

How Much is Enough? Money and the Good Life

What constitutes a life worth living?

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Introduction

This thesis is focused as an assertion against our insatiability for wealth. The overlapping paradox we constantly find ourselves in, is that we continue to work increasing hours per week, while we can meet our basic needs in much less. This drive for our insatiability of wealth is currently led by our unhealthy definition of the good life. The book *How Much is Enough?* by Robert and Edward Skidelsky presents an overview of what would constitute as a good life, a question that is raised throughout philosophical history. Ancient philosopher Aristotle forged the concept of *eudaimonia*, in which individuals have to realize their full potential in order to live a good life. A more collectivistic view came from Immanuel Kant, in which he called individuals to act in a moral way so that their actions could be the basis for universal laws.

The Skidelsky's view the good life as a life that is universally desirable or at least worthy of desire. Here, the goods are not ways of conduct in achieving the good life, they *are* the good life. The Skidelsky's compose seven elements that constitute of the good life: leisure, harmony with nature, personality, respect, friendship, security, and health.

The problem of constantly pursuing financial wealth is highly relevant as the tendency has become more and more apparent that we find ourselves constantly 'turned on' for work. The recent survey published by juniors of corporate bank Goldman Sachs show the most extreme form, in which juniors work 95-hours per week and grade their social life with a 2 out of 10.¹ It is evident that the COVID-19 health crisis has worsened our work-life balance, simply because these two previously distinct sections of our lives have become interwoven due to remote working.

Thus, this thesis can be viewed as a critique of our current societal work structure and the misdirection of what should consist of the good life. The thesis is especially of interest for my generation that will start their professional career in a few years. My work should give reason to think and sense on how one should balance their life. I do stand by the liberal political view that governmental policies should not forcefully urge individuals to alter their work-life balance. However, I argue that increased attention on an individual level should be paid to the constituents of the good life. In this thesis, I will explain what I think those constituents should be and how these differ from the proposed by the authors.

Within this thesis, I will use the book by Robert and Edward Skidelsky as a starting point. I will first outline the argument made by the authors, from which I will critically review their lines of reasoning and proposed elements of what the good life should consist of. After having provided a summary on the book of the Skidelsky's, I start my Critical Inquiry. During this section, I first counterargue two often heard objections to their methodology. The second part of this section will offer three requirements that

¹ Goldman Sachs & Co. "Working Conditions Survey." 2020.

I add to the list of requirements that an element should meet as proposed by the Skidelsky's. During my Philosophical Inquiry I offer two elements that should be added to the list of elements. These are happiness and knowledge. During the final section of the Philosophical Deliberation, I integrate my proposed requirements and show whether these fit with the final list of elements that contribute to the good life.

Overview of the book

The authors inflame their argument by stating that the book is focused against our avidity for more and more money. Philosopher and economist John Maynard Keynes predicted in 1930 that a hundred years from then, we would continue to work fifteen hours per week, instead of forty. Technological advances over the years would decrease the worktime needed to maintain a constant output, thus leading to the fall in working hours. A simple observation around us shows that this phenomenon is not as widespread as Keynes might have thought. The authors attempt to answer the question of the good life: what should it consist of? To answer this question, the authors assume, by closely following Keynes, that capitalism has brought everyone enough to lead a good life but it is now time to abandon capitalism and focus on the elements.² It is safe to conclude Keynes' prophecy by stating that he was partly right. Keynes' righteous assumption that our wealth would increase due to technological advances is correct. However, Keynes made the mistake to assume that capitalism would flee once it brought us sufficient wealth.

Keynes' mistake

Keynes' prediction was based on the simple observation of historical capital accumulation and technical progress. Here, Keynes proposed that humanity would be able to satisfy all human needs at a fraction of the work effort due to technological progress.³ Capitalism would thus function as an intermediary state, supporting our journey to the good life.⁴ Keynes' forecast on decreasing working hours per week while growth of income would increase, missed out three important factors. People either work forty hours per week because they enjoy it, are compelled to, or want more and more.

The first cause might have surprised Keynes in a certain sense, if it were not for the fact that our definition of work has changed since 1930. Work has become a source of self-identity, appreciation, and sociability. Perhaps the clearest distinction between work now and in the past, is that the former provides us with intrinsic satisfactions and motivations.⁵ Yet, evidence from surveys indicate that in the developed countries, people want to work less rather than more.⁶ This means that there must be more to the explanation on why working hours have stopped falling.

The second cause may perhaps be the most anti-capitalist and is therefore often claimed by Marxists. Marxists reasoned that workers in the capitalistic system are forced to work longer hours than wanted because they are compelled to by their employers. The power to pay less than the work of the worker is worth and being able to control the labour market make this possible.⁷ A characteristic of this capitalist

² Robert Skidelsky and Edward Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough? The Love of Money and the Case for the Good Life*, (New York: Pinguin Group, 2012), 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶ Harald Bielenski, Gerhard Bosch and Alexandra Wagner, *Employment and Working Time in Europe*, (Dublin, 2002).

⁷ Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 30.

domination can be found with sociologist Juliet Schor. She argued that competitive pressure and poor employee' rights have urged employers to extend the working hours of their current employees, rather than spreading the workload over additional workers.⁸ The reason for this can be found in the additional costs of training, insurance, managing and benefits of the new employees.

The third and most prominent cause for Keynes' failing prophecy relates to his assumption that material wants could be fulfilled, thus at one point we would have enough. Being insatiable is described as a state of mind, in which one experiences a continuous, unsatisfied craving for more than one has.⁹ The question here becomes: why do people, who 'have everything', always find to need more?

The correlating concept here is 'wants', which can be viewed in isolation from an individual perspective or in relation to others. In other words, wants are individual to the human being, but the way they get expressed or suppressed is social. His wrongly prediction further rested on the assumption that individuals would have a finite number of material needs that would be satisfied at a certain point.¹⁰ Here, the interchangeability of Keynes between the definitions needs and wants became his handicap. An individual's needs can be defined as the objective material requirements to lead a comfortable life and are thus finite. One does not need more loaves of bread or litres of water than one can consume to enhance their quality of life. Wants, on the other hand, are pure psychological infinite expandable feelings towards material consumption. This forms the first psychological problem for Keynes; our wants increase all together with economic growth and thus misses the natural tendency to come to a halt.

The prime mistake Keynes made was to believe capitalism would eventually lead to a point in which people feel saturated with the wealth they acquired. Keynes assumed that individuals possess a fixed stock of natural wants, failing to recognize the new set of wants that would be released by capitalism. Capitalism has thus allowed us for an effective progress in accumulating wealth but left us incapable on the civilized use of the wealth.

The Skidelsky's present Keynes' mistake as the Faustian Bargain. Capitalism was a necessary factor to incentivize humans to reach a plateau of productivity that would allow the accessibility of basic needs and the accompanying satisfaction. The bargain here is, to reach that plateau, we had to cater human characteristics such as jealousy and greed.¹¹ The assumption that we could abandon the feelings of jealousy and greed once we reach that plateau, proved to be faulty. We cannot enjoy our basic needs,

⁸ Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*, (New York: Basic Book, 1991), 66.

⁹ Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 34.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

because the negative primitive human characteristics towards ‘wants’ have now become embedded in us. The constant benchmarking with our peers fuels our hunger for material success.¹²

The elements of the good life

Chapter six starts by carefully outlining the good life. The good life is not an ideal state that can be achieved, but rather consists of prerequisites that fulfil the concept effectively. According to the authors, the good life is a life that is desirable and worthy of desire. As mentioned earlier, the overarching horizon of the good life is not just to *be* happy, but to have *reason* to be happy. To have the good things in life – health, respect, friendship, leisure – is reason to be happy. Being happy without such elements is a simple delusion that life is going well.¹³ The basic goods thus do not become *means* or *capabilities* to the good life, they *are* the good life. The focus should not be on the capacity of leading a good life, but on the actual leading on it.¹⁴

There are four criteria which clean up the arbitrariness of the basic goods. The first being that the basic goods should be *universal*. This means that each element should be viewed as part of the good life, and not just a particular part of it. The elements should be viewed through a universal lens, requiring strong philosophical intuitions from different ages and cultures.¹⁵ Second, basic goods are *final*. This means that the goods are sufficient within themselves and cannot be used as a means to another good. The authors refer to the philosophers’ method of discovering final goods, which is to continuously ask ‘what for’ regarding the use of products.¹⁶ For example, the question ‘what is’ money for will probably lead to the answer to buy food. The answer to ‘what for’ food is for, leads to the answer that one needs food to keep him alive. ‘What for’ life would then be, leads to a question that cannot be answered. Life here, is not ‘for’ anything, but is part of the basic good of life. This method of reasoning, continuously asking ‘what for’, uncovers the final goods.¹⁷

Thirdly, basic goods are *sui generis*. This means that basic goods should not be part of another good. For example, the good ‘freedom from COVID-19’ is universal and basic but is not a good because it falls under the larger umbrella of health.¹⁸ Lastly, the goods should be *indispensable*. This means that anyone who does not have access to a good, lacks serious harm of it. A straightforward method of determining the indispensability, is to regard the ‘goods’ as ‘needs’. The term ‘need’ captures the necessity and essentiality for a decent human existence.¹⁹ The following elements are proposed by the Skidelsky’s that fulfil the good life.

¹² Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 37.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

Health. The authors refer to health as the full functioning of the body; all bodily capabilities needed to live and sustain life. Livingly elements such as vitality, energy and alertness are all ascribed to the element.²⁰

Security. By security, the authors specify security to the extent that an individual can expect his life to continue in an accustomed course, without being interrupted by, for example, war, crime, economic or social disturbances. Security here refers to the taken for granted objects in an individual's environment. If this environment suddenly changed, he would feel threatened and perplexed.²¹

Respect. One's respect to another refers to the indication that the other persons' interest and opinion are taken into consideration. It does not refer to the admiration between two persons' but implies a certain level of reciprocal recognition. The complete abolishment of respect occurs with slavery, which is regarded as the worst thing possible next to death. Losing the status of 'being a human' here is often described as a social death.²²

Personality. Personality emphasizes the possibility to plan and fulfil a life's plan to one's taste, nature, and conception of the good. Simultaneously, personality refers to the inner conception of an individual, the freedom of one's spirit to be expressed.²³ The ownership of property becomes an essential safeguard of personality, as the expression of one's own taste, ideals, and nature, free from public opinion.

Harmony with Nature. The authors see nature as both intrinsic and anthropocentric. It becomes clear that the nature's value is intrinsic to us in a sense that we should not manipulate the environment for our own needs. Simultaneously, harmony with nature is anthropocentric because preserving nature is part for our own good.²⁴

Friendship. The term friendship encompasses all robust and affectionate relationships. Family and other relationships may differ between ages and cultures, but certain relations are essential to achieve the good life. As Aristotle proclaimed, no one could choose to live a happy life without any form of relationship, even if all the other goods were obtained.²⁵ True friendship exists when both parties see each other's good as their own, thus creating a new good from which both hope to benefit. Friendship becomes both personal and political. The latter because friendship binds people in a community and protects them against conflicts.²⁶

Leisure. Leisure is often thought of the act relaxing and resting. A more philosophical conception refers to a special form of activity in which we leisure for the sake of it, and not as a means to something else.

²⁰ Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 154.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 156.

²² *Ibid.*, 158.

²³ *Ibid.*, 160.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

For example, playing squash cannot be classified as leisure if done instrumentally; for the sake of losing weight. Another reason why certain activities cannot be classified as leisure, is because the activity is too passive, such as watching television and getting drunk.²⁷ Leisure, according to the authors, therefore becomes an activity that is characterized by the lack of compulsory factors.²⁸ More philosophically, a life without leisure where everything is done for the sake of something else, becomes vain. Leisure has become an act where a higher order of thought and cultivation can be reached. Important to note that it is not about the intellect with which a leisure act is done, but the character of ‘purposiveness without a purpose’.²⁹

Methods to exit the race

To answer the question on how to escape the rat race, the authors first describe conditions a policy needs to meet. The first is that the policy should allow economic organizations to produce enough goods and services to satisfy everyone’s basic needs, while maintaining reasonable standards of comfort. Second, the policy should allow a reduction in the amount of necessary work, freeing up time for leisure. It also would have to lead to a less unequal distribution of work and promote important social bases of health, such as friendship and respect. Lastly, to allow harmony with nature, the policy should focus less on globalization and more on the direct surroundings.³⁰

Basic Income. The basic income is paid by the state to each member, regardless their background, work status and other factors. It is an unconditional payment to all citizens of a society and should be high enough to give the citizens the possibility to choose how much to work.³¹ The universal basic income has the goal of reducing the incentive to work by making leisure more attractive and readily available. It offers a choice to society whether to continue working fulltime or now have the possibility to work less. The method lifts more people above the poverty line, while providing them with the possibility to renew the balance between work and leisure.

Reducing the pressure to consume. Reducing the pressure to consume is an indirect measure to improve the focus on the good life. If the pressure to consume is reduced, we will feel less need to work, as work has become a means for consumption. Restricting advertising will reduce the inflammation of our tendency to insatiability.³² As the government already guides our consumption behaviour through tax and other policies. The authors do not argue for the prohibition or increased taxation of particular goods, as they have proven to be ineffective, as individuals find creative ways of expressing their wealth.³³

²⁷ Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 165.

²⁸ Ibid., 166.

²⁹ Ibid., 166.

³⁰ Ibid., 193.

³¹ Ibid., 198.

³² Ibid., 203.

³³ Ibid., 205.

Progressive consumption tax. The aim of the consumption tax is to limit the demand for excessive consumption. Thus, people should be taxed on their consumption, and not on their income. The progressive income tax has a benefit over the progressive consumption tax in a sense that it will reduce competition in consumption and increase saving for retirement.³⁴

Reducing advertising. Nowadays, advertising is nowhere near the informational role it once had. Today, the aim of advertising is to promote the product and attract the consumer to it. The chief goal of an advertisement is to persuade us to buy products we thought we would not need beforehand. From here, the authors argue that advertising inflames our tendency to insatiability. The Skidelsky's propose to disallow companies to write off advertising costs as a business expense. This would force companies to cut down on advertising, leading to a decrease in the promotion of luxury goods. Goods that are classified as 'wants', as opposed to 'needs', lose their attraction. Therefore, restricting it can also be justified in the name of consumer protection.³⁵

Issue of discussion

According to the Skidelsky's, Western societies are wealthy enough to live and follow the good life as they propose. The only thing society needs to collectively do, is to shift focus from our insatiability for wealth to the elements of the good life. Consequently, the authors propose several policies that assist the state in nudging societies towards the ideal of the good life. However, it is precisely the elements and the reasoning behind it that will be part of the next chapters. In the following section, I will criticize the requirements and add three that enable a more concrete path to achieve the good life. After discarding some elements proposed by the Skidelsky's, I argue for an additional element to be added to the list. A second element will be added that overarches the previously described elements.

³⁴ Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 207.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 208.

Critical Inquiry

Within the following section, I will describe certain critiques on the methodology and reasoning of the Skidelsky's. For this I will use philosophical academic sources and my own practical philosophical reasoning. By first describing often heard objections, I will then attempt to refute those. The critical inquiry will function as a basis for my philosophical inquiry following.

Forming an Objective List

Before turning to the rest of my critique, it is important to review the theory behind composing an objective list of elements that contribute to the good life. The foremost overarching critique relates to the methodology and belief that a plurality of basic objective goods directly benefits people. Before continuing my critique of the Skidelsky's and after composing a list of elements, I need to respond to two objections of the objective list theory.

The first often raised objection when forming an objective list of basic goods, refers to the pluralistic account of the concept. Some philosophical movements argue that the objective list view cannot be considered a sufficient theory of well-being, because it does not identify a unique state of affairs that constitute well-being. In other words, how can one speak of an objective list when the composed elements do not follow a clear framework of well-being?³⁶ This critique rests on the assumption that there must be an essential nature of well-being, to which all elements constitute to. In other words, all elements must contain some reference to the *nature* of the concept well-being.³⁷

However, using the 'nature of well-being' in the argument used by the critics is illegitimate in itself. This is because it is wrong to *a priori* assume that well-being has a 'nature' of this kind. Well-being cannot have a 'nature' because the concept well-being is evaluative and is used to plan and execute goals that are worth striving for. The question whether and how elements constitute to the good life on the account of the nature of well-being should remain unanswered.³⁸

A more confronting argument on why an objective list theory should be viewed as pluralistic, is because *how well one is being*, refers to the individual. In other words, the perceived well-being between individuals may differ intricately in different respects. Therefore, it is that a pluralistic theory will show the best account of well-being.³⁹

The second objection to the objective list theory concerns the question on what elements to put on the list that constitute to well-being. Since the objective list theory does not have a principal well-being definition and accompanying method of establishing elements, we should therefore deny the theory and

³⁶ Christopher Rice, "Defending the Objective List Theory of Well-being", *Ratio* 26, 2 (2013): 203.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 205.

focus on creating a basis for well-being, the critics argue.⁴⁰ This objection can be refuted, by the integer examination of people's considered judgements about well-being. In defining a list, philosophical theorists can revert to the judgements of individuals and compose elements that can be assembled accordingly to the concept of well-being.⁴¹

The same critics may then argue that conclusions formed by the philosophical theorists would be biased by, for example, geographical, time and cultural factors. This may be true to a certain point, but still too insignificant to keep us from further investigating the basic goods. This is because we can note that different cultures and ages share overlap regarding elements that contribute to the good life. For instance, the modern concept of relationships overlaps with Aristotle's *philia* (friendship) and Confucius' *ren* (compassion).⁴²

To conclude, the two most apparent objections can be refuted by referring to incorrect methodology applied by critics and the intergenerational overlap between. By establishing the possibility of composing an objective list of elements, I can now continue reviewing additional critiques to arrive at a solid basis for my philosophical inquiry.

Possibility of conflict

The possibility of conflict between two or more elements is a critique that I find challenging to overcome, despite the counterargument of the Skidelsky's. For example, a conflict may occur between leisure and the respect that comes from earning a living. One may find the respect that comes with a high paying job important, thus negatively impacting the time the person has available for leisure. The authors attempt to solve this dilemma by arguing that such a dilemma could only come to the surface with a form of master-good, under which all other elements can be subsumed. Unless such a good exists, there is no rational reason for choosing one good over the other. The authors here revert to a blind and arbitrary leap of faith to assume no such good exists.⁴³

I find this difficult to acknowledge, as this attests to complacency by ending the discussion with a statement of blind faith. This presents a form of universality assuming that all individuals weigh each element approximately equal. By setting all elements equal, the authors revert to the deliberate discussion and decision of an individual on how to balance between the elements. Should one pursue a political career at the cost of leisure? The authors assume that individuals faced with such choices can reasonably decide for themselves what the better option is. The individual can, in other words, rationally and sensibly decide what the best path is to pursue.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Rice, "Defending the Objective List Theory of Well-being", 209.

⁴¹ Ibid., 210.

⁴² Ibid., 211.

⁴³ Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 167.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 168.

This is an apparent contradiction made by the authors, which can be found in their explanation of Keynes' prophecy failure. The authors here explain that Keynes' prophecy failed because individuals cannot rationally for themselves decide when 'enough is enough', thus leading to a never-ending cycle of wealth creation. Thus, the explanation that individuals cannot rationally decide for themselves how much is enough, contradicts the assumption that individuals can rationally balance their effort and time between the elements.

To conclude this critique, I think the possibility of conflict is too prominent to be disregarded with the assumption that individuals can sensibly decide for themselves. Philosophical counterarguments are insufficient; thus, I propose to add a requirement to the list of basic goods, which can be captured in the concept of autonomy. During my philosophical inquiry I will continue my explanation on why this element can function as a countering factor to this critique.

Requirements to follow

The Skidelsky's find that basic goods should be universal, final, *sui generis* and indispensable, as described earlier. In addition to this, I argue that each basic good should have a valid measurable component and should be able to be executed autonomously. The former requirement is important, because it allows the individual to measure his or her level of well-being, and act accordingly if the good life is not attained, yet. The second requirement ensures that the element can be completed autonomously, meaning that the individual can decide for himself on how to execute the list of elements. A third requirement I propose does not relate to the elements but relates to the society in question. I argue that the society must have a form of *sensus communis*, in which all members in society are aware and are motivated to follow the good life.

Measurement

The Skidelsky's dismiss any form of self-reported happiness because it reaches out to the measurement of subjective well-being (SWB). SWB, according to the Skidelsky's, is a simple one-dimensional good of unconditional value, as it completely disregards the *actual* source of happiness. The Skidelsky's are therefore highly critical of attaching any form of happiness or SWB in the process of attaining the good life.⁴⁵ In my view, self-reports are essential in their contribution to the good life. I believe that if something can properly be measured and benched, each element can function more effectively in the pursuit of the good life. Individuals can thus decrease ambiguity, and if they find a certain element to be achieved sufficiently at a certain threshold, they can shift focus to elements that need more consideration.

As proposed by Kroll and Delhey, subjective indicators can be used by an individual as a barometer of his or her progress. These counters the argument used by the Skidelsky's, stating that the provided

⁴⁵ Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 125.

averages from the measurement of SWB has not grown over the years, demonstrating the irrelevance of SWB. This is primarily due to the various treadmill effects that make it likely that SWB averages remain constant.⁴⁶ In other words, we constantly adapt our levels of SWB to new standards. Therefore, a constant level of SWB over a period does not indicate that we do not increase our levels of happiness. More significantly, a constant level indicates that we *are* becoming more and more happy, due to the treadmill effect. A stable level of SWB averages therefore does not mean that something is going wrong in society.

This line of thought is similar in the argumentation made by Delhey and Steckermeier. They argue that the self-reporting of individuals is crucial to arrive at meaningful applications of the elements.⁴⁷ This shows that from multiple background literature, the measurement of subjective well-being *is* necessary for the implementation of the basic goods. The elements to be added to the list need to have a measurable component.

Sensus Communis

A second and more general requirement that needs to be met relates during the process of following the elements within society as a whole. I think it is of importance that the community in question holds a *sensus communis*. To be able to compose a common list of the good, a broadened sense of an ideal should be created that to which 'all' of a society can agree to. The concept of *sensus communis* acts as a communicative tool for the interpersonal comparison of our intuitions. The *sensus communis* overcomes the individuality of a person's interests and ensures the alignment within a community.⁴⁸

The *sensus communis* has been endorsed by Hannah Arendt, when she explained that we need our community sense in order to transcend our private conditions in favour of the public and interpersonal conditions. According to Arendt, the deliberation in collective and representative thinking enables individuals to form a shared conception of validity.⁴⁹ To ensure the justified and fair construction of elements, the *sensus communis* is a requirement that needs to be embedded within society. This is not a factor that can actively be measured during the process, but its result can be observed if a society follows and allows the fulfilment of the elements.

⁴⁶ Christian Kroll and Jan Delhey, "A Happy Nation? Opportunities and Challenges of Using Subjective Indicators in Policymaking", *Social Indicators Research* 114, 1 (2013): 18.

⁴⁷ Jan Delhey and Leonie Steckermeier, "The Good Life, Affluence and Self-reported Happiness: Introducing the Good Life Index and Debunking Two Popular Myths", *World Development* (2016): 53.

⁴⁸ Etienne van Camp, "An Objective List of the Good: Desirability – Feasibility – Requirements", *KU Leuven Institute of Philosophy* (2015): 34.

⁴⁹ Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves, "Hannah Arendt", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (2019).

Autonomy

The third and final requirement I add relates to the individual and can be captured in the concept of autonomy. Before continuing why autonomy should be a requirement in countering the often heard objection described earlier, I will first provide some philosophical background on the concept.

When we think of autonomy, we personally imagine an ideal life where the defining features of the corresponding life are rationally chosen by himself. The challenge to the concept of autonomy is, however, why it would be better to have one good option and nine bad ones, than just to have the single best option?⁵⁰ Relating this to the objective list theory, and one might wonder whether a governmental institution should coercively mandate the balance between the elements of the good life, leaving no room for autonomous decision making.

For an individual to arrive at a healthy balance between the time and effort of the elements, one will pursue the personal set goals in a rational structure. If the individual knows his intentions and possible choices, by exercising his rationality, the goal of healthy balance between elements can be reached. This calculated process can be defined as deliberated autonomy: the free choice from a range of options that is followed by the correct application of rationality.⁵¹

This form of autonomy expresses our rational intellect, as argued by Hurka. More specifically, the rational foundation of deliberated autonomy rests on the collection of accepting and rejecting of options, that guide the individual to a personal set goal. The careful reasoning is a key driver for this requirement.⁵² Someone with various options on how to divide their time and effort between the elements can consider and contemplate, while exercising their reason. Weighing the benefits and drawbacks of potential decisions exercises the rationality and reflection, called deliberate autonomy.⁵³

How should autonomy thus function as a requirement? Whether it is possible for the agent to autonomously fulfil the element, without any coercive measures from others or social institutions, autonomy now has become a matter of achieving the ends of the objective list.⁵⁴

Still, I would argue that autonomy has some intrinsic value, instead of only instrumental as one may argue when acknowledging the above. The autonomous decision-making process on how one structures his life, and the value attained from it are of intrinsic value. He who chooses a certain life, disregarding other forms of life, takes the responsibility for the positive and negative consequences of choosing that form of life. He becomes more effective in its contribution to the world, than if he could only choose from one form of life.⁵⁵ Thus, taking the above into account, and a strong case can be made why

⁵⁰ Thomas Hurka, *Why Value Autonomy?*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 364.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 365.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 378.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 375.

autonomy should function as a requirement for the objective list. Each element on the list must be able to be achieved autonomously through a process of deliberation and autonomy. This allows the individual to rationally and effectively decide how to balance between the elements. Further practical research conducted shows that perceived autonomy and the availability of opportunity and choice enhances individual life satisfaction.

To conclude, the requirements for an element to suffice are that they must be universal, final, *sui generis*, indispensable, measurable and should be able to be achieved autonomously. Whether the elements of the Skidelsky's fit my requirements will be discussed later.

The Easterlin Paradox

The Skidelsky's explain in the book how economic growth does not contribute positively to the achievement of well-being. The overall cost for advocating growth is not encouraging, as shown that despite the doubling of UK per capita income, we possess no more of the basic goods. In other words, our lives with respect to the basic goods has not improved over the years, coming as unsurprising that we did not have become happier.⁵⁶

The above-described reasoning functions as a basis for two chapters in the book by the Skidelsky's. Due to its significant contribution, I find the following critique to be too important to leave aside, despite its little relevance to the elements.

The Skidelsky's contemplate on what to do with economic growth. The authors suggest dismissing the long-term goal of economic growth and suggest a change to the structuring of our existence to facilitate the good life.⁵⁷ The Easterlin paradox mainly revolves around the argumentation that there is no link between the level of economic development of a country and the overall happiness of its members. Stevenson and Wolfers reject this claim, thus countering the Skidelsky's. Stevenson and Wolfers show that economic growth has contributed positively to better circumstances and thus have improved our well-being.⁵⁸ More importantly, Stevenson and Wolfers find no evidence of a satiation point where wealthier countries have no further increase in subjective well-being. This, combined with the conclusion described above, shows that economic growth is positively associated with the happiness of its members.

To conclude, this critique encompasses the overall view of the Skidelsky's that economic growth should not be the goal in relation to the elements of the good life. I disagree by taking the above evidence by Stevenson and Wolfers into account, showing that economic growth *does* benefit the level of well-being.

⁵⁶ Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 178.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁵⁸ Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, "Economic Growth and Subjective Well-being: Reassessing the Easterlin Paradox", *National Bureau of Economic Research*, (2008): 29.

Conclusion

To summarize the critical inquiry, I first replied to two commonly heard objections on the objective list theory for constituting elements for the good life. After philosophically refuting those arguments, I continued to describe the possible critique posed by the Skidelsky's, referring to the possibility of conflict between elements. After disproving their solution, I opt for an additional requirement that should cover this problem, which will be described in the philosophical inquiry. Secondly, I argue for a measurable component to account for an effective implementation of the elements. Additionally, I add the element of *sensus communis* to account for societal validity. After, a more general critique of the book by the Skidelsky's is discussed. By referring to the Easterlin paradox, I show that the argumentation that economic growth does not improve well-being is faulty.

Philosophical Inquiry

In this section, I will philosophically inquire two elements that should be added to the list that contribute to well-being. The first is Happiness, which functions as an overarching and controlling mechanism. Second, I will argue why Knowledge should be added to the list of elements. By discussing two philosophical approaches to knowledge as an element of the good life, I aim to integrate both to a compelling case.

Happiness

MacLeod investigates the possibility of taking the quality of affective experience into account. By acknowledging that subjective feelings of happiness are important, MacLeod continues to explain that such feelings are only valuable when the feeling is associated with certain activities that are essentially good in themselves.⁵⁹

In other words, experiencing happiness is important for fulfilling the good life, but it is not the experience of happiness that makes an element good, it is the element itself as a source. MacLeod thus shows that happiness is important to evaluate the goods, and it therefore can function as an overarching goal and controlling mechanism of the list.⁶⁰ This contrasts the view of the Skidelsky's, as they view the basic goods as outcomes with an objective nature, thus disregarding the inner states. The proper goal that falls in line with the Skidelsky's, is not for citizens to be happy, but to have *reasons* to be happy. Here, happiness is thus disregarded from having any form of impact on the list of basic goods.⁶¹ Secondly, the Skidelsky's disregard happiness as a part of the good life, because happiness cannot be adequately measured nor compared. More importantly, one man's happiness can be the result of not caring about the fate of others. No generalizability can therefore be assumed when using the concept of happiness.⁶²

I find the first objection to happiness by the Skidelsky's to be ineffective in its reasoning, because the concept of happiness as an element of the good life should be closely put with the objective list approach. This is due to the philosophical reasoning that happiness functions as a guideline and controlling mechanism for the individual following the goods. I thus take a step back and follow the earlier reasoning by MacLeod in which subjective feelings of happiness matter, but have no privileged position, as the source of happiness is more significant.⁶³ Referring to the second objection by the Skidelsky's, I argue that subjective happiness that defines happiness is independent of the appreciation or assessment of other people. Studies of happiness show that people are fully capable of answering questions about

⁵⁹ MacLeod, "Well-Being: Objectivism, Subjectivism or Subjectivism?", *Journal of Happiness Studies* 16, 4 (2015): 1078.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1078.

⁶¹ Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 123.

⁶² Jan Ott, "Good Question, Nice Answer, But Why Without Happiness?" *Journal of Happiness Studies* 15, (2014): 738.

⁶³ MacLeod, "Well-Being: Objectivism, Subjectivism or Subjectivism?", 1078.

their perceived level of happiness and appreciation.⁶⁴ Not only is happiness perceived as important by people all over the world⁶⁵, but it is also more importantly shown that happiness has a significant positive impact on the mental health.⁶⁶

Furthermore, Delhey and Steckermeier show in their research which was completed across 30 EU countries, that there is a close-knit relationship between the good life on the one hand, and people's self-reported happiness and life satisfaction on the other.⁶⁷ This academic finding strengthens the philosophical reasoning made above. To summarize the above critique on the Skidelsky's, their decoupling regarding affluence, the good life and the self-reported happiness is weak. I argue that the coupling should be considered, which can be effectively achieved by encouraging happiness as an overarching element of the objective list.

The first reason why I think happiness should be considered is because it functions as an overarching goal and controlling mechanism. It should be viewed holistically for achieving the good. The second reason why happiness holds some value, is because happiness is useful when measuring and valuating elements of the good life as a source.

Knowledge

Austin completes a compact historical meta-analysis of what thinkers across time, religion and culture found important to value as the good life. The findings by Austin will be discussed and the element that I deem philosophically relevant for my thesis will be integrated with a similar element proposed by Hooker.

Starting with the Greek tradition, Aristotle set up a list of virtues that could answer the question of *Eudaimonia* (a good and flourishing life) as posed by Socrates. The list is as follows: courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, proper ambition, patience, truthfulness, wit, friendliness, modesty, and righteous indignation.⁶⁸ By the Oriental tradition, Confucius created the concept of *dao*, a method of living on how to become a good person, and consisted of a set of traits that, if followed, would lead to a life of cultivation. The set of traits could be distinguished in five different groups: *jen* (humanity), *yi* (good social relationships), *li* (temperance and etiquette), *zhi* (exercising virtue) and *xin* (the true and honest application of virtue).⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Ruut Veenhoven, "Greater happiness for a greater number" *Journal of Happiness Studies* 11, 5 (2010): 615.

⁶⁵ Ed Diener, "Are Scandinavians happier than Asians? Issues in comparing nations on subjective well-being", *Politics and Economics of Asia* 10, (2004): 19.

⁶⁶ Ruut Veenhoven, "Healthy happiness: Effects of happiness on physical health and the consequences for preventive healthcare", *Journal of Happiness Studies* 9, 3 (2008): 465.

⁶⁷ Delhey and Steckermeier, "The Good Life, Affluence and Self-reported Happiness", 59.

⁶⁸ Annie Austin, *A Universal Declaration of Human Well-being*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 26.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

Austin continues his analysis by demonstrating how for both Aristotle and Confucius, a good life is a life followed by a person who is modest, compassionate, truthful and does not attempt to achieve the extremes in the most important aspects of life. Aristotle and Confucius accentuate the importance of inner and outer knowledge on an individual level, because to strive for the good life, one needs to know himself and his position to the outer world.⁷⁰

Austin builds on the modern political works of the Aristotelian and Confucian approach explored by Finnis (1980), Chappell (1995) and Gomez-Lobo (2002). These authors depict noteworthy conceptions of the modern Good as described in ancient Greek and Oriental history.

Harmonious relationships appear to be consistent in some form across these accounts. The relationships extend to the social relationships and the social institutions embedded in society. Meaningful work is included by Finnis and Gomez-Lobo, as is Education, enabling people to educate their mind. The value Play is included by Finnis and Gomez-Lobo, contributing to creative part of the good life. Psychological and forms of well-being can be found in Chappell and Finnis. Where the latter describes it as Inner peace, Chappell refers to Inner harmony. Next, Aesthetic experience makes the list of all three authors, holding some form of connection to Natural world, in which we are connected to animals, plants and other nature forms.⁷¹

Overall, one element overlaps the areas of reason, understanding and truth as proposed by Austin, Finnis, Chappell and Gomez-Lobo. This is Integrity and consists of practical reason and practical action because it refers to an individual's capacity and willingness to follow his or her conception of the good; what he or she values and the ground for it.⁷² The practical reason refers to, as defined by Aristotle, as the ability of forming one's own conception of the good life and to plan one's life accordingly. The practical action aspect of Integrity is the ability of living according to the conception and plan.⁷³ To effectively use one's practical reason, one needs different forms of knowledge. Knowledge about one's social setting (environment) is crucial for him to understand how his life is embedded. Aristotle called this *practical wisdom* and is a necessary condition to act in the outside social world and must be inward and outward facing.⁷⁴

The second aspect of Integrity is the practical action, and thus refers to the ability to live in accordance what one finds valuable. It can be viewed as the self-direction and the conformity of one's values. Similar to the practical reason, the practical action is also fundamentally relational. The social environment in which individuals find themselves, encourage or discourage the actions they would

⁷⁰ Austin, *A Universal Declaration of Human Well-being*, 26.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

prefer to follow in order to live accordingly to the conceptions of the good. Integrity can thus be defined as being true to yourself as a social-relational being embedded in a dynamic environment.⁷⁵

A second philosophical inquiry on knowledge is proposed by Hurka. From the book by Hurka, I will elaborate on the element that ensures the connection between an individual and the outer world. This form of connection is important because it allows the individual to be part of a greater good in his environment, Hurka explains. That element is knowledge, and the first category of Knowledge as proposed by Hurka relates to our self-knowledge regarding the outside world. It is about knowing your relations to your immediate environment and the people that you are in regular contact with that has special value. It forms our fundamental connection and ensures the development of being able to live in harmony and add value to the lives of ourselves and others.⁷⁶

The second category proposed by Hurka is important for constituting the good life, because it refers to knowledge of the individual's inner state: the feelings, thoughts, and the traits of character. If one wants to improve his moral character or balance time and effort between elements, he first needs to know where he stands and where it is flawed.⁷⁷ Self-knowledge is important because it is about *you*, following the ancient Greek wisdom of knowing thyself, leading to a journey of self-discovery. Self-knowledge here acts as instrumental points that acts to constitute to the good life. It becomes beneficial as it helps assisting balancing the elements of the good life.⁷⁸

Austin and Hurka can be summarized and integrated into the concept Knowledge. Austin's practical reason, referring to the ability to form one's own conception, has overlap with the inner form of knowledge as proposed by Hurka. Hurka's form of outer knowledge holds some overlap, but to a lesser extent as this refers to knowledge about our environment. The practical action by Austin provides the individual with the knowledgeable capacity to express himself.

Our form of knowledge that we know regarding the outside world ensures the connection between our self-knowledge and our environment. One can argue that the inward and outward form of knowledge both refer to social rationality and individual rationality, respectively.

⁷⁵ Austin, *A Universal Declaration of Human Well-being*, 31.

⁷⁶ Thomas Hurka, *The Best Things in Life: A Guide to What Really Matters*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 87.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

Philosophical Deliberation

This section will provide a recap that philosophically integrates the chapters earlier. By first elaborating on the requirements I composed, I will then construct a list of elements that I find philosophically interesting to encourage, and that finds a solid foundation based on the literature. Earlier I described how an objective list of the good is desired, because it functions as a guideline on what individuals can focus on to fulfil the concept of the good life.

Requirements

The earlier mentioned requirements introduced by the Skidelsky's that a composed element should be universal, indispensable, final, and *sui generis*. I composed three additional requirements that refer to the elements and society. This ensures a more complete and compelling case when following the list of elements.

The first additional requirement referring to the elements, is that each element should be measurable. This provides the individual with the opportunity to measure the effectiveness of their use of elements. More importantly, the ability of measuring provides the proper and effective competence to alter one's balance between elements if one deems necessary. The second requirement I introduced is of a societal nature. For society to effectively encourage their members to follow the list of elements, there must be a *sensus communis* to compose a broadened sense of ideal. It must be a common conception of the good of which all individuals in a society can agree to. Important to note is that the requirement of a *sensus communis* will not be investigated on the level of each element, because it refers to the collective view of a society. The third and final requirement I propose and can be captured in the concept of autonomy. For the optimal balance between the elements, the individual should be able to execute and follow the elements autonomously. This allows him to decide for himself on how to divide the time and effort between the list of elements.

Elements

Next, I will discuss elements that I argue that should be encouraged to follow. I will discuss the elements and show how they fit my requirements described earlier. The first additional element I propose is Knowledge, referring to the inner and outer category of knowledge as proposed by Hurka and Austin. As mentioned earlier, their philosophical inquiries regarding knowledge and integrity have common ground.

The outer form of knowledge is important because it refers to our self-knowledge regarding the outside world. Austin refers to this line of thought as the practical action, in which the individual could live in accordance with what one finds valuable. This hybrid effort, in which knowledge is transferred to action, ensures the effective applicability of our form of outer knowledge. The second category is the inner

form of our knowledge and can be described as the journey of self-discovery. As mentioned earlier, proper self-knowledge leads the individual on an inquiry to decide what he deems valuable.

The requirements that knowledge should meet can be achieved. First, I will test the requirements as described by the Skidelsky's. Next, I will test knowledge against my proposed two requirements.

The first requirement is universality. To determine the universality of knowledge, one should look for the testimony through different ages and cultures. To acquire knowledge of oneself and the environment one is surrounded by, is a philosophical line of thought that goes back to Aristotle, in which wisdom encompasses the practical action and reason. Second, knowledge should be final, meaning that it should be good in itself. This is the case because knowledge is not just a means to another good. The Skidelsky's use the method of continuously asking 'what for?' over and over. Knowledge can eventually be uncovered as a final good because it is not 'for' anything. Third, knowledge is indispensable, meaning that if someone lacks inner or outer knowledge, one may be deemed to serious harm or loss. One can think of someone who lacks any form of knowledge, may be considered a person with no soul; someone without proper knowledge is just the body. After all, no form of connection between the soul and environment can be made. Fourth, Knowledge should be *sui generis*, implying that it should not be part of another good. Knowledge here is not part of any other good; it stands alone.

The fifth requirement that knowledge should be measurable is more philosophically challenging, but I manage to employ a measurable component by referring to the article by Hunt. The accustomed philosophical definition of knowledge is when someone holds a belief that is true and justified. Such methods of measurement cannot be used for this form of knowledge, because it solely rests on the correctness of answers.⁷⁹

Hunt proposes to include the component of an individual's certainty about a particular set of knowledge. The question what would count as sufficiently certain has already been raised by Quine in 1987, in which he raises the question how certain one must be to be able to apply *true knowledge*.⁸⁰ Quine described this problem as the boundary problem, in which the question is raised where the boundary must lie for knowledge to be certain or not certain enough to count as knowledge. Here, a practical and philosophical solution comes into place, as proposed by Quine.

The solution is that knowledge can be measured when the level of certainty required to qualify as knowledge, is the benchmark when that knowledge is applied for the utility or importance of

⁷⁹ Darwin Hunt, "The concept of knowledge and how to measure it" *Journal of Intellectual Capital* 4, 1 (2003): 100.

⁸⁰ Willard Quine, *Quiddities: An Intermittently Philosophical Dictionary*. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987): 108.

consequences. In other words, knowledge becomes measurable alongside the certainty level of a belief, when that knowledge is applied in the real-life world for the presupposed utility and benefits.⁸¹

My second requirement refers to the concept of autonomy and can be captured in the question whether the element knowledge can be acquired autonomously. First, regarding the part of our inner knowledge, I would argue that it can only be achieved autonomously. The individual holds the sole responsibility of developing knowledge about the inner state: feelings, thought and traits of character. The second form of knowledge relates to the outside world, and this also can be achieved autonomously. An individual can only independently form observations and accompanying connections to the outside world. Again, this form of execution of one's life plan can only be executed individually and autonomously, for it to be effective in its contribution to the good life.

Health is an element that is described earlier by the Skidelsky's. The requirements that health is indispensable, final, *sui generis* and universal has been described earlier, these need not to be discussed again. The two additional requirements regarding the element itself do need elaboration.

The first is that health should be measurable. This can be achieved easily by referring to the earlier definition of health by the Skidelsky's. The authors described health as the full functioning of the body, where health includes all things to sustain a healthy life, such as vitality, energy, and alertness. Applying to a measurable component of health, and I would argue that the number of bodily inferences to the good life is a good measurement of health. If the number of an individual's bodily inferences within a certain time frame is limited, then the person can decide for himself whether he is healthy. The second criteria ask the question whether the element of health can be autonomously achieved. This raises the first immediate counterargument that certain forms of illnesses cannot be prevented in any way, such as cancer. This counterargument is difficult to account for using the concept of autonomy. I, however, fall back on the argumentation that no individual is exempted from these forms of illnesses. This leads to my claim that, if a certain factor is collectively shared within a society that cannot be altered autonomously, it should then be left out of the equation. Thus, the requirement of autonomy is discharged to cover the counterargument of unpreventable diseases.

This is my form of protection which allows me to continue with the argumentation that health can be autonomously achieved. An individual can be primarily held responsible for his health, as the following of a healthier lifestyle can be autonomously strived for. Limiting one's drinking and smoking and the promotion of exercising, significantly increases the use of the full functioning of one's body.

Friendship is an element that is proposed by the Skidelsky's, indicating that their four requirements can be met. More interestingly are the two additional requirements I propose. The first relates to the

⁸¹ Quine, *Quiddities: An Intermittently Philosophical Dictionary*, 110.

measurable component of friendship as an element. This can be achieved by closely following the friendship definition by the Skidelsky's. They describe friendship as a concept that encompasses all robust and affectionate relationships. The number of robust and affectionate relationships can be measured by the respective individual.

The more challenging approach is to extrapolate how friendship can be achieved autonomously. A clash between definitions is the most apparent, as friendship always requires two or more individuals, while autonomy is solely individualistic. Admittedly, this clash of definitions is difficult to counterargue. However, here I fall back on the blind and arbitrary leap of faith from the book by the Skidelsky's, explaining that certain conceptual problems cannot be philosophically dealt with. Such anomalies should be taken as they are and should not stand in the way of doing philosophy.⁸²

Leisure fits my two requirements as well. First, leisure can be measured by any individual striving for it. The concept is defined by the Skidelsky's as an activity for the sake of it. I argued earlier, it can be filled in differently, depending on the individual. The number of hours, and perhaps the types of activities one follows, function here as the measurable component. Next, it can be autonomously strived for since such activities can be done individually.

Security is the final element proposed by the Skidelsky's. Security, as explained earlier, can be defined by the extent that an individual can expect his life to continue in an accustomed course, without being interrupted by economic or social disturbances. The amount of social and economic disturbances account for the element to be properly measured. Next, security is something that can be achieved autonomously. By altering the environment, such as stable friendships and jobs, one can minimize the impact of social and economic disturbances.

The last element is Happiness and holds an overarching characteristic. Contrasting the Skidelsky's, who argued that happiness cannot be part of the objective list in any form, because it lacks consistency and is not generalizable, I argued the case that happiness *can* function as a guideline and controlling mechanism. For this inference I used philosophical reasoning and scientific evidence inferred from happiness surveys. As happiness does not meet all requirements, I argue for a different approach where happiness becomes a holistic concept covering all other elements. It functions as a guiding principle, so that individuals contemplating and following the list of elements, know what the fixed objective point of the horizon is.

The controlling mechanism of happiness is to determine whether the individual's implementation of elements contributes to their well-being. By asking himself whether the implementation of goods contribute to his perceived happiness, he can verify the undertaken actions and adjust if necessary.

⁸² Skidelsky and Skidelsky, *How Much is Enough?*, 167.

Elements proposed by the Skidelsky's that I will not consider are respect, personality, and harmony with nature. The reason that I drop these elements is because these do not meet the measurement requirement. Respect is something that cannot be measured. Viewing the other's views and interests as worthy of consideration lacks any form of concrete and abstract assessment. Next, personality lacks any form of measurement and thus cannot meet the requirement I described earlier. Lastly, the element harmony with nature lacks a measurable component. Although the Skidelsky's argue that it can be measured alongside, for example, the self-sufficiency ratio and presence of local markets, I find this highly insufficient, as it does not tell us anything about *how* harmonious one is with nature.

To conclude, respect, harmony with nature and personality are elements of the good life that lack effective ground to function as solid constituents of the good life. From my perspective, an element can only be effective if it can be measured and be executed autonomously.

Overall Conclusion

In my thesis I used the work by the Skidelsky's as a starting point to deliberate on what and how aspects of life can guide an individual to the good life. More specifically, I aimed to answer the following question: *what requirements of the good life, as discussed by Skidelsky and Skidelsky in their work "How Much is Enough? Money and the Good Life?", need to be altered for a more compelling case, and what elements should be added to the objective list of the good life?*

During my critical inquiry, I first focused on commonly heard objections to the reasoning of the Skidelsky's. Critiques on the possibility of forming an objective list of elements and whether these may conflict each other are counterargued, which then gives room to think of requirements that should be added to the objective list. To ensure a thorough process of deliberation and execution, I argued for three additional requirements. Two relating to the element on an individual level and one on a societal level.

That an element should be measurable and be able to be achieved autonomously relate to the element on an individual level. An element that is measurable provides the individual with the ability to properly measure and benchmark his progress in following the element. Ensuring that an element can be achieved autonomously, shows that individual can deliberate and balance for himself between the elements. During the next chapters, I argued for two elements that should be added to the list. These are knowledge, referring to the inner and outer forms, and happiness, the overarching and controlling element of the objective list. Finally, during the last chapter, each element is weighed and disregarded if it does not meet the elements. Respect, personality, and harmony with nature are elements put forward by the Skidelsky's but are disregarded because they lack a proper and significant measurable component. The third requirement relates to society, meaning that there must be a *sensus communis* for the objective list to work.

I would like to end the thesis by offering my personal perspective. Through discussions with family and friends about the book and my findings, I reached a disquieting confliction. Although I acknowledge that fulfilling a good life consists of much more than working and maximizing short-term pleasure, I also observe that this inference is not at all widely shared in my social network. If an individual were to decide to redirect his life to the good life, while his social network does not, it would force the individual to break with his direct environment. This weighing of consequences will remain a deciding factor for individuals who contemplate on redirecting their life.

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