

Inner Work Outline Excerpt –
Three Paths to Well-being
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Basic Starting Place:

- a. We are aiming for a life of goodness – well-being within ourselves (*eudaimonia* in Greek) and well-being with others - how to live optimally in each of these areas of our lives. To live optimally, we have to be able to regulate our thoughts, feelings and emotions, speech, behavior and how we experience the world in our physical bodies, especially stress.
- b. We also are aiming to fulfill our moral duties to others. Morality is essentially concerned with not causing intentional, negligent, avoidable and unnecessary harm. In normal lives, this mostly includes emotional harm done with words, gestures and behaviors. Morality also requires us to benefit others when possible, except for people who are doing harm, as defined earlier.
- c. We have inner destructive patterns - resistance to what is good, right, true and beneficial. This inner resistance has the effect of diminishing our well-being in both arenas, well-being within, and well-being with others. This resistance, in general, affects our thinking, feelings, emotions, speech and behavior, as well our physical being.

Three Paths to Wellbeing

These paths are not exclusive each other. They are three different articulations of the path toward well-being, optimal living.

Path One: The Vision Path

- i. A somewhat precise and reality-based vision for how we want to be, optimally, in each main arena of our lives, including what our moral duties are. Areas for most are family, work, school, community activities and citizenship. Some include spiritual and/or religious practice and groups.
- ii. The will to do what is necessary to achieve our visions – going from a good idea to actual implementation.
- iii. Acquiring the specific inner life and interpersonal skills to be able to achieve our visions – self regulation.

- iv. Enlightened Reflection – constant evaluation of all the above.

**Path Two: An Adaptation of the Stoic Path:
Virtue, Wisdom, Rationality, Depth**

- i. Virtue, from a Stoic perspective:
 - 1. What you are supposed to do in order to achieve your vision and fulfill your moral duties, regardless of what other people do and regardless of what your passing feelings and emotions might be.

- ii. Wisdom:
 - 1. Factual knowledge about the matters with which you are concerned
 - 2. Insight to yourself – especially the unconscious patterns of the ego-self (defined below).
 - 3. Insight into others – what might be going on inside of them to account for their actions.
 - 4. Insight into the processes that people and groups of people go through. Families, friendships, classrooms, teams, other groups. Understanding group dynamics and group culture.
 - 5. Some definition of the good that we are seeking that will create an optimal life - inner well-being and well-being with others.

- iii. Rationality – thinking well
 - 1. A grasp of the facts of a situation. The ability to see things as objectively as possible.
 - 2. The ability to create good theories based on facts.
 - 3. To be able to regulate thoughts, feelings and emotions, and therefore speech and behavior.
 - 4. The ability to process well with others – discuss and solve without giving in to unregulated thoughts, feelings and emotions that get in our way.

- iv. Depth
 - 1. For those inclined, to study, understand and pursue meaning and purpose in life, the depths of the inner life and for those inclined, matters concerned with divinity and God.

2. For example, the areas of love, justice, truth and beauty, and other areas of philosophy.

Path Three: The Duty Path.

Finding meaning through:

- i. **Doing you duty** (nothing matters but your duty). This requires deliberation on what your duties are. See #3 below:
- ii. **Finding bliss / authentic happiness.** What gives your life meaning beyond pleasure and immediate gratification. Authentic happiness will require discipline, training and sacrifice of immediate gratification.
 - a. For example, sports, music, excellence in hobbies and interests; also, spiritual and religious practice.
 - b. Creating nourishing friendships and loving relationships.
- iii. **Being resilient** when you can't find bliss / authentic happiness. The things give us deeper happiness are difficult, and they won't offer immediate rewards. Often, we feel we can't do it and give up. Resilience is the strong will to keep at it, despite adversity. Resilience requires specific inner life skills to deal with resistance.
- iv. On a deeper level, knowing that **everything matters, everything makes a difference.** Once we master the first three elements of the duty path, we become aware of small moments that can make a huge difference.
- v. Notes regarding bliss / authentic happiness
 - (a) Authentic Happiness (bliss) is a by-product of virtue and seeking the good; when you just you seek happiness as pleasure and feeling good, you eventually find misery.
 - (b) Pleasure, getting needs met and gratification are good in moderation and in proportion.
 - (c) The ego-self confuses authentic happiness with the gratifying of ego self needs – pleasure, gratification, control, etc.

Regarding our Duties:

1. Safe – do not act foolishly or recklessly with your life.
2. Healthy – healthy physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. One must have some degree of self-acceptance, along with the drive to become better.
3. Moral – do not cause harm; benefit the worthy when possible. Be an agent of the good. Make things better. The courage and resilience to stand for what is good, right, just true and fair.
4. Respectful – of the person, property, dignity, etc., of others
5. Rational – grasp of facts, develop good theories, be able to reason well with others.
6. Insightful (wisdom as insight) – knowing what is happening inside of you; inferring what is happening with others, know where you are in the process of things; know how to make things better, seek rich factual knowledge of things that are important to you..
7. Be caring, loving, generous, empathic
8. (other duties)