



# The Good Life: Different Perspectives

Akiva Quinn & Usha Sista

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# The Good Life

## Pleasure and Purpose

What constitutes the Good Life for YOU?  
What is a well-lived or a happy life?

Which texts, thinkers and traditions best inform the elements of the Good Life?

Different perspectives on **the Good Life** focus on pleasure, morality, purpose or virtue.

### **Life of Pleasure**

rational aim for people to maximise pleasure:  
Epicurus, Hedonism

### **The Moral Life**

to live well means to live a morally good life:  
Altruism, Humanism

### **The Fulfilled Life**

character, happiness, virtue constitute the good life: Virtue Ethics

# The Good Life

## Hedonism or Humanism

- Epicurus: the good **is** pleasure, gratification of physical desires and lasting *stable* pleasures, satisfaction/tranquillity free of anxiety or pain
- Seeking happiness in pleasure via feelings and experiences or sensual delight is self-limiting so we should not directly aim at it (Sidgwick)
- Hedonist Paradox: those dedicated to seeking pleasure rarely find it other than fleetingly
- In contrast to *intrinsically* valuing pleasure, Humanism **values** human fulfilment, liberty, social wellbeing and shared responsibility

# Epic of Gilgamesh

Gilgamesh, let your belly be full,  
Make merry day and night.

Of each day make a feast of rejoicing.

Day and night dance and play!

Let your garments be sparkling fresh,  
Your head be washed; bathe in water.

Cherish the child that holds your hand,

Let a spouse delight in your bosom.

# The Good Life Beauty, Love and Morality

- Plato saw the *good* as unchanging: “the divine nature is as perfect as anything could be”
- Beauty, courage, learning and love connect us with immediacy to goodness and truth
- Does immortality offer better? “There are greater gifts, to be born and to die, and in between to live like a man” (Ulysses)
- Experiencing love for someone or something takes us beyond our ego and this ‘unselfs’ us which gives rise to morality (Iris Murdoch)



# The Moral Life

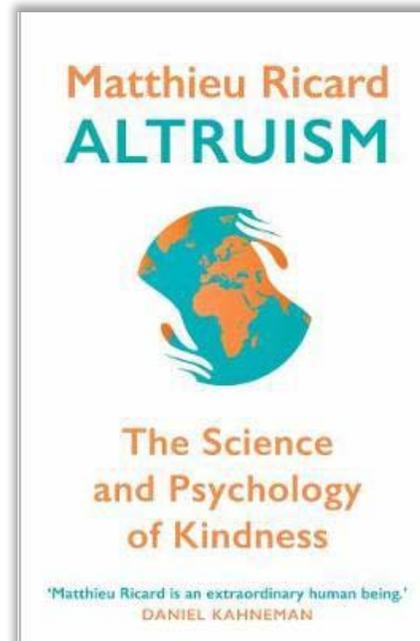
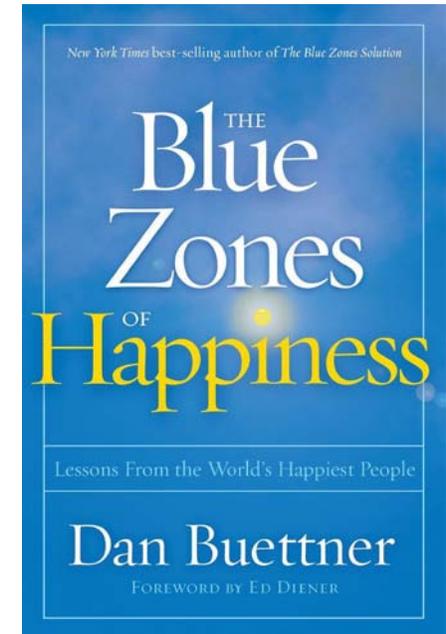
“The moral life is the good life”

Hugh Mackay, *The Good Life*

# The Good Life

## Altruism and Happiness

- Happiness and well-being are inherently **social** goods and depend on people and place

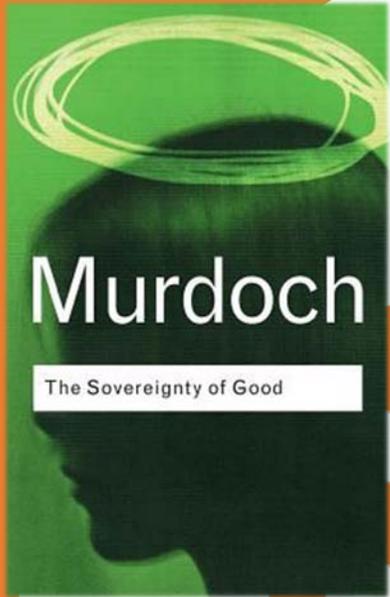


- Altruism contributes to life *satisfaction* and well-being for ourselves and others

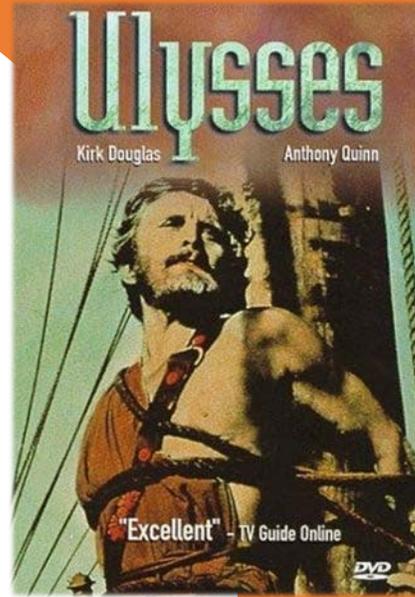
# Altruism

“Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness”

Martin Luther King, Jr.



[www.thelifeyoucansave.org.au](http://www.thelifeyoucansave.org.au)



# The Good Life Reading and Reflection

📖 Hugh Mackay

***The Good Life: What Makes a Life Worth Living?*** (2013)

📖 Peter Singer

***How are we to live? Ethics in an age of self-interest*** (1993)

***The Life You Can Save; The Most Good You Can Do*** (2015)

📖 Simon Blackburn

***Plato's Republic: A Biography*** (2006)

📖 David Brooks

***The Road to Character*** (2015)

***The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life*** (2019)

