the comparative method is a suitable choice for showing to what degree the Western conceptualizations of happiness can be generalized and applied outside the western context. This thesis attempts to examine, the underlying value system of humanistic, but mainly positive psychology related to happiness and presents an Islamic outlook on human potential and the associated objectives and values that the Quran regards as determinants of human happiness. The additional value of this thesis is that it provides a cross-cultural comparison between the western understanding and a Quranic understanding of happiness and human potential. The expectation is that, this comparative method will hopefully shed light on the origin of happiness in both understandings and with that will clarify the degree of contrast between the two happy human portrayals. Furthermore it is hoped that this theoretical analysis will stimulate empirical research on how effectively knowledge related to the issue of happiness can be applied within different frameworks of understanding.

Background

In different areas of human life, the mental state called happiness is communicated as a value that needs to be obtained, a goal that needs to be achieved. Some sociologists indicate that religion and philosophy, once fields where social values were produced and a source of identity, are now replaced by market and economy, as we tend to identify ourselves more and more with our profession and consumption behaviour (Ter Borg & Ter Borg, 2009, 95). As a result of secularization and individualization of Western society, it is the market that acts on

(existential) emotional human needs in absence of religion as collective value giver. We live a consumer society where in marketing value attached to the product or service, is becoming more and more about human values, emotions and identity (Baudrillard, 1998; Carrette & King, 2005). A product or service is presented with such meaning attached to it, that it addresses fundamental humanistic issues like who you are, the purpose in life and what being happy means. Our relationship with products and services has changed as they (luxury products and services) form an extension and representation of who we are and what we have achieved. In our search for happiness, as a highly valued emotion that is connected to fundamental values and virtues, the solution is also searched in the direction of what is happening in society. Despite secularization of society we see that religion is still present in modern man's life under the name of spirituality, consisting of a mixture of wisdoms from different religions, as a de-institutionalized religion with no reference to a specific religious tradition (Helaas, 2008).

Then there is positive psychology that, in the search for happiness, takes part in this social phenomenon, by combining the Judeo-Christian and Eastern wisdoms with scientific research. Positive psychology, a recent (1998) branch in psychology, is a sub division of humanistic psychology that in contrast to clinical psychology does not focus on reducing mental illness but on increasing happiness. The main goal of positive psychology is the promotion of optimal well-being and therefore the subject of interest is the role of personal strengths and positive social systems. The central themes in positive psychology are happiness, hope, creativity and wisdom. Humanistic psychology on the other hand is a brand in psychology, which combines philosophy and clinical psychology and focuses more in general on positive human behaviour and the nature of human existence. Humanistic psychology is founded on Judeo-Christian philosophies (existentialism), Eastern philosophies and phenomenology.

The last few decades have shown that, within the field of psychology there is an increasing attention towards the influence of religion and spirituality on mental health, as we witness the integration of religion and spirituality into research and practice by psychologists and therapists. Topics that have religious and spiritual relevance like, forgiveness, gratitude, and compassion, but also in general morality related subjects, are put to psychological investigation. The interest in religion and spirituality, from the perspective of positive psychology, is mainly related to the question of how religion and spirituality can be utilized to stimulate well-being (Pedrotti & Edwards, 2014, 143-144).

Although positive psychology does not have a certain claim about what happiness is, since there are no disagreeable definitions for "subjective happiness" as it is defined as the appreciation of one's own life, yet there is a connection made between happiness and moral virtues. What is, within positive psychology, the content of these virtues and their relevance for happiness and above all to what extent can this knowledge be considered as universal? The concept of happiness within psychology is rooted in an empirical understanding of happiness, where on the other hand religious and philosophical traditions identify happiness with faith and the highest good. We see that subjective well-being functions as a bridge between science and morality (Ott, 2013). The most recent challenge within positive psychology is, how to understand moral virtues, their significance for happiness and the relationships between virtues (Kristjansson, 2010; Timpe & Boyd, 2014, 11).

This challenge brings another development along with it, namely cross-cultural comparison. Happiness is universal in the sense of being a human experience, yet although we speak of a universal human experience, still are we looking for the same thing in the same way?

Happiness in general is not only connected to experience (emotion) but is also a product of thought (cognition). Accordingly even within subjective happiness there is an objective judgement about happiness. Therefore it is important to note that the manifestations and

descriptions of happiness are culturally informed and contextualized. Exactly this point has been one of the criticisms on positive psychology leading to cross-cultural research in recent years where impact of cultural differences on the subjective interpretation of happiness are acknowledged. (Knoop & Fave, 2013, 2)

The field of psychology, although not named as such, already existed in early Islamic sciences mostly under the name of philosophy. Therefore many early Muslim scholars directly or indirectly contributed to the study of happiness under the umbrella of philosophy, as research and theories related to the field of psychology were mostly a part of philosophical writings. Early philosophical works directly contributing to the subject of happiness are for example “The Attainment of Happiness” (*Tahsil al-sa'da*) written by Al-Farabi (870–950) and “The Alchemy of Happiness” (*Kimiya'-yi sa'adat*) written by Al-Ghazali (1058–1111). Although the diversity of schools of thought, there is a general idea on happiness in Islamic tradition, since the core thoughts about guidance for well-being and human nature can be found in the Quran which is accepted as the main source of religion. In Islamic tradition the word pursuit of happiness is rarely used, instead a commonly used expression is “the attainment of happiness”, where the concept of happiness is connected to two realities namely an eschatological and worldly reality.

In Islamic tradition, the “who am I?” question in the broadest sense of the word is more important and comes prior to the strongly related subject of happiness. Happiness is not a goal to be pursued on its own, rather to be attained as part of realization of discovering and nurturing the self. As the subject of happiness is enclosed within the study of the “self”, it cannot be explained outside the term self or soul, (*nafs*) that includes a broad range of topics including the heart (*qalb*), spirit (*ruh*), intellect (*aql*), and will (*irada*) as well as human nature (*fitrah*) (Nasr, 2014).

As the ultimate purpose of human nature is discovering the “self”, the causes of its misery and happiness are also connected to this ultimate purpose. However, comprehending and knowing the truth about the ‘self’ and God is not sufficient, one also needs to act according to this truth and therefore moral virtues are important (Khadduri, 1984, 82). When it comes to the connection between happiness and moral virtues, Al Kindi explains that in overcoming material and psychological causes of sorrow, material possessions and other worldly deeds are nothing compared to the cultivation of virtues. Virtues play an important role in the attainment of happiness related to this world and the hereafter (Nasr, 2014), where justice is considered as the highest virtue together with wisdom, however it is justice that stands above all virtues (Khadduri, 1984, 83; Al-Attas, 1993, 75). The connection between justice and happiness, as well as their definition is explained by to Professor Al- Attas in the following quote in his book “*Islam and Secularism*”(1993, 75).

“Happiness’ refers not to the physical entity in man, not to the animal soul and body of man: nor is it a state of mind — it has to do with certainty of the Ultimate Truth and fulfillment of action in conformity with that certainty; and certainty is a permanent condition referring to what is permanent in man and perceived by his spiritual organ known as the heart (*al-qalb*). It is peace and security and tranquility of the heart; it is knowledge, and knowledge is true belief; it is knowing one’s rightful, and hence proper, place in the realm of Creation and one’s proper relationship with the Creator; it is a condition known as ‘*adl*’ or justice.”

Research question

We can conclude that there is a lot of research done nowadays on positive functioning and happiness, and we also see the application in practice. However, in order to effectively benefit from the richness of collective human knowledge, I think it is important to also have a perception of things outside their own cultural framework. In order to benefit as a whole society from research related to positive functioning, or its application in practice, a cross-cultural comparison is necessary for societies that are heterogeneous in nature when it comes to value systems. To what degree can the Western conceptualization of happiness be generalized and applied outside the Western context? In other words, to what degree is knowledge related to happiness scientific and universal? This question is particularly relevant to Muslims in Western societies. On the other hand, the concept of happiness in the Islamic tradition when no longer connected to any ontological, historical and cultural collective context can easily be transformed in meaning according to the contemporary socio-political and economic ideologies in a certain society. Therefore, in order to effectively benefit from the richness of Islamic religious wisdom, I think it is important to also have a perception of happiness within Islam's own cultural, yet especially theological framework.

The research question of this thesis reads:

“What are the fundamental differences when the Western perspective on happiness in positive psychology is compared with the perspective on happiness from a Quranic understanding?”

Methodology

This thesis attempts to compare the concept of happiness, and the related themes like human potential, self-actualization and moral virtues in Western tradition reflected in positive psychology, with the message of the Quran regarding happiness. The aim of this thesis is to inspire an approach that treats Muslim mental health within the own Islamic system of values and conceptualizations of happiness in order to avoid conflicts. The main purpose of this thesis is to show the fundamental differences in value systems, and not to find a way to integrate the Islamic concept of happiness in modern psychology or the other way around. Therefore when comparing the two concepts of happiness I will not use "lens" (or "keyhole") comparison, in which I will use the Western concept of happiness in psychology as a lens through which to view the Islamic concept of happiness or the other way around. Instead, I will study the two concepts of happiness within their own framework and limit this research to an in-depth analysis of the "self" (human potential, self-actualization) and the virtue of justice, which I will compare in content and relevance for happiness.

The reason for selecting the virtue of justice as the comparing element is motivated from the Islamic part. The virtue of justice is relevant for its strong connection to happiness, but moreover for its overarching position, standing above all other virtues in the Islamic moral system. Positive psychology on the other hand, has not systemized virtues based on gradation.

I have selected the works and theories of influential humanistic psychologists and the works of contemporary scientists in positive psychology. These scientists are known for their major contributions and great amount of research on the matter of happiness. Another determinative factor in selecting certain recent literature, is the preference for research where the impact of cultural differences on the subjective interpretation of happiness are acknowledged (cross-cultural research), as also general research in which moral virtues and their significance for happiness are examined.

When looking for an overview of research findings on happiness, the most important sources that need mentioning are the Journal of Happiness Studies, The World Database of Happiness

and the Journal of Positive Psychology. The World Database of Happiness founded by Ruut Veenhoven, who is also the founding editor of the Journal of Happiness Studies, provides the largest collection of worldwide research relating to happiness, dating from 1915 till recently. The general search (Leiden University library and Google) on Islam and happiness, as well as the specific search in both mentioned journals and the world database of happiness show that, there is none to very little empirical research done within the field of psychology on the subject of happiness in relationship to Islam.

Since Humanistic psychology is founded on Judeo-Christian philosophies (existentialism), Eastern philosophies and phenomenology, a philosophical approach is chosen in understanding the Quran on the matter of happiness. Therefore when selecting Islamic literature, I preferred the work of contemporary scholars who in their theological approach question the deeper meaning of the Quran by strongly involving philosophy (*kelâm*). These contemporary scholars, also familiar with Western philosophy, are known for their major contributions and great amount of research on the matter of happiness, transforming the ancient scriptures, historical theories and thinking into modern man's world. Another reason for preferring certain scholars is for their work on secularization and its influence on society and religion.

In giving meaning to Quran verses, works of contemporary scholars are used who are specialized in Islamic jurisprudence (*fikh*) and exegesis (*tafsir*). The theological method used by these scholars in giving meaning to Quran verses, is based on the understanding that, the only source of meaning is the Quran itself. Within this method, other sources are not considered as meaning directing rather as giving detailed information, on the condition that this information does not collide with the Quran verses or general philosophy of the Quran.

Part I: Positive Psychology

1. Positive Psychology

1.1 Introduction to positive psychology

A new theory has emerged within the last decade in the field of psychology under the name of positive psychology. The founders of this theory are Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. This scientific study focuses on things in life that go right and is born from the concern that the ruling problem-fixing approach in clinical psychology is ineffective. The focus in positive psychology lies on what is right about people and attention is paid on strengths of character and positive emotions. A manual is created comparable to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), called Values In Action (VIA), which instead of describing human disorders describes mental health in terms of positive character and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, preface). This manual consists of a classification of six core moral virtues as well as 24 subordinate empirically measurable character strengths through which the virtues manifest (Kristjansson, 2010, 305). The movement is founded on three pillars: the study of positive emotions, the study of positive traits (personal virtues and strengths) and the study of positive institutions (democracy, family, public opinion). The main aim is - through *massive research* on human strengths and virtues - to increase the knowledge about the things that make life worth living. In other words, positive psychology studies human happiness, focusing on techniques and theories that can help people, groups and institutions to flourish toward their highest potential (Kristjansson, 2010, 296). Positive psychology does not replace traditional clinical psychology but adds another dimension to mental health.

Where previous understanding of well-being among psychiatrists and psychologists consisted of a little more than the absence of mental disease, in this new approach a healthy person is not only free of mental illness, but is also a happy person and a happy person is one who is able to reach his or her highest potential by living a good life. As a result of this new movement the definition of mental health is re-defined. According to this new definition, being mentally healthy does not equal being free of mental illness but also means leading a life in a state of well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 4).

The study of subjective well-being is of importance to psychology for the identification of factors that will allow people to achieve permanent increases in their level of happiness.

Another reason to study happiness is for the identification of basic human needs. When the absence of for instance social relations makes people unhappy and the presence makes people happy, such finding can serve as evidence for belongingness as basic need for example. The study of happiness is also for obtaining basic insights in how people make judgments and evaluations by studying the well-being reports (Eid & Larson, 2008, 171).

Recent years have shown the tremendous growth in output, but also the influence of positive psychology. The movement has managed to receive hundreds of millions for research and attracts many delegates in international conferences. Not to mention the in academic interest in positive psychology, as it has become the most popular class at respected universities like Harvard (Kristjansson, 2010, 296)

1.2 Defining and measuring happiness

First of all there is no consensus on the use of the word happiness, even not in scientific debate because it includes also an ideological issue, since the proper use of the word is also connected to an ideological debate about value priorities. On the other hand, when happiness is used as synonym for "the good", it also propagates an ideology (Strack & Argyle &

Schwarz, 1991, 8; Ferraro and Reid, 2013, 126). Instead of describing happiness in extremes and looking for a comprehensive definition, recent approach connects several concepts to happiness (well-being) and divides these in two main categories, subjective and objective conceptions. Subjective concepts of happiness on individual level, subjective well-being (SWB), includes for example self-appraisals, job satisfaction, self-esteem, control belief or an overall life satisfaction.

The fundamental assumption in positive psychology is that the response given to research questions regarding well-being, can be seen as a primarily source of information on a person's subjective experience. In other words this self-report is a direct valuation of the respondents' subjective experience on well-being. The evaluation of the respondent can be a cognitive evaluation, based on the conditions and circumstances of life in positive and satisfying terms in general or in a certain domain of life like marriage or job satisfaction for example (Life Satisfaction). Another possible evaluation is an affective response, which represents the ongoing subjective experience of a person. Affective responses include emotions and mood and are divided in positive affect (PA, positive feelings and moods) en negative affect (NA, negative feelings and moods) (Eid & Larson, 2008, 125, 308). We can conclude that research on happiness is based on two components: (1) positive moods, emotional states and (2) a cognitive evaluation in positive and satisfying terms.

The current situation in which research on subjective well-being finds itself in can be described as 'empirical shortfall'. The complex set of factors makes it only possible to assess subjective well-being with a too narrow focus: either focusing on Life Satisfaction or NA and PA. Another issue is that there is a limited broadly based reliable database of findings. The current data on well-being are based on mix of different measures of varying quality, usually taken from non-representative samples of respondents. Therefore, at this stage is not possible to make generalized conclusions or statements with a high degree of confidence (Eid & Larson, 2008, 133).

1.3 How to understand happiness: Eudaimonic and Hedonic Happiness

There are two main theories that need mentioning since, although there is no common definition, many approaches in understanding well-being go back to philosophical discussions related to hedonia and eudaimonia (Ferraro and Reid, 2013, 126). Within these two theories, emphasis lies either on pursuit and experience of pleasure or on human flourishing and life satisfaction (Ferraro and Reid, 2013, 126). Sociological data shows that both theories are becoming integrated as research proves that individual happiness includes both aspects. For a long time, in explaining individual happiness, economists for example have emphasized the hedonic aspects of a person's life where well-being was understood in terms of economic growth and individual material wealth. Today even in the field of economy, there is more room for the eudaimonic approach under the name of ecological economics. Well-being is understood in terms of sustainability and a flourishing life, where wealth is not considered as a goal but as a tool used in achieving a flourishing life. (Ferraro and Reid, 2013).

Hedonism describes wellbeing (happiness) with pleasure, where happiness is the sum of the balance between pleasant and unpleasant experiences. From this generally agreed point on, there are different theories within the hedonistic theory (Eid & Larson, 2008, 22). Hedonistic happiness is measured through balancing the pleasant and unpleasant experiences, where happiness is the sum of the balance between these. In other words, it is about the subjective feeling regarding the quality of pleasantness in ones life. Hedonism views happiness by focussing on positive feelings only. Happiness is described as high levels of life satisfaction (LS) and positive affect (PA) and lower levels of Negative effect (NA) (Eid & Larson, 2008, 432).

The general description of eudemonism centres on the idea that wellbeing consists of nature-fulfilment. What this nature is and what it means to fulfil this nature is differently explained (Eid & Larson, 2008, 25). Positive psychology defines eudaimonia as happiness that comes from fulfilment, which includes positive feelings, resulting from engagement in meaningful activity and the actualization of one's potential (Eid & Larson, 2008, 432). This could vary from reward-based happiness gained through achieving deadlines at work, winning a golden medal, to spiritual happiness resulting from doing charity or meditative isolation.

1.3.1 Which theory of happiness is applied in positive psychology?

Positive psychology is comfortable in arguing that the distinction between eudaimonia and hedonism is something artificial and unnecessary as research literature in psychology is full of examples of how interwoven these theories are. This understanding is based on a certain perception of Aristotle, where Aristotle is seen as someone who himself saw pleasure as an integral part of eudaimonic living (Eid & Larson, 2008, 433). Therefore, the point of departure of positive psychology is that happiness is the measure when it comes to categorising character traits and virtues as research shows that there is a connection between happiness and certain virtues and traits. Even if positive psychology promotes virtues, which may seem as promoting eudaimonic type of happiness, the fundamental understanding however is that virtues are important to promote because they make happy, however so does the hedonic type of pleasure. Here we see clearly that there is no distinction made, because these theories are considered as interwoven with each other since pleasure can also be an integral part of eudaimonic living (Eid & Larson, 2008, 433).

1.3.2 The ideology behind happiness

What is remarkable is that Aristotle's eudaimonic pleasure is simply translated by positive psychology as hedonic pleasure. In fact Aristotle does make a distinction between pleasures worthy and not worthy of choosing where the selection of pleasures is not made based on pleasure itself, but with reference to the activities they accompany. Accordingly, Aristotle classifies activities in good and bad, worth of choosing, or worth of avoiding where a pleasure's goodness derives from the goodness of its associated activity. The reason why pleasure is not the criterion in Aristotle's case is because pleasure is not synonymous to the good, instead the good is synonymous to virtuous activity and virtuous activity is synonymous to happiness. In Aristotle's view, what a good man judges as pleasant, really is pleasant because the good man is the measure of things (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Aristotle's Ethics, 2013). Subjective well-being on the other hand, describes happiness as pleasure in general (hedonism) and not with the good, secondly the measure in Aristotle's happiness is goodness (in man) and not experience of pleasure itself like it is the case in hedonism. The measure of positive psychology is subjective well-being, which can be the result of either hedonistic pleasures or eudaimonic happiness. Virtues are disconnected from goodness as measure in the first place, and are secondly connected to pleasure (hedonistic and eudaimonic) as measure. The value of a virtue is determined in terms of happiness and placed in the same category as hedonistic pleasures like consumption in general for example. Within positive psychology certain virtues and character traits are simply considered as positive when they correlate with happiness and others are negative when they don't.

The key concept in positive psychology is happiness and this concept is inspired by Aristotle's view on eudaimonia (happiness). Positive psychology does not claim that Aristotle's philosophy on happiness and virtues is the grounding element of this new theory

but considers itself as a guide on the path to Aristotle's good life (Seligman, *Authentic happiness*, 2004, preface). The word inspiration is used which is rather a vague expression since the understanding of happiness and its connection to good and virtues, is almost the opposite of Aristotle's understanding of these. In fact hedonism is described by making use of Aristotle's definitions like human potential, virtue etc that are linked to happiness (eudaimonism) (Kristjansson, 2010, 300). Hedonism as a school of thought, and even ethical hedonism, describes pleasure as the highest good and therefore the strive in life is to maximize net pleasure (pleasure minus pain). In Aristotle's idea of eudemonia, happiness is the by-product of the good and not a goal to be pursued on his own.

1.4 The Promotion of Hedonistic Happiness

Is it problematic when eudaimonism is mixed up with hedonism and hedonism is presented to society on such a large scale, connecting it to definitions like human potential, virtue and good life like positive psychology does? Anti-hedonists are of opinion that happiness leads to senseless, indifferent and irresponsible optimism, leading to easy in obeying behaviour when it comes to ruling economical and political ideologies. Happiness is also linked by anti-hedonists to individualism and egotism, in a negative sense as a weakness in the chain of moral consciousness and social bonds. Another objection is that technology and science that promises public happiness will eventually bring us to the "Brave New World", referring to the title of a science fiction novel from 1932, written by the British author Aldous Huxley. The future world of mankind will resemble what is inside this science fiction novel where mankind is completely ruled by technology and rationalism, where people are individually healthy and happy. There is nothing for the individual to complain about related to society, an illusively perfect and desirable society. What at first sight seems like a positive thing (happiness) to pursue for the masses leads to a society of dystopia. In this novel, people are classified with the help of science based on identity (personality and behaviour) from the very beginning in order to optimally fit in one of the prescribed categories. The society is based on consumerism, immediate fulfilment of needs and mass production. People are supposed to be continuously in contact with others (social technology) and being alone is not the custom and so on. Mankind is made blind in the name of happiness for identity is like a tailored suit, measured by science to perfectly fit.

On the other hand, modern humanist psychologists believe in the positive effects of happiness, as research shows that happiness leads to active involvement, creativity and better personal relations. Current stress theory for instance proves that positive attitudes such as happiness function as a buffer that softens the impact of negative life events. Similarly, psychosomatic theory confirms that chronic dissatisfaction increases vulnerability to disease and premature death! (Strack & Argyle & Schwarz, 1991, 23). However does this all justify that we should take happiness as "the" guiding element in life on a massive scale?

2. Virtues, Character Strengths and Meaningful life

2.1 The “goodness” in human nature

Science of psychology entering the field of religious moral concepts is not something that started by positive psychology through the concept of “good”. Scott Peck (1983), although not grounded on major empirical research, introduced the question of “evil”, from the field of clinical psychology previous to the concept of “good”. He made a critical examination of how wise this would be and to what degree. According to Peck, stating views about good and evil is making moral judgments. Even if it is a scientifically based judgment it still remains in the moral sphere. Peck marks this as dangerous, since science needs to stay value free especially because scientific findings serve for the purpose of public industry and government. Making no moral judgments on the other hand is also dangerous, delivering work without questioning the right and wrong aspect of it can lead to serious evil according to Peck. Like the atomic bomb for instance, is made by scientist because politicians decided its creation and gave orders to the military apparatus on how to use it. Moral questions are too important to leave to others, even to historically rooted institutions we trust and every individual should decide for him or her self (Peck, 1983, 258-259). Peck is of opinion that we need to determine what is good or evil, right or wrong otherwise we will be captured in the direction of ruling politics and economic ideology that determines what is right and wrong for us. Relying fully on science is also no option in his view. It would also be illusive to propagate that science is independent from money and ideology; after all it is the state and corporations that fund the research of the majority of scientists (Peck, 1983, 262-263).

Where does positive psychology stand in the issue of human good? Positive psychology presents itself as relying on empirical research when it comes to understanding people and their lives and this is also put forward as distinguishing factor from humanistic psychology and the positive thinking movement. There is the belief that, in contrary to humanists, the human good in terms of strength and weakness can be altered to scientific understanding (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 5). There is acknowledgement of the socio-cultural variation in how people conceive of goodness but the point of departure is that there is less variation at the level of character strengths and not at all at the level of virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 14). Positive psychology does not desire to describe the ultimate good or ultimate virtue or ultimate character but points on the efficient use in terms of reaching desired ends. So if our desire is to become happy we need to achieve this end efficiently by focusing on character and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 14).

2.2 Virtues based on cross-cultural agreement

The Character Strengths and Virtues of Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson (2004), which is used as leading literature by the American Psychological Association, serves as a 'positive' counterpart to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The handbook focuses on the strengths of character that makes the good life possible. The domain of concern is not psychological illness (disorder) as described in the handbook, but psychological health translated as happiness and fulfilment (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 3-4). The classification of six core moral virtues as well as 24 subordinates empirically measurable character strengths, through which the virtues manifest, are illustrated in appendix A.

Positive psychology departs from the idea that it is possible to prioritize values with the help of empirical science, now better able in predicting which mix of values promise the most

results in terms of well being. However bringing this ideological program on the basis of empirically verified information to a next level still remains in its infancy stage (Strack & Argyle & Schwarz, 1991, 23). As mentioned before, there is acknowledgement of the socio-cultural variation in how people conceive of goodness, but the point of departure is that there is less variation at the level of character strengths and not at all at the level of virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 14).

“... convergence across thousands of years and among unrelated philosophical traditions is remarkable and Positive Psychology takes this cross-cultural agreement as its guide.” (Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, 2002, 11) Seligman has selected the core virtues based on cross-cultural agreement from religious and philosophical theories, which are not grounded on empiricism in the first place. However positive psychology believes this information can be translated into empirical data.

“...there is astonishing convergence across the millennia and across cultures about virtue and strength. Confucius, Aristotle, Aquinas, the Bushido samurai code, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and other venerable traditions disagree on the details, but all of these codes include six core virtues...” (Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, 2002, 11)

Although there is disagreement on the details, Seligman chooses to make use of the generally agreed core virtues. What is included in the disagreed part, that is referred as detail, are the meaning these virtues have within each tradition as every virtue gets its meaning an priority within that tradition in relationship to other virtues and the general philosophy within that tradition. The mentioned virtues are as terminology disconnected to an ontological, historical and cultural collective context and placed within the understanding of empirical science. From this perspective it is impossible to speak of a general agreement regarding the content of these virtues because meaning changes according to the general historical and cultural philosophy. What is striking is how things are placed out of their historical and cultural meaning context and placed within a western philosophical understanding of individual self-expression and social conformism. What we see here is science claiming certain authority on traditional (religious) wisdoms by giving meaning to these virtues under the name of empirical science.

2.3 “Positive” Character Means Happy Individual – Optimist versus Pessimist

Seligman describes character strengths as the fundament of being human and as an important route to the psychological good life (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 3-4). Positive psychology is based on the understanding that situational factors have a weak influence on subjective well-being and personality traits on the other hand have a relatively strong influence. Research has also shown that when it comes to character, only 30% is a stable factor measured over a long period of time. This means that happiness is something that fluctuates in the long run based on life-events. The point of departure of positive psychology is that a person’s subjective well-being depends more on his or her personality than the conditions of ones life. Therefore one of the fundamental research objectives is to identify specific personality traits that are associated with well-being. That personality matters for happiness is an accepted fact within positive psychology, however the question why for example extraverts are happier than neurotic people is still unanswered. The future expectation of research is to understand these factors that influence and lead to lasting changes in subjective well-being (Eid & Larson, 2008, 184-189)

Character traits are marked as positive or negative, based on their correlation with happiness, isolated from other personality traits, values, beliefs, attitudes and life experiences of a “whole person”. The individual’s behavior and understanding, resulting from interaction between personal, historical and social circumstances are left out and the meaning and value

of a trait is determined outside the person (Miller, 2008, 603). What does it then mean when research shows that people who have certain personality traits are happier than others, when a comprehensive approach is missing because of the complexity of the phenomenon human? It is not possible to freeze other variables and impossible to map the way they interact within the whole person, as each person is unique. What we have here is the creation of a certain type of human being, grounded on empirical science, which can grow as a model for happy humanity.

One of the strengths of character that Seligman (2004) mentions is transcendence connected to hope, which includes optimism, future-mindedness and future orientation. When personality traits are valued isolated from other personality traits, values, beliefs, attitudes and life experiences of a “whole person”, it becomes easier to create a perception about a certain trait. This analysis, by taking pessimism as example, is illustrated in appendix B. By making generalized conclusions, positive psychology creates a perception of pessimism for being negative and optimism for being positive in terms of happiness and health. Determining what is good or positive for each unique individual is a complex and multidimensional process. There is a social risk of presenting a proto type of human being, grounded on empirical science that will grow as a model for happy humanity. This risk is hidden the approach of positive psychology, which is based on isolation of traits by marking them as positive or negative, where the meaning of a trait is not determined by the totality and interaction within a whole person. In contrary the meaning and value of a trait is determined outside the person where happiness forms the norm.

The defensive pessimist does not lack of confidence or self-belief. Defensive pessimism is a cognitive strategy used by persons who struggle with anxiety as a way of managing anxiety by having low expectation of the own future performance. The mind constructs a projection of the future of the things that can go wrong in order to anticipate on these and in that way avoiding any harm to the performance. Where in contrary positive psychology, is about choosing a positive perception in approaching reality, by focusing on the positive side of each negative event and remaining hopeful (Eid & Larson, 2008, 454). By turning defensive pessimists into optimists, the anxiety that is felt which contributes to unhappiness is eliminated. In reality what happens is that distress is avoided by changing the own perception on reality by ignoring this inner reality.

The approach of Seligman in my opinion seems to be strongly influenced by evolutionary psychology, as what is emphasized here in terms of happiness and positive character is not the internal reality of what we feel (anxiety) and being true to who we are (defensive pessimist), or being healthy or not, but what the other perceives of you (annoying pessimist). Why the necessity to transform the inner reality of the healthy defensive pessimist? Why is it necessary to become a hope giving optimist towards the outside world, communicating happiness, hope and success?

Jonathan Haidt, who wrote *The Happiness Hypothesis, Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (2006), explains that we are driven to cultivate a reputation despite the reality of who we are. The human mind according to evolutionary psychology, is shaped by the evolutionary process, so in order to win in the game of life, you must present your best possible self to others (Haidt , 2006, 66). Having positive self esteem makes us feel good about ourselves and our future and these people are happier and healthier compared to people who lack such positive illusions about the self (Haidt , 2006, 68). He explains that natural selection works by the survival of the fittest and that several research has shown that people are evolved to play the game of life in a Machiavellian way (tit for tat) (Haidt , 2006, 61).

2.4 Meaningful life (good life) and meaninglessness – Happiness and Anxiety

Why do we need meaning in our life? Arnold Modell, a clinical professor of social psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School explains the importance of meaning in life and the connection with feelings, values and self-experience in his book *Imagination and the Meaningful Brain* (2003).

“The absence of meaning in life is excruciatingly painful: it is as if one were psychically dead; to find life meaningful is to be attached to life. When clinicians encounter patients who suffer from the conviction that their lives are empty, futile, and meaningless, they recognize this as a symptom of an illness. When feelings have become disassociated from the self, the self in turn is felt to be empty and dead, as if there were nothing there. There is an evident intimate connection between feelings, values, and the experience of self. Feelings assign value to what is meaningful.” (Modell, 2003, 151)

What is the relationship between meaning and happiness? Human beings require meaning, goals, values or ideals in order to avoid distress (unhappiness) and attach to life (Yalom, 1980, 422). This distress is a form of anxiety that Rollo May defines as the threat to our existence or to values we identify with our existence (May, 1950, 205). Meaninglessness is the most primary threat to a conscious mind, the experience of such threat, even though it produces anxiety (negative affect), is also a positive sign of self-consciousness. Human beings have self-conscious awareness of their being and when their being is threatened they face anxiety (May, 1950, 12).

Having a “psychological good life” means having happiness and fulfillment in life (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 3-4). In chapter thirteen of *Authentic Happiness* (2004) written by Seligman, we read that the good life is described as a life where happiness is derived by using signature strengths and meaning is created by using these strengths in forwarding knowledge, power or goodness. Such a life is described as meaningful and even declared sacred when it includes “a God”.

“The good life consists in deriving happiness by using your signature strengths every day in the main realms of living. The meaningful life adds one more component: using these same strengths to forward knowledge, power, or goodness. A life that does this is pregnant with meaning, and if God comes at the end, such a life is sacred.” (Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, 2002, 260).

Positive psychology considers itself as a guide on the path to Aristotle’s good life (Seligman, *Authentic happiness*, 2004, preface). Seligman shares five pathways to the good life, in his most recent book, *Flourishing*, which is called PERMA, which stands for Positive Affect, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishments. Meaning is the result of using signature strengths to forward certain virtues like knowledge, power, or goodness. By using our signature strengths we produce positive emotions resulting in happiness.

“‘What is the good life?’ In my view, you can find it by following a startlingly simple path. The ‘pleasant life’ might be had by drinking champagne and driving a Porsche, but not the good life. Rather, the good life is using your signature strengths every day to produce authentic happiness and abundant gratification.” (Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, 2002, 13)

Positive psychology is about choosing a positive perception in approaching reality, by focusing on the positive side of each negative event and remaining hopeful, then ordinary events become something to be grateful (gift) for (Eid & Larson, 2008, 454).

From the perspective of humanistic psychology in contrary, it seems impossible to speak of a meaningful life only by focusing on happiness without speaking of anxiety.

“If one penetrates below the surface of political, economic, business, professional, or domestic crises to discover their psychological causes, or if one seeks to understand modern art or poetry or philosophy or religion, one runs athwart the problem of anxiety at almost every turn. There is reason to believe that the ordinary stresses and strains of life in the

changing world of today are such that few if any escape the need to confront anxiety and to deal with it in some manner.” (May, 1950, preface).

Rollo May explains that a negative method of solving the issue of anxiety is to avoid it or to ally with it without solving the conflict, which causes the anxiety (May, 1950, 224). Above all, humanistic psychology describes anxiety as a key emotion related to the paradox of human nature where we speak of specie with free will and finiteness at the same time, which is also conscious of this paradox. Therefore there is always an element of anxiety available in every act of man, whether this is destructive (negative) or creative (positive). Motivation directed by anxiety is almost a rule than exception (May, 1950, 13).

On the other hand anxiety, as a negative affect, needs to be prevented before it even occurs from the perception of positive psychology. This can be done through cognitive-behavioral prevention programs. In our search for a meaningful life, positive psychology sets the target on becoming happy in an authentic way and firmly seats this on character. The cause and solution of distress (anxiety) is approached connected to personality traits (pessimism and optimism), meaning that cause and solution are to be found in the nature of man (Seligman, Schulman, De Rubeis, Hollon, December, 21, 1999). Meaninglessness causes distress that leads to the negative emotion of anxiety (Eid & Larson, 2008, 68). Positive psychology prevents feelings of anxiety (goal) by focusing on (positive) character traits (instrument) that produce positive emotions (solution). Seligman explains that when we use our signature strengths (like optimism for instance) more often at work and envision our job in relationship to the greater good, we will switch perception and the activity we do (our job) will become a calling instead of meaningless work.

“If you can find a way to use your signature strengths at work often, and also see your work as contributing to the greater good, you have a calling.” (Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, 2002, 173).

2.5 Subjective Well-Being versus The Inner-Meaning of Happiness

Happiness as a bodily experience as part of neurosciences, can be explained in terms of neurochemicals like dopamine, serotonin etc. Dopamine is one of the basic mechanisms that underlie human happiness as the release of this neurotransmitter makes us experience happiness. Dopamine is used as primary neurotransmitter in three subsystems of the brain; the Nigrostriatal, mesolimbic and mesocortical subsystem. The Nigrostriatal system is mainly active in body movements and mesolimbic system is mainly active in emotion cognition and memory. The mesocortical system has an important role in planning and goal oriented behavior (Wetenschap info, 2009). In this part of the brain, dopamine, also called “the reward molecule”, becomes important in experiencing happiness in every type of reward driven behavior. For instance when a goal is set and this goal is achieved we become happy (Psychology today, 2012). Psychology views the experience of happiness not only as activation of chemicals in the brain. The interesting question for positive psychology is what triggers the brain to produce these chemicals? In other words, what are the factors that make us happy and how can we experience high levels of subjective well-being? (Eid & Larson, 2008, 220).

Subjective happiness that is measured is the product of a subjective reality. The experience of happiness is not only to be explained by neurochemicals but is also connected to the definition of happiness and the inner-meaning of the word, in other words the perception of the individual. Human perception of reality is not something that can be comprehended in general terms, simply because the inner-world of each individual is different in a unique way. Neurological data from the Human Connectome Project reveals the nature of human uniqueness. The human brain, that translates external information into a subjective

reality, is constructed with neural connections. The neural brain connection map shows that these connections are authentic as our fingerprints. The internal factors make a translation of information through a unique structure, resulting in a subjective reality. This authentic system in connection to genetics, environmental influences and life experience within the “whole person”, determines how we experience happiness, life and even how our pessimism or optimism works out in behavior (Science Magazine, 2013). When the whole person is taken into account, personality traits become meaningful in relationship to other traits as the way they interact with each other determines the unique value of a trait.

Human mind creates meaning not only in interaction with the environment, but also within the unconscious mind, in an internal environment, that is almost like a second universe (Modell, 2003, 21). The superficial meaning (rational) we give to happiness comes from the neo cortex (cortical – neo-cortex), however the inner meaning of happiness is the result of the unconscious mind (sub-cortical – limbic and reptilian brain). Real emotions are located in limbic area of the brain. Even when we express a fake smile for instance, the cortical area is activated instead of the sub-cortical area of the brain. There is no such thing as pure reason uncontaminated by emotion, as we have no absolute control of the mind and its thoughts (Modell, 2003, 6). Motivation and meaning are the products of the unconscious mind (sub-cortical), of which we are only partially aware and which we cannot directly control (Modell, 2003, 5). In terms of subjective well-being this second universe is one that remains undiscovered by positive psychology since the meaning of happiness within the inner narrative of the patient has become less relevant, resulting in an understanding of human nature and subjective well-being in narrow terms (Modell, 2003, 5).

In the approach of understanding happiness, positive psychology chooses the empirical scientific method. Objectivity is translated through a subjective happiness (Subjective Well-Being) that is measurable, as what cannot be quantified or measured is neither scientific nor objective (Modell, 2003, 5-7). Positive psychology is, from an empirical point of view, not interested in understanding of happiness in terms of inner-meaning, but is mainly interested in measuring the level of happiness and in the factors that make this level increase.

Previously in this thesis it is mentioned that, the main aim is to increase the knowledge about the things that make life worth living and this is done through massive research on human strengths and virtues where the human good (human nature) is strongly related to character. Yet, why is there so much emphasis on character? Seligman is convinced that society is facing a character crisis, referring to a 1999 survey by Public Agenda done in the United States. Again based on this survey, Seligman marks the society we live in today as one that will benefit from a science that identifies good character and creates institutions that teaches good character, as public need confirms the absence of character as the main problem for violence and drugs for instance (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 5).

3. The Virtue of Justice: Social Responsibility, Loyalty and Teamwork framed in Citizenship and sealed by Democracy

3.1 Social Reality and Happiness

3.1.1 Introduction

The scientific object of research, subjective well being, is the product of subjective evaluation of life. The objectivists considered human nature and the brain as separate entities having no role in the establishment of meaning. Until recently this was the case, however today it is acknowledged in cognitive sciences that meaning is something interactive, not only depending on the mind, but also influenced by what is in our environment (Modell, 2003, 4). Subjective well-being as the object of scientific research is a perception formed by the inner reality that is not only connected to emotions and feelings but also to cognitive truth influenced by our external environment. The meaning we give to happiness is both conventional and private. The meaning of the word happiness is also constructed connected to social reality, based on ruling ideologies within society (Carrette & King, 2005, 30-31). Therefore, the meaning of happiness should also be approached with alertness for ideological components, set by the own cultural and historical developments.

Analyzing the underlying value system of positive psychology related to the subject of happiness requires glimpsing into developments that have influenced the ideal of happiness in Western social context. On the other hand developments within the field of psychology, although focusing on individual human behavior, also do not stand outside these social phenomena. Meaning that political and economic ideologies have gradually set the direction of an understanding of happiness in psychology and by the individual who is the object of research.

Sociological research shows that well-being is a highly demanded virtue of quality in today's society and that the meaning of well-being as well as our conception of subjectivity has changed over the few decades. In today's western society, well-being on a national level is understood in terms of wealth and health, translated as a strong, successful economy and solid national security. On individual level, happiness is highly in demand and even regarded as a state of virtue (Sointu, 2005, 255, 261). In terms of subjectivity, we see the rise of a proactive agency that is self-responsible for the creation of the own personal health and well-being. Personal well-being is something we achieve through self-reflection in the authentic internal potential (Sointu, 2005, 262). The notion of well-being has become popular in different fields of life, in private life, workplace, commerce, and is communicated through newspapers from 1985 till 2003 by connecting it with ideals of flexibility, authenticity, creativity, and productivity. Within this wide array of definitions, the meaning of wellbeing however is understood within two the key ideals: self-actualization and self-responsibility (Sointu, 2005, 264).

With the rise of science, tradition was more or less overthrown and psychology became the authority of knowledge related to developing models of being human (Carrette & King, 58-59). Today we see that tradition is used as inspiration on a scientific platform. Research, which draws on both psychology, and Buddhist thought in order to understand individual happiness is no longer unusual for instance (Tomer, 2011, 530). Positive psychology reframes well-being in a 'holistic' concept of positive functioning, that includes a spiritual and social dimension grounded on evolutionary science (Ferraro & Reid, 2013, 126). Yet the liberal western society is an example of a society that is based on the ideology of individualism rather than holism, where the focus lies on the individual, who's struggles for liberation is

positioned as highly valuable. Therefore priority lies in the interest of the individual rather than the state or social group.

The virtues collected by positive psychology are grounded on different religious wisdoms but what is the fundamental philosophy here behind this knowledge? Positive psychology operates within this ideology of individualism, grounding happiness on a subjectivity that is built on historically developed ideals of freedom and autonomy (appendix C), where happiness is considered as the product of self-actualization and self-responsibility. Well-being is considered as a quality that is bound to the individual (signature strengths). Today in the Western secular world, identity is developed through self-reflexivity and the search for authenticity from within. The self, who is characterised by autonomy and freedom, is a hybrid production that is governed through the norm of self-responsibility (Sointu, 2005, 262). The virtues described in Seligman's Handbook get their meaning within a liberal, utilitarian philosophy grounded in evolutionary science and psychology (Miller, 2008, 592). Virtues (moral) behavior and personal fulfillment gains meaning within an understanding of ethics that holds happiness as the fundamental axiom. Happiness as the measure of right and wrong is approached in a quantitative and reductionist manner, looking for ways to maximize utility and reducing suffering (hedonism).

3.1.2 Happiness Understood as Fulfillment of Evolved Desires and Fitness (Evolution)

Positive psychology views emotions in terms of evolution, meaning that their functionality lies in survival and reproduction of the fittest (highly capable of social competition through emotional adaptation). Emotions are features designed by the evolutionary process for survival and reproduction for our ancestors. The problem in terms of subjective well-being is that many of these features that have led to successful survival and reproduction do not make us feel happy or satisfied with our life. In contrary they make us feel subjective distress. These negative emotions like jealousy, envy or anger for instance, signal the problem of strategic interference. The emotion of envy for instance, can be a negative experience in terms of well-being, however subjective distress occurs when for example the desired object or idea is gained or worked out by someone else. So, although these negative emotions leave an unpleasant experience, it works as a warning mechanism that sets our consciousness in action to solve any type of adaptive problem that needs solving in order to survive in the largest sense of the word (Eid & Larson, 2008, 63-65).

The evolutionary perspective in positive psychology leads to the understanding that happiness serves as a psychological reward that signals that an adaptive problem is solved successfully or is in the progress of being solved. Events and situations that have the biggest positive impact on subjective well-being are the longstanding adaptive problems humans have been solving over evolutionary time. The general idea is summarized in the following quote:

“Promoting happiness and subjective well-being is thus often merely a matter of exploiting knowledge of evolved desires and attempting to fulfill them. Studies of private wishes and goals reveal that the motivations behind them are often intimately correlated with fitness” (Eid & Larson, 2008, 70). These evolved desires are described as for instance physical attractiveness, professional success, personal access to financial resources, intimacy in personal relationships, helping friends and relatives; securing personal safety, health, power and high quality foods. From evolutionary perspective in proving these needs, competition triggered by negative emotions like envy, needed for survival (drive), leads to creating and maintaining the best (fitness) in man (Eid & Larson, 2008, 70)

Happy people are more sociable and earn well (Eid & Larson, 2008, 507), are more successful in work and love, are healthier and do concern more about others (Eid & Larson, 2008, 290-298). Positive psychology is about creating individuals who are, successful, meaning that they are highly capable of providing in their needs in terms of these evolved desires since working

towards the fulfillment of these desires is what makes us happy. The more competitive driven we are, the more we are able to fulfill these desires, the happier we become. The individual, goal oriented, competition driven nature of man is overemphasized in terms of motivation. Early humanistic psychology on the other hand, emphasizes the influence of socio-historical developments in terms of their negative effect, in terms of distress, on human nature. In western culture, crucial weight is put on individual competitive ambition where the need is created to be independent and appearing strong in the competitive struggle where dependent needs are repressed (May, Meaning of Anxiety, 1950, 152). "...there is reason for assuming that individual competitive success is both the dominant goal in our culture and the most pervasive occasion for anxiety." (May, Meaning of Anxiety, 1950, 153) Our anxieties are linked to cultural trends that partly form our values, of what is important to us as individuals, as Erich Fromm explains "Man's nature, his passions, and anxieties are a cultural product; as a matter of fact, man himself is the most important creation and achievement of the continuous human effort, the record of which we call history." (Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom, 1941, 13)

3.1.3 Wealth and Happiness at work

The subject of happiness emerged in the context of working live in society in the late 1990's where well-being in the workplace connected with trends in political economy. The value of labor is viewed in terms of self-monitoring, creative and self-reflective labor (self-responsibility). The development started with idealizing the workplace as a stage of opportunity for creativity and flexibility (self-actualization). A good worker is presented as the opposite of a robot, one who is active on the work floor as an authentic being (Sointu, 2005, 265). The search for happiness in general becomes connected to giving meaning to selfhood that is flexible and mainly reflective within the self (authentic internal potential). The trend rises among employers, who adapt wellbeing as an overarching quality of interconnectedness and interdependence, and happiness becomes connected to productivity of employees. Disruptive effects of computers, feelings of being locked up, the long working hours and work/life balance problems, are solved by providing therapeutic offices and coaching programs. The problem of well-being is shifted to the individual who is made responsible for his or her own well-being, leading to the understanding that when work becomes a source of disruption for well-being (work/life balance problems), it is the employee who is held accountable for unreasonable personal expectations instead of the excessive work overload (Sointu, 2005, 265-267).

Positive psychology, in line with these social developments, concludes that most people nowadays identify themselves with their job. Therefore job satisfaction becomes an important component of subjective well-being (Eid & Larson, 2008, 393). Job satisfaction is found to be strongly and consistently related to subjective well-being as the majority (68%) of the workers (US employees) belong to the group of people who spill their work experience onto their private life and the other way around, concluding that job satisfaction affects life satisfaction and visa versa (Eid & Larson, 2008, 403-404). Individuals with a positive self-evaluation have more challenging jobs and reported high levels of job satisfaction (Eid & Larson, 2008, 403). Happiness at work is a matter of using signature strengths and a shift in perception that makes it able for us to see the contribution of our job to the greater good (Seligman, Authentic Happiness, 2002, 173).

Positive psychology confirms the phenomena of identification with work and considers happiness at work as an important component of subjective well-being. Without making judgments regarding the compatibility of phenomena with human nature, positive psychology anticipates on social developments in the creation of solutions regarding happiness. Humanist psychologist Rollo May on the other hand, marks the process of identifying ourselves with

our job, as the result of economic egotism. Rollo May points in his book (1950, 166) “The Meaning of Anxiety” on the psychological influences of modern industrialism and capitalism. May explains that modern "industrialism is the reason behind individualism gone wrong to a level where social values and subordination to any common center of allegiance are crushed under the value of an overstated free individual, who emphasizes individual rights and the superiority of individual reason. In the beginning, the believe behind this economic (political philosophy of neo-liberalism) idea was namely that self interest would lead to economic harmony in society, however it resulted from psychological point of view in egotism, leading to social isolation and hostility in economic competition (May, 1950, 166). The competitive individual was convinced that his or her strive for aggrandizement would benefit society in the same way. The highest value within the industrial system being wealth meant psychologically that wealth was accepted as the criterion for prestige and success for both social esteem and self-esteem. The large class of salaries emerged parallel to the industrial revolution and capitalism. Still most people on this planet create income through labor in the form of salary from a job. Psychologically this meant that both social esteem and self-esteem did not come from the creative activity itself but from the acquisition of wealth (May, 1950, 167). The power of the individual is expressed in terms of wealth, not only for the purpose of material comfort, but also mainly as a sign of achievement and as a value criterion for self worth (May, 1950, 168). Positive psychology confirms that contemporary social landscape of modern capitalism has changed our perception of wealth however, the aspiration of wealth is also marked as an appropriate and desirable goal (Eid & Larson, 2008, 307). Although not the most important factor in the attainment of happiness, income and life satisfaction do show significant positive correlation (Eid & Larson, 2008, 308).

Presenting wealth as an appropriate goal in current capitalist society for the individual is something that actually causes collective distress in terms of sustainability and consolidated ownership. When promoting happiness through wealth in a liberal democratic and capitalist society, realistic would be to acknowledge the obstacles the current system we live in forms to the promised collective happiness in terms of justice.

“Capitalism clearly allows better for the emergence of individual happiness, yet when we look more carefully, we can observe that neither of the extremes is optimal. The fostering of happiness is not limited to mere self-expression and seeking short-term happiness for oneself alone, but rather involves a long-term perspective of meaningful fulfillment for the collective. As extensive research has shown, true happiness is a function of integral belonging to a larger whole (Seligman 2002). Hence happiness relates to sustainability and equity, exactly those aims that are put at jeopardy by the current form of global capitalism.” (L. Zsolnai, 2011, 149)

The Western economic political system is based on the ideology of individualism, freedom and social Darwinian theory of “survival of the fittest”. Herbert Spencer, a prominent classical liberal political theorist of the Victorian era and a social Darwinist, introduced the term “the survival of the fittest”, which became the founding philosophy of liberal economy who believed in the idea that we all would benefit on a national scale from the survival of the strongest (Philosophy now, 2003). Moral justification for the created wealth gap is done based on this theory of “survival of the fittest”. The founding father of this idea is Milton Friedman, who is praised by George Bush as a hero of freedom for his moral vision (Ebenstein, 2007, 236). When it comes to freedom versus equality in society, Milton Friedman’s system is based on the believe that freedom should be put before equality as freedom will get us indirectly equality but this does not work the other way around. In the last case there will be no freedom and also no equality in society (Cole, 2008, 239).

3.2 The Strive for the Common Good Within a Democratic Citizenship

3.2.1 Good citizenship and Happiness

Happiness is presented by positive psychology as the ultimate need of humanity that is good for several things like; health and efficiency on the work floor, but also citizenship, as happy people make good citizens. The Positive Psychology Center (PPC) at the University of Pennsylvania, where Martin Seligman works as head scholar, states one of their three head concerns and research areas as understanding positive institutions and connect that to the strengths that foster better communities, such as justice, responsibility, civility, parenting, nurturance, work ethic, leadership, teamwork, purpose, and tolerance. Positive psychology provides scientific support related to, for instance democracy, for being good on human health, by measuring the increasing effect on happiness. Good citizenship is promoted under the virtue of justice that leads to happiness because the ideology of citizenship is to bind citizens in the pursuit of a common good (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 369-389). Seligman explains that this ideology can be traced back to the Roman and Greek republics, where a virtuous person is described by Aristotle as a citizen who acts on behalf of ruling authority. Seligman explains how this ideology has led to our current understanding of citizenship and has developed in time to a concept that is grounded on notions of autonomy, alliance and international agreements. According to Seligman, the concept of citizenship has developed into a contract of responsibility for the public welfare where all individuals strive to shape the principles in order to realize happiness in public or civic activity. Seligman acknowledges that with the rise of industrialization and the market economy, private life and self-interest overshadowed public life as a source of happiness and that the responsibility of citizenship took the form of a personal rights concept. However, he is convinced that the protection of rights and the common liberty, assured by a democratic framework, allows the members of a polity to rule themselves through active civic participation.

If we are to summarize Seligman, democratic citizenship and virtues behavior are bound together by the pursuit of a common good. Good citizenship is described as the pursuit of common good where the group despite their differences, forms cohesion in the pursuit of this common good (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, 372). In analyzing Seligman's conclusion the following question rises; although the happiness data clearly show that the happiest places on earth are democracies, should happiness be used as the starting standard of morality where a good citizen equals a virtuous personality (The Economist, 2011)? What is meant by this question is that, even though the happiest places on earth are democracies, the majority being happy about apartheid for example does not mean that apartheid is moral (just). In other words, is it justified to connect democracy with happiness and with that, moral behavior with good citizenship based on common good? The common good is probably something political, something common for the majority but not necessarily good.

3.2.2 The Common Good in a Liberal Democracy and Society

Democracy has grown in the world into a form called liberal democracy. Most democratic countries in the world are ruled under this form. Contemporary democracy is less connected to the Greek ideology as Seligman presents by the common good and more connected to industrialism and capitalism. Liberal democracies are so under the influence of lobby groups that we cannot speak of a motivation coming from a sense of a common good. There is no change possible with active civic participation as Seligman puts it, when the system is based on a liberal democracy instead of a participatory democracy that relies more on economic political course and less on involvement of everyone. (Red Pepper Magazine, 2009)

Democracy in the west, nurtured by capitalism into a liberal democracy, starting in early Greece as a system that allowed active public intervention (active citizenship), has transformed the public into passive consumers. The connection between liberal society and capitalism is explained by Ludwig von Mises, a philosopher, economist and sociologist, in his book *Liberalism in the Classical Tradition*.

“A society in which liberal principles are put into effect is usually called a capitalist society, and the condition of that society, capitalism. Since the economic policy of liberalism has everywhere been only more or less closely approximated in practice, conditions as they are in the world today provide us with but an imperfect idea of the meaning and possible accomplishments of capitalism in full flower. Nevertheless, one is altogether justified in calling our age the age of capitalism, because all that has created the wealth of our time can be traced back to capitalist institutions. It is thanks to those liberal ideas that still remain alive in our society, to what yet survives in it of the capitalist system, that the great mass of our contemporaries can enjoy a standard of living far above that which just a few generations ago was possible only to the rich and especially privileged.” (1985,10)

Within western societies, the philosophy of liberalism is not only applied on democracy, but also on economy, shaping society to its current form of a consumer society. The consumer society is defined as a society in which the buying and selling of goods and services is the most important social and economic activity (Oxford Dictionary, 2014). The most solid common strive served to increase in a liberal democracy is consumerism rather than the moral good.

Using happiness as a single overarching standard of morality where current form of democratic citizenship is presented for the pursuit of common good, is ignoring how interwoven democracy en liberalism are and with that how disconnected the good is with the current form of democratic citizenship. Happiness isn't the only thing we care about and it's not the only worth full weight to apply on our considerations. Promoting the current form of democracy as positive institution, based on its increasing effect on happiness, should not be the task of psychology. After all, the meaning that “positive” institutions or systems add to our life is a changing concept, but above all ideological concepts.

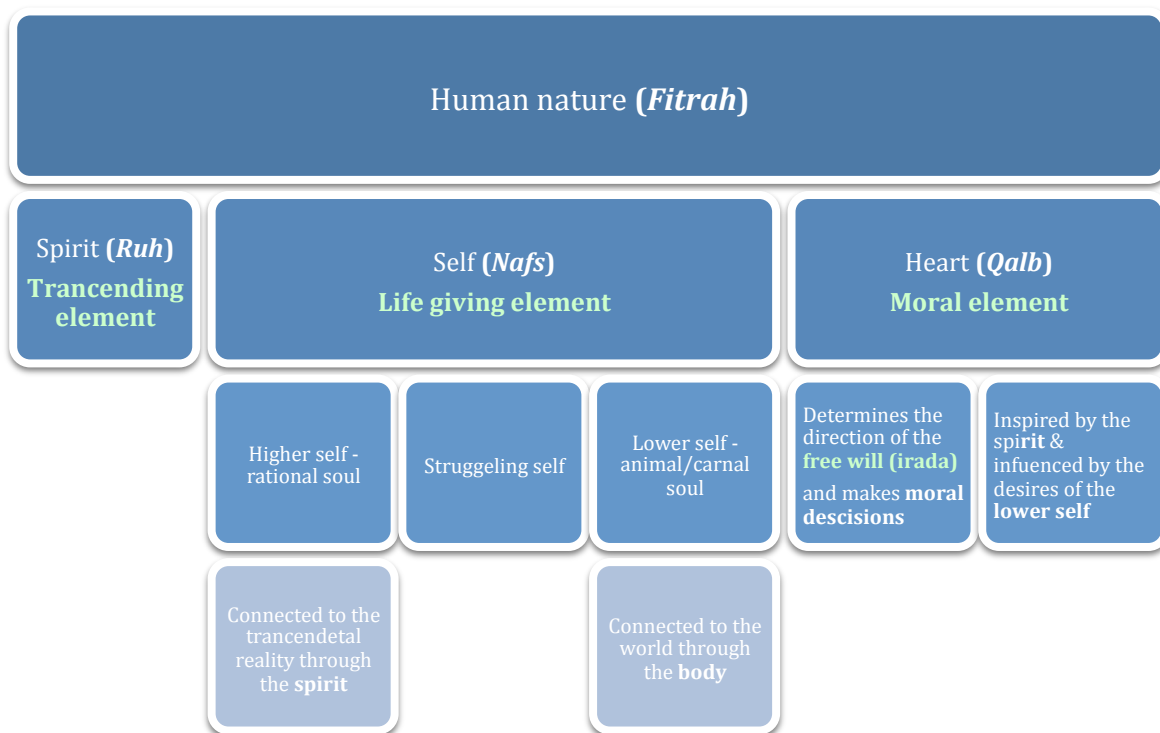
Part II: Islam

1. Human Nature and Happiness

1.1 Introduction

When referring to the inner human reality and human nature (*fitrah*), the Quran makes use of the words self or soul (*nafs*), heart (*qalb*), spirit (*ruh*), intellect (*aql*) and will (*irada*). The word *aql* (the intellect) is used in the Quran also in reference to the self (*nafs*), heart (*qalb*) and spirit (*ruh*) (Murata, 1992, 229). Human perception of reality, in terms of self-knowledge but also knowledge in general, is namely not a restricted field only approachable by the intellect in the classic sense. Reality consists namely of different dimensions, other than the physical reality there is the inner reality of man (*qalb*); the abstract transcendental reality (*ruh*) and the reality that proceeds according human free will directed by the self (Duzgun, 2011, 221).

These definitions will be explained in the following paragraphs and the interrelations are illustrated in the figure below.



1.2 The Spirit (Ruh): The Entrusted Good

The Quran explicitly mentions that, there is very less revealed regarding knowledge about the *ruh* (17:85). Mehmet Okuyan (Professor at Ondokuz Mayis Universitesi, specialized in *tafsir*) explains in a television interview (Hilal TV, 21 November 2012) that the Quran speaks of creation of man in stages where two different words are used when referring to man, namely “Adam”, meaning “mankind” or “man”, and “mortal”. A living being that is by “form” human, is called mortal. On the other hand, a living being that is by “morality” (character) human, is referred as Adam or mankind. With the spirit blown into this new living mortal creation, made from water and mire (24:45, 25:54, 38:71), man gets the privilege of receiving reason (sight, hearing), free will and a heart (moral decisions).

The distinguishing element between Adam as a living being and a mortal as a living being, is the *ruh* (spirit). What we understand here is that the *ruh* is not the life-giving element, as in the stage previous to receiving the spirit there is already life as Okuyan mentions.

The *ruh* (spirit) transcends mankind, giving him his human nature (32:7-9, 7:179, 22:46).

Okuyan explains in the same interview, that only after the *ruh* (spirit) blown in to man, the angels are obliged to show their respect (bow down) before Adam (38:72, 15:29), as it is the *ruh* (spirit) the angles uphold and bow down to.

The *ruh* is the element that makes it possible to connect with the Divine realm, and find the right way. Sachiko Murata (Professor of Religion and Asian Studies at State University of New York) summarizes the Islamic spiritual psychology as a process where the self (soul) can move up towards the spirit (*ruh*) or descend by moving away from the spirit (*ruh*). Guidance of God, which is manifested directly through the prophets and indirectly through human intellect, calls upon the soul to return to its origin (Murata, 1992, 316).

Where from the perspective of positive psychology the self is able to experience a transcendental reality (spirituality) without science (positive psychology) having to acknowledge the reality of the spirit, in the Islamic understanding it is theoretically not possible to experience spirituality or divine reality without acknowledging the reality of the human spirit.

1.3 The self

The *nafs* when mentioned in the Quran without any addition, refers to “self” and exists of three levels that are interconnected to each other (Schimmel, 1994, 184):

- *nafs ammara* (12:53) - The lower (animal) self, the carnal soul that incites to evil.
- *nafs lawwama* (75:2) – The struggling self.
- *nafs mutma'inna* (89:27) – The higher self at peace, the satisfied, peaceful God realized rational soul.

Murata (1992, 230) explains that the two fundamental tendencies of the animal soul are anger and appetite, attracting the self to anything that is pleasant or turns and defends the self against anything that is infelicitous. The happiness of the lower self comes from eating, sleeping, mating, focused on bodily pleasures. The lower self also incites to evil (12:53) and therefore the self is only allowed to approach these terrestrial blessings under the condition that they are lawful (5:87-88). These tendencies of the lower self are positive and necessary in order to gain worldly happiness, as there needs to be a balance between this existence and the hereafter (2:200-201). Without denying the worldly needs, happiness is not to be understood only in terms of worldly fulfilment of needs (3:14). The Quran mentions that there is no happiness possible for mankind only with worldly fulfilment of needs (3:15). It is in the nature of the lower self to want endless fulfilment of needs, but the ones who are guided by the higher self will look for happiness in the higher realms of reality (3:14).

Happiness of the higher self on the other hand, lies in witnessing the beauty of the Divine presence in the largest sense of the word, as in deriving happiness from the pleasure that comes with experiencing and gaining knowledge of the art within nature and man himself (Murata, 1992, 231).

Positive psychology makes no distinction in hedonistic and eudemonic activities that result in happiness. Unlike in positive psychology, there is a clear distinction made in Islamic understanding between happiness from hedonistic pleasure and happiness from eudemonic actualization of potential. Happiness of the lower self comes from the hedonistic types of pleasure and happiness of the higher self comes from knowledge and good character (virtue), which is the eudemonic type of happiness. Naquib Al-Attas (Philosopher) explains the two dimensions to happiness in Islamic understanding with two different terms - pleasure and true

happiness. The self (*nafs*) attains “true happiness” from knowledge and good character (virtue) experienced by the rational soul (higher self) and “happiness of transient quality” from worldly (bodily) pleasures experienced by the animal soul (Attas, 1995, 91-92). On the other hand, from Islamic perspective, the nature of the qualities mankind is given in terms of the soul, are not segregated and valued based on whether they result in happiness or not. The qualities of the lower-self are positive and necessary in order to gain happiness from terrestrial blessings and the qualities of the higher-self are positive and necessary for experiencing happiness from the intellectual and spiritual realm. These qualities of the lower and higher self are rather approached in terms of submission and not happiness - submission of these qualities to a spiritual Divine dimension within the self.

1.4 The Heart (*qalb*)

1.4.1 Moral conscience: Character and Virtues

With the *ruh* blown into this mortal living being, man becomes besides hearing and sight (reason), also a heart (32:9) (moral conscious) that has the qualities to apprehend (7:179) with intellect (22:46) and to receive guidance (64:11, 50:37) (Murata, 1992, 290). Bayindir (Professor at Istanbul University, specialized in *fikh*) explains that, in the perspective of the Quran, what makes man different from animals is not reason or language, but moral faculty, referring to a heart that is able to reflect (7:179) (2003, 118). The heart is classified as a decision-making organ (27:13-14) that has a moral (spiritual) function, which is making judgments (Bayindir, 2003, 118). The intellect lights up the path of man in life and shows the direction, yet it is the heart that decides whether it will follow the right path or its own desires and own truths (Bayindir, 2007, 106-113). This means that the heart is able to ignore or act against reason and become closed to truth (6:43), causing so called “true blindness and deafness” (22:46) (Bayindir, 2003, 119-120). Murata (1992, 289) also refers to this dynamic, and explains that the root of the word *qalb* translates as; to overturn, return, go back and forth, change, fluctuate, under go transformation.

The heart is considered as the centre of human personality, the meeting point with God, with a cognitive and moral dimension to it. The heart is not only the place of virtues (good) and feelings, but the heart can also be stern and fierce (3:159), blind and deaf to truth, insensitive to feelings (2:74) or a place of conflicts (9:45). Although faith and the strength of the spirit are located in the heart (58:22), the heart is also able to refuse and choose to disbelieve: “the heart that refuses to know” as the verse states (16:22).

Therefore the component that gives man his/her human qualities is the heart as Murata explains in *The Tao of Islam*. What is kept in the heart controls the degree of humanness, deeds, action and intensions are initiated from the heart, but also the level of connection with the Divine realm is dependent on the condition of the heart (Murata, 1992, 289). Virtues such as, compassion, mercy (57:27) and affection (8:62-63), but also feelings such as tranquility (rest) (13:28) and certainty (peace of reassurance) (48:4) are located in the heart. The heart is considered as a spiritual eye, ear and reason as in the communication between God and man it is mentioned that the Spirit of Faith and Truth is revealed to the heart (and mind) (26:192-194, 2:97). In another verse there is reference to the ability of the heart (and mind) to see the Divine inspiration (53:10-12). Therefore both believe and trust in God -*iman* (2:88, 2:97) and God consciousness - *takva* (22:32) are described as matters of the heart.

1.4.2 Happiness of the Heart

When referring to happiness in terms of the heart, the words satisfaction, finding rest, comfort, assurance, tranquillity, peace and certainty, are used in the Quran together with *zikr* (13:28) (Attas, 1995, 98). Happiness of the heart (satisfaction) seems to be possible through remembrance of God (*zikr*) and through *iman* (believe and trust) in an active manner (13:28), where active refers to righteous behaviour (13:29).

Zikr, is definitely one of the most important concepts of the Quran and is considered as the ultimate state of spiritual consciousness, as William Chittick explains in *Science Of The Cosmos, Science Of The Soul*, (2007, 113). Abdulaziz Bayindir (2003, 25) explains that the Qur'an often mentions words that derive from the root *zikr* and translates *zikr* as; holding knowledge present in the mind; to utter knowledge by aid of tongue, heart and to remember knowledge. This knowledge considers the Unity of God (*tawhid*) that, according to Bayindir is already present in the mind, expressed in the Qur'an with the word *tezekkur*.

Besides believe, trust and righteousness (13:29), in the single following verse, the first part of the Islamic creed (*tawhid*) is mentioned; "*There is no god but He!*"(13:30). Seyyed Hossain Nasr translates the first part of the Islamic creed (*shada*) as "there is no divinity but the Divine" and marks the formula of Unity as the most universal criterion of orthodoxy in Islam (Nasr, 1978, 5). According to Chittick, all prophets who brought this message did "not teach" this truth but "paid attention" to it in order to remember (*zikr*) humankind, who has the tendency of forgetting and disobeying (2007, 113). Bayindir states that the Unity of God is incorporated in the very essence of the creations existence; it is incorporated in the *fitrah* (nature of things). The unfolding of this knowledge (*zikr*) regarding the Unity of God, in the perspective of the Quran, is possible by comparing knowledge from nature (including the self) with revelation (Bayindir, 2003, 25). The most important function of the heart in terms of happiness, is recognizing (witnessing) the signs (*ayat*) of God revealed in nature (creation) (41:53) and revelation (scripture) and remembering (*zikr*) God (13:28). Having faith is not a process of blind obedience as described in the Quran, since having "true faith" requires comparing (6:80, 41:53, 51:20-21).

Abdulaziz Bayindir defines *fitrah* in general as "the collection of laws that constitute, develop and change the structure of beings". The universe including humankind is created in conformity with the Divine norm that is called *fitrah* (30:30). The basic laws of science, technology, and human behaviour are also part of *fitrah*, which means that knowledge from science, that reads the manifestation of nature (*ayat*), is included in the definition of religion according to this approach (Bayindir, 2007, 361). Murata explains this from a cosmological point of view. The signs in the micro and macrocosm - being manifestations of the Metacosm (Divine Reality) and a reflection - are indicators that point to the absolute reality of the Real, to the principle of *tawhid* (there is no divinity but the Divine) (41:53). A "true realization" of the principle of Unity (*tawhid*) in terms of Islamic cosmology means, connecting the signs in the microcosm (in the self) with the macrocosm and realizing that "there is none real but the Real" (Murata, 1992, 225).

How is it possible that this knowledge regarding the Truth, does not unfold automatically when it is a part of our so called "bleu print" (*fitrah*)? Al-Attas explains that, forgetting God, which also includes forgetting oneself (59:19), occurs when the rational soul is repressed by the carnal soul, in the largest sense of the word, limiting consciousness to bodily senses only (Attas, 1995,106). Knowledge when limited to such understanding, as Attas explains, also becomes limited, whereas knowledge as the Quran describes, should be derived from a conscious heart (soul - direct experience), mind (deductive or inductive inference) and body (observation or direct vision), referring to the "three degrees of certainty in knowledge" (Attas, 1995, 105). The starting point here that is important to mention is that in the Quran, knowledge and consciousness are not limited to bodily existence. Nasr explains that previous

to the bodily existence there is the existence of the rational soul (*nafs al mutma'innah*), which has the highest level of consciousness regarding the Ultimate Truth (*tawhid*) and has awareness of the Good (virtue). This means that prior to matter, there is consciousness, which is the fundamental philosophy that separates the traditional view from the 17th century modern scientific view, including positive psychology that is based on the theory of evolution. By traditional view, Nasr refers to sacred scriptures of various religions and oriental and traditional Western Philosophers (Nasr, May 2003).

Perceiving reality with a conscious heart, where the quality of this inner reality is determined by what is located in the heart referring to good and evil traits and virtues and immorality, means that knowledge and consciousness are not limited to bodily existence and reach beyond the senses. What also needs to be mentioned is that reality is perceived within a set of traits and virtues located in the heart, forming the inner reality of the individual-including the reality of happiness. This inner reality is from Islamic perspective relevant for several reasons. First of all, the quality of knowledge derived from a conscious heart is determined by what is situated in the heart - the inner reality of man. The heart clearly gives vision in realities that transcend the boundaries of time and space, opening doors to other dimensions that the eye cannot see. This state of broad-mindedness where reality is viewed in a boundless (cosmic) fashion, leading to relief, loss of distress (94:1, 20:25-27) and enlightenment (39:22) is described as “the expansion of the heart” (Murata, 1992, 289). The Quran underlines the importance of the inner reality (*qalb*) also by paying attention to the pureness of this reality and marks hypocrisy (appendix D) as one of the most serious threats to spiritual growth and happiness.

Secondly, the condition of the heart (inner reality) is not only important for a clear view on reality, providing rest and satisfaction, but is also vital for salvation on the Day of Judgment (26:87-89, 50:31-35). The heart takes along its condition, the abstract reality of the heart, to the hereafter and will make a transition to a similar reality. When lived a narrow life of spiritual blindness (darkness) and ignorance, these conditions will be reflected in the following reality of existence (20:124-125, 17:22, 17:97). When the day of judgement arrives, the heart needs to be clean (26:89) in a state of satisfaction and peacefulness in order to enter the state of highest happiness (89:27) (Murata, 1992, 289-319). What counts in that sense, as in being successful, is what is gathered in the heart rather than the level of satisfaction in worldly needs (100: 8-11, 26:87-90).

In the Islamic understanding in contrary to positive psychology, the heart is far more than a simple pump. The heart, that is able to apprehend with intellect, to reflect and to receive guidance, is considered as the centre of human personality, the meeting point with God, with a cognitive and moral dimension to it. The heart is classified as a decision-making organ that has a moral (spiritual) function, which is making judgments. In the perception of reality, the heart has a significant importance where knowledge and consciousness are not only assigned to the brain. The level of consciousness is namely determined by the quality of this inner reality, in the sense of what is located in the heart. Today research shows that the heart communicates with the brain to such extend that it results in influencing, information processing, perceptions, emotions and health. The heart is in fact, a complex processing center with its own functional “brain” that influences the brain (Armour, Feb 2008, 165-176; Daemen, Feb 2013, 53-54). What is gathered in the heart seems to be even less relevant for positive psychology, than the level of satisfaction in fulfilment of needs in terms of happiness. In general, the inner narrative (inner reality) of the patient has become less relevant in the field of psychology. Seligman (2004) makes no reference to human happiness in terms of the content of the heart and its influence on behaviour. Neither is there any reference made to consciousness in relationship to the heart.

2. Meaning of Life, Happiness and Character

2.1 The Word Happiness

The opposite of happiness (*sa'adah*) in the Quran is referred as *shaqawah*, meaning great misfortune, misery, distress, or suffering (Attas, 1995, 91). The opposite of the meaning of happiness is important as the meaning of the word happiness is not the equivalent of pleasure, rather the meaning is derived from the opposite word- the misery that takes place in the realm of the inner self (Attas, 1995, 102-104), referring to doubt, uncertainty and fear of the heart (Attas, 1995, 98).

Hossian Nasr explains that the cluster of Quranic terms that deal with the word happiness, felicity, joy, rejoicing, contentment, gladness and pleasure in English, derive from different roots in Arabic. Words derived from the root *s'd*, like *sa'adah* (happiness) or *su'idu* (felicitous), used in expressing both happiness related to life on earth and the afterlife, are the closest Arabic equivalent of the words happiness or felicity in English (Nasr, 2014, 77-78). The Quran refers to a worldly happiness specifically, by the word *hasanah* (2:201), derived from *husn*, which means at once, goodness, beauty and virtue. Yet, the most revealing cluster of words are derived from the root *r'd'y*, translated as contentment, referring to the ultimate state of spiritual happiness of the self, related to this life and the hereafter (89:27-30) (Nasr, 2014, 79). The word contentment in this verse, refers to God being content with the soul but also the soul being content within the self (Nasr, February 2014, 77-78). The self, mentioned in this verse (*nafs mutma'inna*) is translated as the soul at peace, which is the highest spiritual level one can achieve (Schimmel, 1994, 184).

Islam coming from the root of *s'l'm* means both submission to God and peace. Submission is the remembrance of the heart of God's presence and acknowledgment of His Lordship, leading to peace. The condition of the self at peace referred as *nafs al mutma'innah* is a state of calmness and restfulness; it is having freedom from doubt and restlessness. This freedom is the result of the return to the true nature of the self, being submissive to God (covenant with God) (Attas, 1995, 105) - the heart forming a union with God evoking feelings of safety, security and freedom from corruption and failure as Attas explains (Attas, 1995, 105). With the acceptance of the trust (the covenant) as mentioned previously (*ruh*), came namely the responsibility and the risk of falling into a state of unhappiness. The fulfillment of these responsibilities, that bring the self closer to the real self, result in happiness and on the other hand, the refusal to accept these responsibilities lead to a state of wretchedness (*zulm*) (Nasr, February 2014, 81)

2.2 Character (virtues and good behavior) and Negative Life Events

The word *trial* is used many times when referring to pleasant but also the unpleasant circumstances of life (2:155, 3:186, 21:35). Misfortune and hardship in life is not something that only overcomes bad people, as we understand from the Quran, but also good people (2:214). Mankind will namely go through a trial related to the self (*nafs*), consisting of positive and negative life events. What does it mean when life becomes a matter of trial? The word *trial* is used in the Quran with reference to two dimensions. *Trial* in terms of life means "experiencing and undertaking", and in terms of the afterlife it means "a judgement by God". What is the significance of negative life events?

The repeating event in the Quran, that can be considered as the ultimate negative event in life is death. The Quran is in a way trying to convince the reader of the fact that eventually it will happen and there will be a return to God (56:60, 3:185, 4:78, 32:11, 50:19).

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient (155), Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return." (156) Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided. (2:157 Sahih International Translation)

The proper acknowledgement of God's Lordship as we understand, is explained by using death as repeating element in order to create the understanding in man that there is no such thing as worldly ownership. The place of mankind on earth is not to "own", but to allow the self to grow, to become righteous (by remembering God - covenant). Negative life events, as we read in the verse, give the opportunity to the self to grow the character strengths of patience, plus the proper understanding of ownership translated in knowing ones position in the realm of existence and with that the proper acknowledgement of His Lordship (2:155-157). When the above-mentioned concept (God's Lordship as ultimate Owner) is properly understood and internalized (forming character), it should result in the righteous deed of sharing precious wealth.

"We have certainly created man into hardship (90:4). Does he think that never will anyone overcome him? (90:5) He says, "I have spent wealth in abundance." (90:6) Does he think that no one has seen him? (90:7) Have We not made for him two eyes? (90:8) And a tongue and two lips? (90:9. And have shown him the two ways? (90:10) But he has not broken through the difficult pass (uphill clime) (90:11). And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass (uphill clime)? (90:12) It is the freeing of a slave (90:13). Or feeding on a day of severe hunger (90:14). An orphan of near relationship (90:15). Or a needy person in misery (90:16). And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion (90:17). Those are the companions of the right (90:18 tr. Sahih International)."

What we understand from the Quran is that the expression of "I believe" is not relevant when it is not backed up by righteous deeds, as there is a trail to undergo (29:2, 3:142). Life, the uphill clime, will teach compassion (mercy) and patience if the right path is chosen (righteous), that can only be reached through showing compassion to others (90:17). The Quran quite clearly informs that righteousness is never reachable when precious wealth is not shared (3:92).

Being righteous is one of the two choices mankind makes in an environment we call life (90:10), which is described as an uphill clime (90:4-12). An uphill clime suggest the struggle to the top but most certainly the fact that there is an effort to make that includes experiencing pleasure, happiness, pain and unhappiness. Life does not proceed in the garden anymore (appendix E), as it requires efforts (uphill climb). However, the Quran does not illustrate a pessimistic picture related to the hard part of life, but it also optimistic and points that even in hardship there is encouragement and hope to find, as with each hardship comes relief (94:5-6). A favourable life, that includes worldly possessions (including relations) may provide ease, pleasure, comfort and safety, however they also serve as learning tool adding good or bad attributes to the self, depending on ones own choice. Below follows an example on how mercy is received in different ways. We read three types of response to mercy, which is a sign of a favourable life, in the below-mentioned verses.

If We give man a taste of mercy from Ourselves, and then withdraw it from him, behold! he is in despair and (falls into) blasphemy (11:9). But if We give him a taste of (Our) favours after adversity hath touched him, He is sure to say "All evil has departed from me;" Behold! he falls into exultation and pride (11:10) Not so do those who show patience and constancy, and work righteousness; for them is forgiveness (of sins) and a great reward. (11:11 Yusuf Ali) Regained mercy could provoke feelings of joy from pride (exultation) and arrogance (pride)(11:10). On the other hand, with the loss of this favourable life, it is possible to have

feelings of hopelessness (despair) that leads to un-thankfulness (blasphemy) (11:9). So a favourable life is not per definition a triumph or a good thing that is gained in terms of character development as it can lead to arrogance and pride as we read. However the same applies for an unfavourable life that can lead to hopelessness and un-thankfulness. The key element here is character that shows patience and constancy (11:11). Both negative and positive life events teach mankind the proper place in the realm of life in the relationship with possessions and the self (3:186). So somehow both negative and positive live events serve as a catalysis that exposes what direction the heart will take which can be in both cases negative (non-righteous) or positive (righteous). Therefore in the relationship with God, when man calls upon God, man is somehow placed in a middle position between fear (negative emotion) and hope (positive emotion), implying the fact that fear is as necessary as hope (7:56, 32:16). Fear is placed in the opposite position against hope and forms a balancing element here because the heart feeling too secure and comfortable from positive life events, will not bring the best in man to surface as it can lead to a false trust in the things that provide this security and comfort. Fear from the perspective of positive psychology is a negative emotion because it has no added value in terms of happiness.

We can conclude that within the Islamic understanding it is not possible to calculate life experiences in terms of positive and negative, since the level of true happiness (spiritual elevation) is depending on direction the self will take for growing different character traits to become human in the Quranic meaning of Adam (close to the inner spiritual self referred as *ruh*) instead of mortal (physical aspect). In Islamic understanding, happiness in terms of a blessed life in prosperity (hedonism) is not the central theme in character development unlike it is the case in positive psychology, where positive character is directed from the desire to become happy. Positive life events, even though leading to happiness, are not necessarily good for character development. The heart feeling too secure and comfortable from positive life events could develop false trust in the things that provide this security and comfort. Good character in terms of positive character is not grounded on happiness but on, to what level the individual has internalized the understanding of patience (trust and thankfulness in God) in life as an uphill clime, and compassion (towards others) in life.

2.3 The Meaning of Life – Self-actualization

The success of the self, as explained in the Quran, lies in allowing the self to grow and one who disallows the self (soul) to grow, who destroys this growth, is describes as one who is in failure (91:7-10). The development of the self, that is given the capacity to distinguish right from wrong (91:7), includes falling and standing and making choices. This process of growth is not focussed on making faultless, sinless, pure good creatures (angels) at the end (4:31). Returning to the heavenly origin does not refer to a perfect sinless state of an angel. The highest stage in that sense that is aimed at, is the level where there is mutual satisfaction reached between the self and God but also within the self as a whole (89:27). Good and evil forces serving the development of man are not positions to strive for, as we understand from the story of Adam (appendix E). These forces rather serve as catalysis in the spiritual evolution of man, in the process of growth.

The return to ones origin that is mentioned previously in paragraph (1.2), refers to the process of submission (Murata, 1992, 230). The return to God plays a key element in the purpose of life and the Quran emphasizes this return to God very often. Life is namely the opportunity for man to return the entrusted good, only accepted by man (33:72), to his/her Lord. This requires a higher self to return (face) towards God before the actual return (day of judgment). What does returning to its (self) origin mean? Previously to the bodily existence, the soul settles an agreement with God by witnessing and acknowledging God as his Lord (7:172) and

a covenant is sealed by the true self, which is the rational soul that is connected to the spirit (*ruh*) (Attas, 1993, 77). This means that on the day of resurrection the soul and body will be held accountable in terms of this covenant. Nasr explains the acceptance of His Lordship as “the trust” (*amanah* – entrusted good), that all souls (higher-self) have agreed upon (February 2014, 81). This process of returning the entrusted good is interrupted by misguidance and evil leading the soul to descend towards the carnal (animal) soul, moving away from God. There is a constant struggle of domination, between the lower self pulling the self downwards and inciting to evil and the higher self pulling the self upwards towards the spirit (Murata, 1992, 316). Self-actualization lies in the core of this process. “The relationship that needs to be established in terms of actualization is the carnal soul (animal soul) that enslaves itself in submission and service and so 'returns' itself to the power and authority of the rational soul” (Attas, 1993, 69).

We can conclude from our analysis in appendix D, that self-identification as part of self-actualization in religious sense, is an internal process rather than a process of distinction based on the differences with the outer world (other religions or others in general). This internal process is about whether one identifies oneself with this world (the lower self) or the other world (the higher self) – in other words, identification is about making a distinction within the self between the lower and higher self (79:38-41), where the ultimate moment of total self-reflection will be the Day of Judgement as we understand from the Quran. Therefore self-reflection and being genuine, the opposite of hypocrisy, forms the core goal of this process of actualization and not happiness in contrary to positive psychology.

Where stands worldly happiness in this process of actualization?

The relationship between happiness, the self and this covenant, is explained by Attas by referring to the verse below where we read that “the” great attainment in terms of rejoice comes from commitment to this contract. With the acceptance of the trust (the covenant) as mentioned previously (*ruh*), came namely the responsibility and the risk of falling into a state of unhappiness. The fulfillment of these responsibilities, that bring us closer to the real self, result in happiness and on the other hand, the intentionally willingly refusal to accept these responsibilities lead to a state of wretchedness (*zulm*) (Nasr, February 2014, 81). The self (*nafs al mutma'innah*) that is calm and restful, being free from doubt and restlessness, is free as the result of having returned to its true nature, by being submissive to God (covenant with God) (Attas, 1995, 105)

Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment. (Sahih International translation 9:111)

The Qur'an portrays the worldly life with the help of metaphors as a commercial enterprise, where life, in fact man himself is described as a capital (Attas, 1993, 67). Adding value to this capital goes through self-realization and self-improvement, which is the actualization of latent power and capacity, in order to become a perfect man - it is about “trading the self for the true self” that the verse refers to. The real man (true self), as Attas explains, can only in fact be the rational soul (Attas, 1993, 77). In other words, it is about the submission of the lower self (carnal soul) to the higher self (rational soul). In fact we see the miniature version of the submission (religion) of the higher self to God where the cosmic order (kingdom of God) is reflected within man him/herself. Attas explains that while religion (Islam – submission) reflects the Divine cosmic order, man is the microcosmic representation of the macro cosmos, a kingdom in miniature where the Attributes of the Creator are manifested (Attas, 1993, 68-69).

Influential in the thinking of Seligman regarding the subject of self-actualization, were the writings of Abraham Maslow as he mentions. Maslow's pyramid of needs shows that self-actualization (the top of the pyramid) is only possible when lower needs are met, both in physical and psychological sense. Seligman disagrees with this statement and with the hierarchical order of this model. However, Seligman does see a great deal of overlap between the traits and virtues of the self-actualized individual of Maslow, and his classification of traits and virtues (appendix A) of the happy individual, thereby connecting happiness to actualization (Seligman & Peterson, 2004, 63-64).

In terms of virtues and traits, self-reflection and being genuine, the opposite of hypocrisy (appendix D), forms the core goal of this process of actualization from Islamic perspective and not happiness, as it is the case in positive psychology. Self-actualization is about submission of the lower self to the higher self and happiness follows when there is commitment to the covenant since the fulfillment of this covenant brings the self closer to the real self, where the true human potential lies (higher-self, *ruh*) and with that to God.

3. The Highest Standard of Good: The Virtue of Justice

3.1 Virtue of Justice and Happiness

When it comes to the connection between happiness and moral virtues, Al Kindi explains that in overcoming material and psychological causes of sorrow, material possessions and other worldly deeds are nothing compared to the cultivation of virtues. Virtues play an important role in the attainment of happiness related to this world and the hereafter (Nasr, 2014), where justice is considered as the highest virtue together with wisdom, however it is justice that stands above all virtues (Khadduri, 1984, 83; Al-Attas, 1993, 75). The connection between justice and happiness, as well as their definition is explained by Professor Al- Attas in the following quote in his book “*Islam and Secularism*”(1993, 75). “Happiness’ refers not to the physical entity in man, not to the animal soul and body of man: nor is it a state of mind — it has to do with certainty of the Ultimate Truth and fulfillment of action in conformity with that certainty; and certainty is a permanent condition referring to what is permanent in man and perceived by his spiritual organ known as the heart (*al-qalb*). It is peace and security and tranquility of the heart; it is knowledge, and knowledge is true belief; it is knowing one’s rightful, and hence proper, place in the realm of Creation and one’s proper relationship with the Creator; it is a condition known as ‘*adl*’ or justice.”

The quote above will be explained by using Adam’s story (appendix E) as example where he admits to be unjust to his soul and asks for forgiveness after eating from the forbidden tree. Bayindir explains in a television interview (Hilal tv, 15 July 2003) that Adam, despite having all comfort and needs fulfilled, somehow desires eternal life, a kingdom that will never decay. This desire clearly clashes with his believe of God being the Lord of the Worlds and is a sign of not knowing ones proper place in the realm of Creation and one’s proper relationship with the Creator. Knowing that Satan is his enemy (knowledge yet no true belief), he turns blind to this knowledge and follows the desire of the heart. A heart that is sincere in his believe in God’s Lordship, does not act with such desires according to Bayindir.

In the Islamic understanding, prioritization of values is not based on whether virtues generate happiness, rather the virtue of justice forms an overarching virtue and self-reflective capacity of the heart as in being genuine within the self, is considered as the most important trait. Sincerity of the heart forms the founding character trait (being genuine) of every act and thought, making hypocrisy the worst character trait. The heart is considered as the subject of judgment, the place of connection to God, the self and the rest of the creation (2:225) (Murata, 1992, 289). In terms of attaining happiness, a heart that is running between desires of life, is one that has set direction into a one-dimensional reality of transient nature. Whereas, happiness attained by the heart that has set its direction on the (One) Absolute Truth, which is Truth that includes all reality, the heart becomes connected to all dimensions at the same time and therefore finds rest.

3.2 Pursuit of the Common good – the Covenant

Democracy is promoted by positive psychology with the idea that individuals are pursuing the common good in a collective way under the virtue of justice, which is promised to lead to collective happiness. Yet collective happiness is sabotaged especially when it comes to wealth by capitalism since democracy has become a liberal, rather than participatory democracy (Greek model). Nevertheless, since positive psychology is anticipating on social

developments wealth, which has become a measure in today's society for self-esteem and social-esteem, is being presented as a goal to pursuit on the path of happiness. The common good in a (liberal) democracy might be common, but is not always good in the moral sense, so bringing justice under the umbrella of democracy promises happiness for the majority but not for all groups. In the Islamic understanding, the highest common good that is pursued is not happiness and the unifying bond in terms of justice is not democracy but the fulfilment of the covenant. The fulfilment of this individual covenant between God and soul is also what connects all souls (Attas, 1993, 73). This bond that unites all souls, is stronger than any other type of bond like family or nation, transcending all differences and likenesses, a bond existing beyond space and time (Attas, 1993, 74).

In the journey of life, where growth is a choice, the ones who choose to be righteous will eventually benefit (do justice to) the own soul according to the Quran (41:46). When the soul (self) gets in a state of disharmony with the reality of God being the true and only Lord as agreed upon (Covenant), the self becomes in a state of injustice towards the self (Attas, 1993, 77). Justice from an Islamic perspective is a concept of moral rightness, a definition referring to a cosmic order, a system that is based on responsibility and knowing your place and duty in the realm of life in light of this Truth as agreed by the soul.

Where does individualism and freedom stand in the pursuit of the common good under the virtue of justice? The level of self-realization (growth), as Attas explains, depends on how much weight is put by the individual on responsibility and consciousness regarding freedom and existence (Attas, 1993, 68). What is understood in this context with freedom and consciousness in relation to the self? Freedom refers to the right to rule one's self by itself, yet it should not be understood in terms of absolute autonomy as freedom is explained from a holistic point of view - man forms a part of Gods creation that is ruled within a certain model, a certain order (religion and laws of nature). Man as vicegerent is given the trust of government (the entrusted good), to rule one's self by itself, where trust refers to responsibility and freedom of the self to do justice to it-self (Attas, 1993, 66). Justice is described by Al Attas, in *Islam and Secularism* (1993, 76) as a "harmonious condition or state of affairs where everything is in its right and proper place". In case of man, justice does not only include ones place in relation to others but also with regards to the self "... it refers in a primary way to the harmonious and rightly-balanced relationship existing between the man and his self" (1993, 76). The rational soul (self), who is free to do justice to his self, can do justice by confirming and fulfilling the Covenant with God.

3.3 Righteousness and Wealth: Happiness understood in terms of moral consciousness instead of fulfillment of desires and fitness (evolution)

Nasr explains in his speech held in relation to the "The Tenth Reviving the Islamic Spirit Anniversary", at the network called Ristalks in 2011 that, in verse eighteen of chapter five and the previous verses, the Quran refers to the story of certain Christians and Jews who assume that being Christian or Jew equals being the children of God and being loved by God. In this chapter, the correction of this thought is made by referring to the importance of the realization of being a part of His creation and the most important of all, the return to God. In that sense the whole creation is equal, however specialness comes from being virtues rather than identifying oneself as a member of a certain religion. In chapter five (5:27-32) the "true" story of the two sons (no names mentioned) of Adam is tolled and a reference is made to the virtue of righteousness. The story is about the two sons of Adam who both offer a sacrifice to God and only one offer gets accepted. The reason why the other offer is not accepted is because "God only accepts from the righteous" as is stated in the verse (5:27). Then, as a reaction to being rejected, one brother kills the other.

What was wrong with the rejected offer? In other words, what is righteous behaviour? This is explained in chapter two verse hundred seventy seven

Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous. (2:177 Sahih International translation)

The Quran emphasizes the human condition of loving wealth as a normal act (3:14) but to be righteous one has to prioritize this impulse below the virtue of giving. Even though the worldly wealth is attractive to the soul, there is something marked as even better, which is that the ones with *takwah* will receive (3:15). The ones with *takwah* are those who are the believers (*iman*), the patient, the true, the obedient, and again the ones who spend their wealth for God, and seek for forgiveness as we read in the Quran (3:16-17). Both sons do their offer and even though it seems like both believe in the principle that “everything is owned by Him and will return to Him (5:18)”, one is sincere in this believe and the other isn’t. Kane’s (Biblical name) love for worldly wealth and the security he finds in it overshadows the trust in God, affecting his righteousness (10:7-9). The feeling of safety given by material wealth was exactly what tricked Adam as he ate from the forbidden tree to reassure his comfort in the garden for eternity. Security and satisfaction in wealth, when owned with such psychology that there is no true will to offer wealth on the path to God (Ultimate Owner), will not bring happiness. Human nature allows committing oneself (love) to the comfort and security of wealth easily, but righteous are the ones who share the best of their wealth (2:267-268). We can conclude that a proper understanding of God’s Lordship and trust in God (*iman*) is missing in Kane’s case and why he is not considered as righteous.

By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love; and whatever ye give, Allah knoweth it well. (3:92 Jusuf Ali Translation).

Two different human profiles are presented in the story of the two sons of Adam. Even out of precaution, even though knowing that (at a certain time) he will be killed by his own brother, Abel (Biblical name) tells his brother that he does not intend to kill him, as he fears God, the “Lord of the Worlds” (5:28). Even the fear for his life does not take him to a state where he will kill his brother out of precaution as an act of survival. He chooses the opposite position that his brother has taken, who has become one of the wrongdoers (*zulm*) (5:29). In the story of Kane, who perhaps feels jealousy, stabbed in the back, disappointed, hurt, threatened and so on, all these negative emotions lead him to get rid of the person who threatens and causes distress. He decides to kill the one who causes the threat to his unfulfilled (unmet) needs of appraisal, winning competition, acceptance, acknowledgment perhaps? His behaviour could be explained as an act of survival, in fact a very animal like wild behaviour, while the other brother even being under an even more serious threat (his life), chooses to remain righteous and not kill his brother acting from a moral consciousness. Human psychological evolution as we understand from the Quran, in terms of eternal happiness, views emotional needs also and most importantly from a vertical plane (heavenly, transcendental, spiritual) as human nature is attached through the soul to a reality that transcends him/her from the horizontal plane (worldly, bodily, lower-self). In the story of the two sons of Adam, the offer of one getting accepted triggers the other in term of competition. The Quran sets the direction of competition in terms of *righteousness* and not in terms of worldly needs. Negative emotions are, in the realization of happiness, directed towards morality and not fulfilment of desires. The competitive nature of man is directed from the vertical plane in terms of *takwah* and not from the horizontal plane, as we understand that

trust in material wealth should not overshadow the trust in God. When man acts in righteousness, there is justice, which is like an umbrella covering all other virtues (Khadduri, 1984, 106-134).

Positive psychology views happiness from an evolutionary perspective, as a psychological reward mechanism that signals when an adaptive problem is solved successfully for the fulfilment (evolved) needs. Proving in our evolved needs is what makes us happy and individual goals and wishes are motivated from the primal instinct of fitness. Competition triggered by negative emotions like envy or jealousy for example, is needed for survival (drive), and leads to creating and maintaining the best in man in terms of fitness. Therefore knowledge of happiness in a sense equals knowledge of evolved desires and their fulfilment. The level in which fulfillment of desires is realized in today's society is directly connected to wealth. Since the general majority of the western population earns his or her living by trading labour against income by salary and lives in a consumer society, it means that needs and desires are fulfilled to the degree of income. Positive psychology defines wealth as a legitimate goal to pursuit on the path of happiness.

In the Islamic understanding, in opposition to fulfillment of desires and fitness, true happiness is viewed in terms of moral consciousness (righteousness). Happiness in terms of wealth providing security, comfort and pleasure, is described as important for providing in the needs of the lower self. However it is the higher self that is overemphasized in the Islamic understanding since evolution of man is viewed in terms of moral consciousness. Even negative emotions are, in the realization of happiness, directed towards morality and not fulfilment of desires.

Part III: Conclusion

Conclusion

Discussion

I would like to mention upfront that the value of science, is not put to discussion in this thesis, since it is not the scientific findings, but the ideology connected to science and chosen angle that is compared with a certain religious understanding related to the subject of happiness. Even though knowledge from religion and science are considered to have a universal character, religious interpretations as well as scientific paradigms are subjected to influences of their time and cultural context. Happiness is a universal human experience, still is the framework in which happiness gains meaning and the way it is attained the same? In other words:

What are the fundamental differences when the Western perspective on happiness in positive psychology is compared with the perspective on happiness from a Quranic understanding?"

We can classify the fundamental differences in four main groups:

1. The first group contains the differences that can be addressed to the philosophical context in which happiness gains meaning.

Within psychology happiness gains meaning in a philosophical context of a materialistic understanding of human nature, based on evolution. Materialism upholds matter as the fundamental substance in nature and explains all phenomena, including mental phenomena like the mental state of happiness and consciousness, for being the result of material interactions. In the materialistic philosophy, happiness and related subjects like human nature emotions, spirit, etc., are explained from the vertical plane as material interactions, since there is no room for a horizontal plane.

Human psychological (spiritual) evolution as we understand from the Quran, views emotional needs also and most importantly from a vertical plane referring to a heavenly, transcendental, spiritual reality, as human nature is attached through the soul (*nafs*) to a reality (*ruh*) that transcends him/her from the horizontal plane (worldly, lower-self). The fundamental philosophy that separates the traditional (Islamic) view from the 17th century modern scientific view, is that prior to matter, there is consciousness. Previous to the bodily existence there is the existence of the rational soul that is connected to the spirit (*nafs al mutma'innah*), which has the highest level of consciousness regarding the Ultimate Truth (*tawhid*) and has awareness of the Good (virtue). Virtues also originate from the spirit, which are lived and applied through the rational self. In Islamic understanding it is theoretically not possible to experience spirituality, divine reality or of authentic (true) happiness without acknowledging the reality of the human spirit.

Although using tradition (religion and philosophy) as inspiration on a scientific platform, virtues described in Seligman's Handbook get their meaning within a liberal, utilitarian philosophy grounded in evolutionary science and psychology. The evolutionary perspective, applied in positive psychology, explains the ultimate motivations and values of people in terms of needs. These needs have evolved through natural selection, therefore subjective positive emotions (the cultivation of virtues), are seen as sign of evolution in behavior, resulting in adaptive advantage. Individual goals and wishes are motivated from the primal instinct of fitness and happiness is understood for being the result of successful fulfillment of this act. Therefore knowledge of happiness in a sense equals knowledge of evolved desires and their fulfilment.

Positive psychology also views emotions in terms of evolution, their functionality lies in survival and reproduction of the fittest where being fit refers to being highly capable of social competition through emotional adaptation. Although negative emotions leave an unpleasant

experience, it works as a warning mechanism that sets the consciousness in action to solve any type of adaptive problem that needs solving in order to survive and provide in needs. Competition triggered by negative emotions like envy for example that is needed for survival (drive), also leads to creating and maintaining the best (fitness) in man.

In the Islamic perspective, the competitive nature of man is directed from the vertical plane in terms of *takwah* and not from the horizontal plane. Negative emotions are, in the realization of happiness, directed towards morality and not fulfilment of desires. In the Islamic understanding, in opposition to fulfilment of desires and fitness, true happiness is viewed in terms of moral consciousness (righteousness). In the story of the two sons of Adam we read that the Quran sets the direction of competition in terms of *righteousness* and not in terms of worldly needs (evolved desires), as the trust in worldly wealth should not overshadow the trust in God (*iman*). The level of humaneness, in terms of being evolved, is measured by the ability to stand by one's word, believes and principles (covenant - focus on pre-bodily existence, morality) and not measured by the level of and success in gathered facilities needed for achieving fitness (focus on bodily existence).

The level in which fulfilment of desires is realized in today's society is directly connected to wealth. Since the general majority of the western population earns his or her living by trading labour against income by salary and lives in a consumer society, it means that needs and desires are fulfilled to the degree of income. Positive psychology confirms that contemporary social landscape of modern capitalism has changed our perception of wealth. Yet, this social development is carried fore-ward by encouraging the aspiration of wealth as an appropriate and desirable goal, as income and life satisfaction do show significant positive correlation. The Quran also admits that human nature allows easily committing oneself (love) to the comfort, security and satisfaction of worldly wealth, since wealth is made attractive to the carnal soul, but in the perspective of the Quran righteous are the ones who share the best of their wealth. When there is no true will (character) to offer of what is owned (wealth) on the path of the Ultimate Owner, by sharing it with others, true happiness becomes beyond reach, as compassion, mercy and the trust in God are not internalized. The real gain in terms of capital from this world, including true happiness, can only be from immaterial wealth, which is growth (self-actualization) of the self to a certain level (*nafs mutma'inna*). In terms of virtues and traits, self-reflection and being genuine, the opposite of hypocrisy, forms the core goal of the process of self-actualization from Islamic perspective and not happiness, as it is the case in positive psychology. Successfully attaining true (authentic) happiness should not be understood in terms of needs and desire fulfilment but in terms of submission. Self-actualization is about submission of the lower self to the higher self and happiness follows when there is commitment to the covenant since the fulfilment of this covenant brings the self closer to the real self, where the true human potential lies (higher-self, *ruh*) and with that to God. Happiness is the result of a process of inner submission of the lower self to the higher-self leading to an inner harmony that comes as a result of living in accordance to *fitra* and facing One direction (*tawhid*).

Another important source of motivation of man apart from fitness is anxiety resulting from the reality of death, yet this element seems to be less central to the whole theory of happiness within positive psychology. The ultimate goal being happiness in positive psychology, anxiety that causes distress is logically marked as negative, since positive psychology, is about choosing a positive perception in approaching reality, by focusing on the positive side of each negative event and remaining hopeful. Therefore optimism, apart from the fact that it correlates with happiness, is crucial. In order to view negative events in positive light, any form of pessimism, even defensive pessimism as coping strategy for anxiety, is marked as a negative trait since it does not include the sufficient amount of hope necessary for the self and others.

In Islamic understanding, the value of a trait, emotion or virtue is not determined by whether it produces happiness; value is viewed in terms of being transient or eternal of nature. Eternal are the things that can be taken to the afterlife within the heart, which will be judged in the hereafter, yet valuable in positive sense are only considered acts, emotions, feelings, virtues and traits that are pure of nature (purified from evil). Where in positive psychology happiness, virtues and character get meaning within fitness, in the Islamic understanding there is also and most importantly finiteness that adds meaning to these concepts. The Quran puts quite much emphasis on the subject of finiteness by using this negative life event as teaching element for creating consciousness regarding the return to God and the acknowledgement of God as the ultimate owner. The most existential anxiety, the fear of death, is an element that is crucial in Islamic understanding for its balancing function as opponent of hope. The (negative) emotion of fear, placed in the opposite position against hope, forms a balancing element. In the relationship with God, when man calls upon God, man is somehow placed in a middle position between fear (negative emotion) and hope (positive emotion), implying the fact that fear is as necessary as hope. The heart feeling too secure and comfortable from positive life event, will not bring the best in man to surface as it can lead to a false trust in the things that provide this security and comfort. The repeated element of death refers on one hand to the mortal aspect of man (not the owner of this world), and on the other hand it refers to growth of the self towards the spirit that does not belong to this world, elevating the mortal man to moral Adam.

2. The second group includes differences related to the valuation of happiness based on the two theories of happiness, hedonism and eudaimonism.

In positive psychology, there is no distinction made between hedonistic and eudemonistic happiness which means that all types of happiness are valued equally, from reward-based happiness gained through achieving deadlines at work, to spiritual happiness resulting from doing charity or meditative isolation. Happiness that is the result of virtues behaviour, like sharing wealth driven by moral consciousness, is equal to happiness from gaining wealth from competition driven behaviour. Virtues are disconnected from “the good” and connected to happiness including hedonistic pleasure. Virtues (moral) behavior and personal fulfillment gains meaning within an understanding of ethics that holds happiness as the fundamental axiom. Character traits are marked as positive or negative, based on their correlation with happiness. Happiness (including pleasure) is used as synonym for the good (virtues), yet virtues are selected not for creating moral consciousness but for creating happiness. Happiness as the measure of right and wrong is approached in a quantitative and reductionist manner, looking for ways to maximize utility and reducing suffering (hedonism), where happiness is measured by calculating the sum of positive life events minus negative life events.

There is a clear distinction made in the Islamic understanding between happiness from hedonistic pleasure and happiness from eudemonistic actualization of potential. This distinction is important for defining the nature of happiness in terms of true and transient and in the allocation of happiness to the self in terms of higher and lower self.

In the Islamic understanding, happiness is not the decisive factor in the qualification of virtues and traits of the self. The qualities of the lower and higher are both considered as important and necessary as balancing elements. In the Islamic approach, the value of happiness coming from pleasure is not viewed as equal to happiness from virtues (the good). The lower self (mortal soul), focused on bodily pleasures, has a hedonistic understanding of happiness as it is attracted to anything that is pleasant and is repulsive towards anything that is infelicitous.

This type of happiness is described as pleasure from worldly fulfilment of needs, which is of transient quality. Happiness of the higher self on the other hand, true happiness, comes from

knowledge and good character (virtue), which can be compared to a certain extent with the eudemonistic type of happiness. Happiness experienced by the rational soul (spirit) is related to things that are infinite of nature.

In Islamic understanding, happiness in terms of a blessed life in prosperity (hedonism) is not the central theme in character development unlike it is the case in positive psychology, where positive character is directed from the desire to become happy. The goal of life on earth is to make mankind grow to become righteous, knowing ones proper place, and not to become happy in the sense of having more pleasure and less pain. Negative life events are as valuable, or even more, as positive life events in terms of happiness for they teach “the” most essential positive character traits of compassion and patience that will eventually lead to true happiness. The most essential positive character traits are compassion (mercy) and patience because these traits are crucial for becoming righteous. In that sense the approach of positive psychology, where happiness is calculated as the sum of negative life events minus positive life events, becomes meaningless. In the Islamic approach happiness cannot be measured by such calculation because both events serve as matters of trial for the self.

3. The third group is related to the content of the virtue of justice in relation to happiness

Authentic happiness in view of Seligman is experienced when signature strengths and virtues are used in the service of something that is much larger than the individual, which is basically society. In positive psychology happiness, considered as the founding element of morality and good character, comes from the pursuit of the common good resulting in good citizenship. The virtue of justice in positive psychology means having the character strengths of social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork that are translated through citizenship, where citizenship is understood within the system of democracy based on liberalism. Positive psychology uses happiness as the starting standard of morality where good citizenship equals a virtuous personality. Based on research that show that the happiest places on earth are democracies, positive psychology uses happiness as the starting standard of morality where a good citizen equals a virtuous personality. Democracy is connected with happiness and with that, moral behavior with good citizenship. This means that, moral justness depends on the opinion and experience, in terms of happiness, of the public majority. Democracy is promoted by positive psychology with the idea that individuals are pursuing the common good in a collective way under the virtue of justice, which is promised to lead to collective happiness. Yet collective happiness is sabotaged especially when it comes to wealth by capitalism since democracy has become a liberal, rather than participatory democracy (Greek model). Presenting wealth as an appropriate goal for the individual in current capitalist society is, jeopardizing the virtue of justice in terms of the common good (what is good for the majority), related to the subject of consolidated ownership. In terms of the collective, happiness relates namely to sustainability and equity, which are the two things that are jeopardized by the current form of global capitalism.

In Islamic understanding happiness is only possible within a holistic understanding that requires the commitment to a centre that covers all, rather than a group of people or a certain geographic area. Happiness is not possible without blending the self in the harmony of creation, without knowing ones place in the realm of life (cultivation of the virtue of justice), and acting in harmony with the order in nature and revelation (righteous). In view of the Quran, what is universal to humanity in terms of commitment (submission) is not happiness, and neither is happiness a bonding element between people. What binds is rather the universal Divine message of submission to the One God. In the Islamic understanding, the highest common good is not happiness and the unifying bond in terms of justice is not democracy but the fulfilment of the covenant. The fulfilment of this individual covenant between God and soul is what connects all souls. This bond that unites all souls, is stronger than any other type

of bond like family or nation, transcending all differences and likenesses, a bond existing beyond space and time. Justice from an Islamic perspective is a concept of moral rightness, a definition referring to a cosmic order, a system that is based on responsibility and knowing your place and duty in the realm of life in light of the covenant as agreed by the soul. Justice as virtue from Islamic perspective means having the character strength of righteousness.

4. The final group is related to the level of focus on the heart (inner reality)

In the Islamic understanding in contrary to positive psychology, the heart is far more than a simple pump. The heart is considered as the centre of human personality, with a cognitive and moral dimension to it. The heart also plays a significant role in the perception of reality, where the level of consciousness is determined by the quality of this inner reality (*qalb*) since the inner reality of man (*qalb*) is connected to the abstract transcendental reality (*ruh*)

Therefore, from a holistic perspective, it is not possible to separate the reality of subjective happiness, which is connected to different dimensions, in objective and subjective terms, or to capture the phenomena of subjective happiness in objective terms (fixed, constant, measurable) limiting it to one dimension of reality.

Today research shows that the heart communicates with the brain to such extend that it results in influencing, information processing, perceptions, emotions and health. The heart is in fact, a complex processing center with its own functional “brain” that influences the brain. What is gathered in the heart seems to be even less relevant for positive psychology, than the level of satisfaction in fulfilment of needs in terms of happiness. Traits and virtues forming the inner reality of the individual- including the reality of happiness are viewed within a non-holistic approach. Character traits are marked as positive or negative, based on their correlation with happiness, isolated from other personality traits, values, beliefs, attitudes and life experiences of a “whole person”. Seligman makes also no reference to human happiness in terms of the content of the heart and its influence on behaviour, neither is there any reference made to consciousness in relationship to the heart as cognition is allocated to the human brain.

Suggestions

Instead of taking evolutionary biology as basic for approaching human nature, that departs from the idea that man is an adaptive animal who despite the environmental factors can be happy, taking the approach of founding fathers of humanistic psychology like Rollo May and Erich Fromm instead, who focus their research on the influence of social developments on human nature, could in my opinion bring the two concepts of happiness closer together. The search for happiness then becomes no longer “ search for happiness for the sake of happiness”, a hedonistic outlook, as anything can make man happy from drugs, to sports, consumption or wealth. An outlook where the research is focused on human nature instead of happiness “an sich”. The second focus in terms of happiness then becomes the search for the things that are and are not compatible to human nature, which is connected to a lot of ethical and moral questions. The essential question could make a turn from “ what makes happy?” to “what is compatible with human nature in terms of happiness?” Yet, should science answer and approach the question of “how to behave in accordance to human nature (*fitrah*) in order to become happy” within in an empirical model? Should this be measurable? The added value of positive psychology lies in the method of approach. In contrary to existential psychology for example, positive psychology tries to approach the phenomena of happiness within the model of empiricisms where the phenomenon becomes measurable. Questions of this nature are too extensive to be answered by positive psychology only. I believe in an approach where wisdom and knowledge are extracted, whether from religious scriptures or empirical research, resulting from a cooperation between different fields of

expertise. On the other hand, from the perspective of religion, some phenomena cannot be made fully compatible to the understanding and reach of our senses and captured in figures (empirical), as human consciousness transcends the bodily existence and with that the senses. The Islamic approach could however help in turning towards a different perspective or a different scientific method, grounded on a different theory, showing more dimensions to happiness other than evolution based.

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Appendix A

The classification of six core moral virtues and the related character strengths

WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

Creativity [Originality, Ingenuity]

Curiosity [Interest, Novelty-Seeking, Openness to Experience]

Open-Mindedness [Judgment, Critical Thinking]

Love of Learning

Perspective [Wisdom]

COURAGE

Bravery [Valor]

Persistence [Perseverance, Industriousness]

Integrity [Authenticity,

Honesty]

Vitality [Zest, Enthusiasm, Vigor, Energy]

HUMANITY

Love

Kindness [Generosity, Nurturance, Care, Compassion, Altruistic Love, “Niceness”]

Social Intelligence [Emotional Intelligence, Personal Intelligence]

JUSTICE

Citizenship [Social Responsibility, Loyalty, Teamwork]

Fairness

Leadership

TEMPERANCE

Forgiveness and Mercy
Humility and Modesty

Prudence

Self-Regulation [Self-Control]

TRANSCENDENCE

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [Awe, Wonder, Elevation]

Gratitude

Hope [Optimism, Future-Mindedness, Future Orientation]

Humor [Playfulness]

Spirituality [Religiousness, Faith, Purpose]

Appendix B

Optimism versus Pessimism

The reason why optimism is part of the list of personality traits is because optimism can reliably be associated with well-being. The explanation for this correlation, the underlying process, is however still something that is in progress (Eid & Larson, 2008, 184). Seligman explains that a person who suffers from learned helplessness has a pessimistic explanatory style. The explanatory style is about how we place ourselves in terms of value, deserving, worth and hope, which according to Seligman is the hallmark of whether we are an optimist or pessimist

“The theory of learned helplessness was conceptualized and developed by American psychologist Martin E.P. Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1960s and ’70s. ...Learned helplessness became since then a basic principle of behavioral theory, demonstrating that prior learning can result in a drastic change in behavior and seeking to explain why individuals may accept and remain passive in negative situations despite their clear ability to change them. In his book *Helplessness* (1975), Seligman argued that, as a result of these negative expectations, other consequences might accompany the inability or unwillingness to act, including low self-esteem, chronic failure, sadness, and physical illness.” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014) Learned helplessness is marked by a chronic lack of confidence and self-belief leading to depressions and becoming a permanent pessimist. The value of pessimism as a trait is determined by happiness and the conclusion is that all spectrums of pessimism, including defensive pessimism, is meritless compared to optimism. In other words, pessimism in general is not a preferred personality trait when describing a healthy person. Although pessimism as personality trait is not considered as disorder that needs treatment, still even defensive pessimism is not a preferred personality trait based on research results that show how unattractive and annoying defensive pessimist can be to others in contrary to optimists.

“... defensive pessimism, a coping strategy that keeps expectations and therefore disappointments in check (Norem, 2001). We do not deny that defensive pessimism can prove useful in some circumstances, but the relevant research also shows that defensive pessimists can annoy others. A straight- A student can only say so many times that she failed an exam before her classmates decide she is not worthy of commiseration. In any event, optimistic individuals are attractive to others, and part of this attractiveness might lie in the contagion of hope.” (Seligman & Peterson, 2004, 528)

What Seligman does is, associating pessimism as personality trait with learned helplessness. However, defensive pessimism is not necessarily characterized by lack of confidence or self-belief. Yet a healthy defensive pessimist who does not need treatment, because he or she does not suffer from lack of confidence or self-belief, is still driven into becoming a learned optimist (Miller, 2008, 597-599). When studies show that natural pessimists are also notably successful in their career and satisfied with their life (Norem, *The Positive Power of Negative Thinking*, 2001), then why this urge to turn a pessimist into an optimist? From the perspective of positive psychology a pessimist is not able to be happy in terms of authentic happiness (Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, 2002, 13). Authentic happiness comes from using our signature strengths and not from correcting weakness, as Seligman explains. Since optimism is a signature strength and pessimism is not, pessimists are forced to become optimists in order to achieve “the highest success in living and the deepest emotional satisfaction”.

Although Seligman marks that pessimists see reality more accurately than optimists and depressed people are wise but sad people (*Learned optimism*, 1998, 109), he is convinced that pessimism’s single virtue cannot outweigh against its many negative aspects (higher

chance of depression). Seligman does value pessimism as trait for a high sense of reality and accuracy but immediately connects this to a situational condition “..particularly if we live in a world filled with unexpected and frequent disasters (Seligman, *Learned optimism*, 1998, 113). Which means that pessimism is only healthy under such conditions. So the underlying message here is that the current conditions we live in tell us it is unhealthy to be pessimistic as there are no unexpected and frequent disasters. Is that really true? Can psychology make a judgment about social reality? Today we live in a world where individuals are more than ever exposed to unexpected and frequent disasters like diseases. Cancer for instance, caused by external factors like environmental pollution (chemicals) and genetically modified foods, threatening our health each day (Darbre, 2006, 121–143). Purely based on statistics that show the high rate of people suffering from cancer, this reality is inevitable. In Holland for example, the most common cause of death is cancer (Nationaalkompas, 2014). Research shows that genetically modified foods, chemicals used by cosmetics industry, and environmental pollution causes diseases like cancer (Evans, et al., January 2009, 43-78; Spiroux, et al., 2009, 706-726). Despite these findings that are acknowledged, the promotion of genetic engineering is still promoted based on the idea that the positive effects outweigh the negative (Uzogara, 2000, 179–206).

What about the promoted trait of optimism? Is optimism healthy under every condition? Optimists are not annoying like (defensive) pessimists but are inspiring, they are future minded and take into consideration both negative and positive facts and most importantly are able to view these in a good light. Pessimist being realist according to Seligman is still not of value as in contrary to an optimist, there is lack of hope. By making optimistic statements even in bad situations we generate happiness for others and ourselves because we give “hope” (Seligman & Peterson, 2004, 528). There can be hope in a pessimists mind in realistic terms, although this might not be enough to generate as much happiness as that of an optimist.

What about the irreversible destruction of the environment or our changed DNA causing diseases? Do such problems require an optimist who gives hope or a pessimist who actually does emphasize the irreversibility of the issue thanks to his or her distinctive high sense of reality and accuracy? When happiness is the norm, the perception of the pessimist becomes the problem instead of the problem itself. Pessimism judged by positive psychology from a perspective of happiness results in a negative image of pessimism that is associated with obstruction, hopelessness and defeatism giving the term a negative meaning (Miller, 2008, 599). However when it is described in terms of justified criticism and realism that is necessary for human survival related to health threatening global issues like mentioned above, it becomes positive, yet not in the sense of happiness but in terms of solution to the threatening problems that make us unhappy.

Appendix C

Socio-Historic developments in the West related to freedom and autonomy of the individual

The Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle describe the best human will as one that is ruled by reason and the ideal humanity as one that is self-sufficient. This ideal continues in the early modern philosophy and the concept of autonomy is further developed in the modern period. Liberalism contributes to this concept by adding the notion of individual autonomy, where self-realization becomes synonymous to the ability to realize the desires of one's "true" will (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2-1-2014). In the field of sociology, autonomy in terms of agency becomes connected to the desire for freedom. Being free as an individual from subordination and structure is presented as a universal desire (Mahmood, 2005,10-11). The self, who is ruled by reason, becomes true to itself and not to any other authority. Within (humanistic) psychology, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers integrate the ideal of the autonomous self, with the ideal of developing one's own individual self, as in self-actualization (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2-1-2014).

The seventeenth and eighteenth century European thought (enlightenment and romanticism) opens the door to developments such as decreasing religious authority, the increase of political liberty and emphasis on individual reason. Religion, and its values as connecting element of society, makes place for science. The greatest challenge for the European autonomous-self at the time, which desires to be free from authority, is religious authority. Institutionalised religion is therefore historically in the Western mind still connected to the idea of authority that stands in front of free individual development. Sociologist like Paul Helaas and Linda Woodhead who defend the contemporary spiritual revolution thesis, are a good example for this. This thesis implies that the move from traditional religion to spirituality is empowering since it means resisting dominant structures, where the move from institutionalized religion means not relying on external authority but on a sacralised inner-self (Fedele and Knibbe, 2013, 13).

However not only the rise of scientific rationalism, also the modern democratic liberal models of the nation state imposed the idea of a strong individual (Carrette and King, 2005, 80-81). The subjective turn since modernity also got blended with governance through citizenship, expertise and institutions, forming the sources of identity and social normality.

Appendix D

Hypocrisy (negative character trait)

Who is the hypocrite in the Quran and why is it considered as a negative (corrupt) character trait? Hypocrisy is marked a sickness in the heart (5:52). Murata explains that the worst affliction (unhappiness) that can overcome man, are the two aspects to hypocrisy; self-deception (pride, arrogance) and self-satisfaction (self-sufficiency and egoism). Pride does not allow to accept the truth and correct oneself (38:76, 16:22-23), and is marked as an emotion that kills righteousness (5:82). On the other hand, self-satisfaction means the beginning of the end, as there is no strive for becoming better, meaning there is no strive for actualization of human potential, there is no growth (1992, 316).

The hypocrite as the Quran refers to, is one who identifies oneself as a “believer” (2:8-9), who does establish religious rituals, yet is not a true believer by heart which shows in ones character as lack of kindness to others. Chapter hundred and seven begins with a strong statement referring to the ones who lie with religion - The ones who are upholding a certain image, who make religion a game of lies, just to see the reflection of the own grandiosity (the most pious), yet lack certain traits like, kindness, compassion and generosity when it comes to spending their wealth. They are described as people who are keen on being seen by others in their devotion for worship and prayer, yet they refuse kindness when it considers the needs of others (107:1-7, 9:67, 2:277).

In fact there is a whole chapter in the Quran, devoted to hypocrites, where the traits of a hypocrite are explained. The Hypocrite is described as a liar (63:1), who is arrogant (63:5), malicious (63:6), suffering from the illusion of greatness (63:8), one who had faith and preferred not to have faith afterwards, yet pretends as if he is faithful (63:3), one who’s appearance and speech might come as pleasant yet there is only the delusion, suffering from a preconceived notion of any voice being a threat (63:4). What is more remarkable though, is the fact in this same verse, believers are also warned - for what is owned (wealth and children) must not keep one from *zikr*, other wise this will result in loss (63:9). When death comes to all of them (believers and the rest) they must not regret or pity not spending on the needy and not having the chance to become one of the genuine (63:10). Being genuine in the believe of, “God being the Ultimate Owner of treasures of the heavens and the earth” seems to be the problem for the hypocrite as he lacks in comprehending this truth (63:7), which is how evil is connected to hypocrisy. For if we analyse the conversation between Satan and God, we see the lack of self-reflection from Satan’s side in the way facts are faced - distanced from the self by using mankind as an object of reflection instead of the self. God is blamed for the error that is made following the act of not showing respect towards Adam which God commanded from him. The point here is that, the own nature that he upholds in pride against Adam is in fact not his achievement, nor his to possess (Bayindir, 2007, 100). Knowing this truth, that God is the ultimate owner of all, also his own nature that he upholds in pride against Adam, he is still not willing to accept this truth. In order to keep up with this lie where his whole position is build on, he corrupts the truth and takes the oath to do so in the future. *[Satan] said, "Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path. (7:16, Sahih international)*. In order to so (evil and corruption) he needs to be on the straight path, and in order to misguide others he has to pretend as if (become a hypocrite) he is one who follows the right path. The word *kafir*, coming from the root of *kufir*, which means to cover up something, refers to “the one who covers up the truth”, which is a conscious action. In order to cover up the truth, the truth must be clear and visible. Satan for instance does acknowledge God’s existence and the hereafter, yet he is marked as *kafir* in the Quran (Nasr, 2002, 42-46, Bayindir, 2007, 99-100). Bayindir explains in a television

interview (Hilal TV, 15 July 2003) that the definition of *kafir*, when wrongly translated as unbeliever, is detached from the hypocrisy it includes, whereas the Quran explains the word *kafir* as one who loves life “more” than the hereafter (16:107, 14:1-4).

God not being the centre of devotion and yet identifying oneself as a believer, means pushing the border of hypocrisy. The Quran explains that the universal message in all Divine revelation, previous to the Quran and within the Quran, is the Unity of God and the center of devotion (21:25). Islam meaning submission to God remains, the key element as all prophets have brought this same message (42:13). This universal message, the Unity of God, is also the principle umbrella under which all receivers of the Scripture are expected to unite (3:64). On the other hand we also read the intentional act and the awareness of diversity in terms of historical development in intellectual, spiritual and moral (law) knowledge. The Quran authenticates and verifies the truths of previous scriptures (5:48).

Also after the acknowledgement of several differences like sex, race, culture, language etc., the Quran explains that diversity is supposed to be an invitation for knowing the other instead of being used as an excuse for looking down on the other from a certain height (49:13). The purpose of diversity is explained in terms of a trail, a strive for being the most virtues (5:48). The only parameter that can be used in order to measure difference in that sense, as in what makes man different in a good way from the other, is the level of *takwah* (49:13), which is only possible by having an inclusive, pluralistic understanding of religion.

Appendix E

The Story of Adam - happiness and mankind previous to the “fall”

In the Bible the descent of mankind is explained in terms of a dramatic “fall”, whereas the story revealed in the Quran is quite different to the former. In the Biblical version, the tragedy of committing a sin, leads mankind to fall from a state of infinite happiness, representing the punishment for sin, from the Garden of Eden (or heaven). This version of the story is marked by feelings of guilt and hopelessness regarding what life will bring. Yet, the old Testament gives an hopeful glance at the future and announces the new order that will come where there will be a correction, referring to the crucifixion, that is seen as the compensation for the fall (Hoek & McGrath, 2008, 170 – 207).

The Quranic version, also mentions the first sin however it is explained as a slip or deflect (2:36) and not as a great sin. The first sin is the result of the first moral decision mankind makes. At this stage Adam (mankind) is a moral creature, who is able to make a distinction between right and wrong as mankind has received a soul, spirit and intellect (91:6-10). Even though the consumption from the forbidden tree follows by their forced leave from the garden, yet it is not the result of a punishment for the sin. Adam (mankind) is namely forgiven for this first sin (2:37) and from the beginning it is the very purpose to place this new creation (mankind) in this earthly life (2:30) and so life on earth must have another purpose. The Quran states that the earth will be a dwelling-place for a time (7:24) where they will live and die, and from there they will return to their Lord (7:25).

In the second chapter of the Quran we read that Adam (mankind – includes both genders) goes through a process of intellectual (names) and moral (first choice) preparations followed by the journey to earth. The moment Adam is informed that he will be sent to a place that he is not familiar of, and less comfortable from the state he was in (2:36), he also receives the words of His Lord who turns to them mercifully (2:37), and tells them there is nothing to fear or to grief for He will send guidance to mankind (2:38-39). There is also no need for hopelessness as God even promises them and all that descends from them the guidance coming from Him. The ones that follow His guidance will not go astray nor fall into misery (20:122-123). Those who believe (*iman*) and who are guarded (against evil) by God consciousness (*takwah*), are described as the ones who will reach supreme felicity in both worlds (10:62-64).

The state in which they find themselves, previous to their fall, is a state in which there are no feelings of shame related to their bodies (20:121, 7:22) or regret related to sin (*zulm*) (7:23). There is innocence in the first place that is lost and regained after their sincere regret. God covers up their exposed shame and mankind is advised to restrain from evil and to have God consciousness (*takwah*), as this is described as the best robe of innocence (7:26).

The state (of happiness) in which mankind finds itself previous to the fall, is described as one that requires no labor, tiredness, struggle or hard work (20:117). There is the comfort of food, water, clothing and housing without showing any effort (20:118-119), of which all requires effort in the earthly life that follows. Yet this seems to be not enough for Adam, all though being warned for loosing the comfort of food, water, clothing and housing (provided in all needs) without showing any effort (20:118-119), when the devil offers to show Adam his/her indestructible kingdom and the tree of eternity he/she accepts the offer (20:120). From the acceptance of this offer, it becomes clear that the place where they are (the garden), seems to be perishable and not eternal (20:120). Adam clearly wants to preserve the current state in which he/she lives as when the devil tells Adam that the fruit from the forbidden tree is

actually created to make Adam an angel or will lead to a permanent stay (7:20-21), he/she accepts the offer. The devil approaches mankind with the solution of becoming an angel and to live in the garden forever (7:19-20) and to become the eternal ruler (owner) of an indestructible kingdom (20:120).

If we are to analyze this story, two aspects are immediately clear in terms of desires – despite having all, the desire to be an eternal ruler (owner) of an indestructible kingdom and permanent effortless comfort when it comes to providing in needs. Yet there is also another aspect that is clear, the desire to be pure without effort. Becoming an angel means having no sins (spiritual) and living in the garden forever means an effortless life without the struggle of moral decisions. We understand from the Quran that man is not made to live like an angel and also not to reach eternal happiness without effort (moral choices). There is a process to undergo so we understand from the Quran. There is no shortcut to happiness like the devil presents through the forbidden fruit, as the Quran explains that there is no other path to true happiness than the path of righteousness (virtues and good behavior) and faith (believe and trust in God, *iman* (13:28-29, 19:96, 24:55). The subject of righteousness and the related themes will also be explained in this thesis but first, a short description of faith (*iman*) will follow.

We read that the devil plays an important role in their slip, however what is remarkable are the lies that lead to this slip and the “trust” mankind shows in the enemy despite the warnings of God (18:50). The trust (faith) in the devil, symbolized by eating from the forbidden tree, shows the lost trust (faith) in God. Okuyan explains that there are three meanings to the word *iman*, derived from the root of *e'm'n*. The first meaning is one that is most often used in the Quran, which is “to believe”. The second meaning is “to trust” (2:283, 4:136, 9:61, 12:11, 64, 40:7, 61:10-11 and others) and the third meaning is “trust giving” (59:23). One who has *iman* is called a *mumin*, also derived from the same root, usually translated as believer. However, in the Quranic understanding, a believer is also one who has trust in what he or she believes and one who can be trusted (Caykara gazatesi, 2008). On the condition of not eating from a specific tree they were able to preserve their state of righteousness, as when they ate from this tree they would become one of the wrongdoers (*zulm*), which is the opposite of righteousness, meaning committing harm and transgression (2:35, 7:19). Leaving God’s word and following the word of the devil for whatever reason is considered as *zulm* (18:50). However, righteousness is regained after their sincere regret. In the regret of Adam we read that he/she speaks of doing wrong (*zulm*) to his/her own soul (self) and asks for forgiveness (mercy) (7:23).