

Chapter One

The Definition of Happiness

I begin by looking at Kant's descriptions of happiness [*Glückseligkeit*]. While Kant uses many different terms in his discussions of happiness (for example, well-being, contentment, inclination, pleasure, bliss), there are two fundamentally different ways he considers happiness.¹ On the one hand, Kant treats happiness as a sensible state, that is, as a state that involves the satisfaction of inclinations, brings pleasure, and is characterized as well-being.² On the other hand, Kant describes happiness as an intelligible state, that is, as a state that involves moral contentment.³ He sometimes calls the first "physical happiness" and the second "moral happiness." I explore the way in which happiness is sensible or physical in section I. Of particular importance to this description of happiness are the terms "inclination" and "pleasure." In section II, I consider happiness as intelligible or moral. Here the terms "moral happiness," "self-contentment" and "bliss" are important. Finally, in section III, I reach a conclusion concerning which of these two accounts of happiness best reflects Kant's understanding of happiness (granted that he speaks of happiness in both ways). I also suggest how these descriptions of happiness are tied to a problem in Kant's account of the highest good.

I. Happiness As Sensible

While there are unclarities in Kant's notion of happiness, there is no doubt that he thought of happiness as

a physical state. In several places, Kant uses the terms “well-being” and “welfare” to describe happiness. In the *Groundwork*, Kant says that complete well-being [*Wohlbefinden*] and contentment [*Zufriedenheit*] with one’s state is called happiness [*Glückseligkeit*] (Gr.61/4,393). Further he observes that a person’s preservation [*Erhaltung*] or welfare [*Wohlergehen*] is “in a word his happiness [*Glückseligkeit*]” (Gr.63/4,395). In the second *Critique*, happiness [*Glückseligkeit*] is said to be a person’s “consciousness of the agreeableness of life [*das Bewusstsein . . . von der Annehmlichkeit des Lebens*] which without interruption accompanies his whole existence” (CPR,20/5,22). “Happiness [*Glückseligkeit*] is the condition of a rational being in the world, in whose whole existence everything goes according to wish and will” (CPR,129/5,124). Happiness [*Glückseligkeit*], in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, is said to be “satisfaction [*Zufriedenheit*] with one’s condition . . . with what nature bestows” (MM,45/6,387). Elsewhere, Kant states that happiness [*Glückseligkeit*] contains whatever nature can obtain for us (TP,50n/8,283). Happiness [*Glückseligkeit*] refers to “constant well-being [*Wohlergehen*], a pleasant life, complete satisfaction [*Zufriedenheit*] with one’s condition” (MM,149/6,480). The *Lectures on Ethics* also describes happiness [*Glückseligkeit*] as well-being [*Wohlbefinden*] and identifies this well-being with “the physical good [*das physische Gut*]” (LE,8/M,10). Thus, *Glückseligkeit* is happiness and it has to do with the state of a person’s life in the natural world. A person’s happiness has to do with his or her preservation, welfare, and well-being; in short, with the condition of his or her sensible life.

Because happiness means a pleasant life, satisfaction with a person’s own physical state, it is called a physical good. Kant names one element of the highest good “well-being” (what he elsewhere calls happiness) and labels it the physical good. He states that the highest physical good is happiness [*Glückseligkeit*] (CJ,301/5,450). Kant explains that human beings desire happiness because

their nature is such that they are dependent on circumstances of sensibility (Rel.41-42n/6,46). He adds that human beings cannot be expected to wholly renounce what is physical in happiness (Rel.125/6,135). Clearly, happiness operates in these passages as a physical good, as an object desired because human beings are sensible beings.

Kant even at times refers to this physical good as "physical happiness." He describes physical happiness [*physische Glückseligkeit*] as the possession of contentment with one's physical state [*Zufriedenheit mit seinem physischen Zustande*] (Rel.61/6,67) and as satisfaction with what nature bestows [*Zufriedenheit mit . . . was die Natur beschert*] (MM,45/6,387).⁴ In these passages, Kant attaches the term "physical" to happiness as a qualifier. He intends thereby to distinguish one sort of happiness, physical happiness, from another sort of happiness which he calls "moral happiness" (see section II). Thus, in this first sense of happiness, happiness has to do with the state of a human being's life in the sensible world.

There are certainly differences among the passages above that purport to offer an account of happiness as a sensible state. Some of the passages claim directly that happiness is well-being or a pleasant life. Other passages say that happiness is a person's satisfaction with his or her physical state.⁵ It seems that happiness is said to be both the physical state itself and the person's satisfaction with that physical state. Surely, these are different. To say happiness is a pleasant life is different than saying happiness is a person's consciousness of the agreeableness of life. Perhaps the point here is that a person cannot be happy without being conscious of being happy. Perhaps it is not enough to have a pleasant life unless a human being knows he or she is having a pleasant life. In this sense, happiness goes beyond the mere presence of a certain sensible state to an awareness and a satisfaction with that state. Happiness possibly requires both well-being and satisfaction with that state of well-being. But, based on the evidence there is,

Kant does not explicitly make this point. He speaks more loosely of happiness both as well-being (a state of affairs in nature) and as satisfaction with that well-being (an attitude towards a state of affairs in nature).⁶

It is possible too that there may be a disparity between a state of nature and a person's contentment with that state of nature. One person may be content with a certain level of well-being with which another person is not content. Are both happy? That depends on whether happiness is the state itself or our satisfaction with the state. Both may have the same pleasant life though one fails to be satisfied with that life. If happiness is the having of a pleasant life, then both have realized happiness. But, if happiness requires satisfaction with the conditions of a person's life, then only the first person has realized happiness. A person may not be satisfied with his or her sensible condition even though it is an extremely pleasant life, according to others. Or, a person may be satisfied with his or her sensible condition even though it is not a very pleasant life, according to others. Hence, it is not obvious that there is any clear relationship between a level of well-being and a person's satisfaction with that level of well-being.

However, one point remains. Both of these descriptions of happiness—as a pleasant life and as satisfaction with that life—have to do with our physical state. Though Kant describes happiness as both well-being and as contentment [*Zufriedenheit*] with one's condition, both of these accounts look to our condition in nature, to the fact of our existence in the sensible world.⁷ Neither description postpones happiness to another world or considers happiness to be in principle unreachable in the sensible world. Neither account treats happiness as if it were independent of or had nothing to do with our sensible nature. Therefore, on the central point, there is no difficulty. Kant uses the term "happiness" to describe a sensible state and/or our satisfaction with a sensible state. Happiness concerns a physical state of affairs. Because happiness is a physical state or an atti-

tude towards a physical state, happiness is a goal to be achieved in the sensible world.

Next, happiness is defined in terms of inclination as evidenced by Kant's repeated linking of the two terms. He claims that reason does not approve of happiness (though inclination [*Neigung*] may desire it) except when it is combined with worthiness to be happy (A813/B841). He insists that an action done from duty must ignore the influence of inclination [*den Einfluss der Neigung*] (Gr.68/4,400). Yet he acknowledges that a person's needs and inclinations [*seinen Bedürfnissen und Neigungen*] (whose satisfaction is happiness) run counter to the commands of duty (Gr.73/4,405). Thus, inclination is a kind of motivating force like reason. It aims to determine the will in ways opposite to reason (based on subjective rather than objective conditions). Inclination refers to the dependency of the will on sensations and subjective conditions. Inclination indicates a need (Gr.81n/4,414) and influences the will to aim at satisfying that sensible need. Inclination directs reason to formulate principles for its service, principles aimed thus at the satisfying of needs. Happiness is the satisfaction of these needs and inclinations. Presumably, a person has numerous inclinations (for instance, needs for health, wealth, fame, and so on). When these inclinations are satisfied, when the person has a pleasant life, the person is happy.

Even though, according to Kant, happiness is the satisfaction of inclinations, there is still uncertainty concerning what this means. Commentators have argued quite rightly that Kant speaks of two ways in which the satisfaction of inclinations, that is, happiness, may be accomplished.⁸ Kant's statements about happiness seem to refer both to the satisfaction of *all* inclinations and to the satisfaction of a complex *system* of inclinations (a hierarchy of inclinations). Kant does not explicitly make this distinction or argue for one interpretation over the other, although his texts reveal both of these views.

On the one hand, there are passages in which Kant speaks of happiness as the satisfaction of all inclina-

tions. Kant states that “happiness consists in the satisfaction of *all* our inclinations [*aller Neigungen*]” (LE,38/M,47); “Happiness is the satisfaction of *all* our desires [*aller unserer Neigungen*]” (A806/B834); and “in this Idea of happiness *all* inclinations [*alle Neigungen*] are combined into a sum total” (Gr.67/4,399).⁹ In other texts, he reiterates: “the sum of *all* inclinations [*aller Neigungen*], i.e. happiness” (CJ,284n/5,434n);¹⁰ and “there is required for the Idea of happiness an absolute whole, a maximum of well-being” (Gr.85/4,418).¹¹ All of these passages focus on the number of inclinations to be satisfied—all, sum total, maximum. According to this definition of happiness, there is a collection of inclinations, the sum total of which must be realized, in order for happiness to be achieved.

On the other hand, there are passages in which Kant speaks of happiness as the satisfaction of a system of inclinations. Kant refers to: “All inclinations taken together (which can be brought into a fairly tolerable system [*System*], whereupon their satisfaction is called happiness” (CPR,75-76/5,73). He states that: “Natural inclinations . . . can be brought into harmony in a wholeness [*Zusammenstimmung in einem Ganzen*] which is called happiness” (Rel.51/6,58). These passages focus on the harmonizing and systematizing of inclinations. They suggest that happiness refers not to the satisfying of all inclinations but to the satisfying of an organized system of inclinations.

Now several questions may be raised: Are these views of happiness incompatible or can they be reconciled? Is there any indication that Kant preferred one view to another?

There is at least in theory a difference between satisfying all inclinations and satisfying a system of inclinations. “All inclinations” refers to the number of inclinations to be realized while “a system of inclinations” refers to the way in which the inclinations are to be realized. For example, to realize all of a person’s inclinations is to satisfy those inclinations in no particular order and

according to no particular scheme. If happiness is the satisfaction of all inclinations, then there is no discrimination among inclinations (none is apparently better or worse than any other) and it is not necessary to forego satisfying one inclination in order to satisfy another (all are to be satisfied). The satisfaction of all inclinations excludes the notion of a system of inclinations. All seems to mean that no inclination takes priority; none must come before another. However, the satisfaction of a system of inclinations does not preclude realizing all inclinations. It may be that all inclinations are still realized only now in a particular order and according to a particular scheme. Or the notion of a system could mean that the satisfaction of all inclinations is not possible. A person may have to forego satisfying one inclination in order to satisfy another inclination or the system of inclinations. In a system, it is possible to discriminate among inclinations; some inclinations may be more valuable than others.

Thus, in theory, there is a difference between these two views of happiness. Happiness as the satisfaction of all inclinations excludes the notion of happiness as the satisfaction of a system of inclinations. But happiness as the satisfaction of a system of inclinations need not exclude the notion of happiness as the satisfaction of all inclinations. These views of happiness need not be incompatible (a system of inclinations can include all inclinations) but they may be incompatible (a system of inclinations may not include all inclinations and all inclinations excludes a system of inclinations). Hence, there is no contradiction between Kant's definitions of happiness if it can be assumed that he intends happiness to be the satisfaction of a system of inclinations which includes all inclinations.

Yet, Kant considers two difficulties that concern any definition of happiness which includes the satisfaction of all inclinations. The first difficulty has to do with the possibility of realizing all inclinations. Kant says that all inclinations means "an infinite number of inclinations"

and that it is unlikely that this infinite number of inclinations could ever be satisfied. Kant states that it is vain to expect that imperatives aimed at happiness could attain "the totality of a series of consequences which is in fact infinite" (Gr.86/4,419). A definition of happiness that includes the satisfying of all inclinations has to include all present and future inclinations (Gr.85/4,418). So, Kant concludes that there is a problem both in determining what is included in all inclinations and in aiming to realize all inclinations.

The second difficulty concerns whether or not happiness can in fact be said to be the satisfaction of all inclinations. Here Kant seems to argue against the view that happiness is the satisfaction of all inclinations. He claims that the "prescription for happiness is, however, often so constituted as greatly to interfere with some inclinations" (Gr.67/4,399). Kant gives the example of a person suffering from gout. He says that such a person may choose to satisfy a single inclination rather than the "wavering Idea" of happiness, since the former is determinate regarding what it promises and the time of its satisfaction.¹² A person may decide to forego the pursuit of happiness as a whole in order to satisfy a relatively certain particular inclination, since otherwise this particular inclination may be frustrated in the pursuit of the whole. The gout-sufferer desires a certain food but desires health. If, as Kant says here, the pursuit of happiness interferes with the satisfying of some inclinations, then obviously, happiness cannot be the satisfying of all inclinations. Happiness understood as the satisfaction of all inclinations cannot account for the gout-sufferer or for the possibility of incompatible inclinations.

These two difficulties suggest that happiness is best understood as the realization of a system of inclinations. Both of the problems Kant raises concerning the definition of happiness have to do with happiness as the satisfaction of all inclinations. Because Kant offers no objections to the second definition of happiness as the

satisfaction of a system of inclinations, it seems to be the more acceptable view.¹³

However, the difficulties Kant has considered imply that the earlier attempt to bring together the two definitions of happiness does not work. The argument there was that the two definitions of happiness need not be incompatible in that a system of inclinations may include all inclinations. It now seems that Kant does not mean for a system of inclinations to include all inclinations. He recognizes that the system which is happiness excludes the satisfying of certain inclinations. Thus, the system which is happiness does not include all inclinations and so the two definitions of happiness are incompatible and cannot be brought together. Hence, there is some evidence that Kant found more acceptable the notion that happiness is the satisfaction of a system of inclinations though this conclusion is challenged by his frequent defining of happiness as the satisfaction of all inclinations.

Finally, happiness is defined in terms of pleasure [*Lust*].¹⁴ Kant offers a series of examples in the second *Critique* which are similar to the gout-sufferer example in the *Groundwork*. In both places, Kant considers a person who desires two objects and makes a choice between them. If a person's desire for some object (his/her inclination) is to be the determining ground of the will, then the choice of this or that object will depend on feelings of agreeableness (how certain is the pleasure to be received from this object, how immediate, etc.). In these examples, the notions of happiness and inclination are tied to notions of agreeableness and pleasure. Kant says:

A man can return unread an instructive book which he cannot again obtain, in order not to miss the hunt; he can go away in the middle of a fine speech, in order not to be late for a meal; he can leave an intellectual conversation, which he otherwise enjoys, in order to take his place at the gambling table; he can even repulse a poor man

whom it is usually a joy to aid, because he has only enough money in his pocket for a ticket to the theater (CPR,22/5,23).

In one sense, these examples are like the example of the gout-sufferer. When a person is "pathologically determined," when a person acts in order to achieve some end, the principle on which the person acts cannot be a practical law because it is not universal. We cannot determine which of two desired objects a person ought to have acted to realize. Even less can we determine which objects all people ought to act to realize. Kant's point is that there is no difference in kind between the objects at issue in these examples. Whether the gout-sufferer eats this food or aims to achieve happiness, whether a person reads an instructive book or attends the hunt; in all cases these choices are choices between two desired objects, either of which might serve as determining ground of the will. Neither choice is moral, neither is based on a practical law, because in both cases, the action is based on desire for some object and it matters not the nature of the object. So these examples all show that insofar as an object of desire is the determining ground of the will, the moral value of the action is the same. We cannot discriminate between "higher" and "lower" objects of desire. Happiness is not necessarily to be preferred to a certain food and an instructive book is not necessarily to be preferred to the hunt. Which object acts to determine a person's will depends on the inclinations and the pleasures of the person and it is thus futile to try to prescribe which objects ought to be desired.

In another sense, these examples differ from the example of the gout-sufferer. In these examples, a person is choosing between two particular objects; for example, a book and a hunt. In the example of the gout-sufferer, a person is choosing between a particular food and happiness as a whole. The former examples reveal a conflict between individual objects of inclination while the latter

example shows that an individual object of inclination may conflict with the system of inclinations. Both examples show that our desires to achieve certain sensible ends may be incompatible although only the latter shows that our desire to achieve a certain sensible end may be incompatible with our desire to achieve a system of sensible ends.

These examples also serve to link happiness and inclination to pleasure. Happiness is a rational being's consciousness of the agreeableness of life [*Annehmlichkeit des Lebens*] (CPR,20/5,22). The principle of happiness includes all principles which place the determining ground of the will in the pleasure [*Lust*] or displeasure received from an object (CPR,20-21/5,22). Kant insists that a man who is concerned only with the agreeableness of life (i.e., happiness) asks only how much and how great is the pleasure [*Vergnügen*] which this or that object might bring him (CPR,22/5,23). He says: "Where one places his happiness is a question of the particular feeling of pleasure [*Lust*] or displeasure in each man" (CPR,24/5,25). Finally, he claims that happiness is "always pleasant [*angenehm*] to him who possesses it" (CPR,115/5,111). Happiness then has to do with the agreeableness of life and happiness is to be found in realizing those objects which bring pleasure. Principles of happiness aim at the maximizing of pleasure.

There are several other passages in which Kant links happiness to agreeableness and pleasure. He describes happiness as the "greatest sum of the pleasantness of life [*Annehmlichkeiten des Lebens*]" (CJ,42/5,208) and refers to happiness "with the whole abundance of its pleasures [*Annehmlichkeit*]" (CJ,43/5,209). He tells us: "Pleasantness [*Annehmlichkeit*] is enjoyment [*Genuss*]" (CJ,42/5,208) and "That which pleases the senses in sensation is 'pleasant' [*Angenehm*]" (CJ,39/5,205). Kant distinguishes the pleasant from the beautiful and the good and relates it to inclination. Thus, he speaks of "the interest of inclination [*Neigung*] in the case of the pleasant [*Angenehmen*]" (CJ,44/5,210).

In the *Groundwork* too, Kant distinguishes between the pleasant and the good. The pleasant, he says, influences the will solely through sensation (Gr.81/4,413). The dependence of a will on sensations is called an inclination and in this case a person is oriented towards the *object* of the action (so far as the object is pleasant to the person) (Gr.81n/4,413-14n). Kant claims in another place that if the doctrine of morals were nothing but a doctrine of happiness then there would be no need of a priori principles. Reason cannot determine "by what means one could attain a lasting enjoyment [*Genuss*] of the true pleasures of life [*Freuden des Lebens*]" (MM,14/6,215). Only experience is truly helpful in making a person's "choice of a way of life suitable to his particular inclination [*Neigung*] and susceptibility for pleasure [*Vergnügen*]" (MM,14-15/6,216).

It is clear that Kant often links pleasure and pleasantness to happiness. Happiness has to do with the agreeableness of life which in turn is defined by how much pleasure is provided. Similarly, principles of happiness aim to satisfy particular inclinations. They are directed towards "the pleasant." Kant uses several words for pleasure or pleasantness (among them; *Annehmlichkeit*, *Lust*, *Vergnügen*, *Angenehm*, *Freuden*). But he does not seem to be concerned to distinguish among them. Neither is he concerned to establish precisely the connection between happiness and pleasure. Happiness involves the satisfaction of inclinations and inclinations are directed towards achieving what is pleasant. Kant is talking both about what happiness is and how principles of happiness operate. Perhaps that is one reason why the relationship between happiness and pleasure is not spelled out in detail. Principles of happiness are based on inclination and desire for some object and thus are directed toward what is pleasant, what brings pleasure. But it is another thing to say that happiness is the satisfaction of inclinations and thus is pleasant, or is pleasure. For instance, what would we make of Kant's example of the gout-sufferer who chooses

the pleasure of a certain food over the pleasure of happiness, if happiness is equated with pleasure or with what is pleasant.

This section has not resolved all of the difficulties in Kant's definition of happiness as inclination and pleasure. Probably, it is not possible to do so. What this section has shown is that Kant considers happiness to involve a physical state in the natural world. There is a connection between happiness and pleasure, inclination, and sensation. When the will is determined to act for the end of happiness, the will is dependent on sensation, and it acts to satisfy inclinations and achieve pleasure. This notion of what happiness is and what happiness involves treats happiness as a sensible state.

II. Happiness As Intelligible

There are three other descriptions Kant gives of happiness. These descriptions stand apart from the previous account of happiness in that they seem to consider happiness to be a mental state or a person's consciousness of himself or herself as a moral agent or a state to be realized in a future world. These three descriptions are alike in that each denies that happiness is a sensible state that occurs when inclinations are satisfied and pleasures are realized. To be considered are Kant's discussions of: moral happiness [*moralische Glückseligkeit*], moral contentment or self-contentment [*Zufriedenheit*], and bliss [*Seligkeit*].

Kant seems to suggest that happiness can be a mental state when he distinguishes moral happiness [*moralische Glückseligkeit*] from physical happiness [*physische Glückseligkeit*] in *Religion* and in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. If happiness can be "moral," then it need not be a sensible state having to do with inclination and pleasure. In *Religion*, he claims that by moral happiness he means "the reality and constancy of a disposition which ever progresses in goodness (and never falls away from it)" (Rel.61/6,67). This happiness is not

“that assurance of the everlasting possession of contentment with one’s *physical state* (freedom from evils and enjoyment of ever-increasing pleasures) which is *physical happiness*” (Rel.61/6,67). Rather, moral happiness “consists of a consciousness of progress in goodness” (Rel.69n/6,75n).

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant mentions the possibility of thinking “a certain moral happiness [*moralische Glückseligkeit*] not resting on empirical causes” (MM,33/6,377). He continues:

When the thinking man has triumphed over temptations to vice and is conscious of having done his often difficult duty, he finds himself in a state of satisfaction [*Zufriedenheit*] and peace of mind which can well be called happiness [*den man gar wohl Glückseligkeit nennen kann*] (MM,33/6,377).

Some people still make a distinction between moral and physical happiness [*moralischen und physischen Glückseligkeit*] (the former consisting in satisfaction [*Zufriedenheit*] with one’s own person and moral conduct, and thus with what one does; the other in satisfaction with what nature bestows, and hence with what one enjoys as an external gift) (MM,45/6,387).

In these passages, Kant seems to be admitting that there is a kind of happiness called moral happiness which is the contentment that follows from doing one’s duty or progressing in goodness. Moral happiness proposes a kind of happiness that is not sensible and does not have to do with inclination or pleasure. But there are several reasons for insisting that Kant’s aim is not to posit such a moral happiness. This can be shown by reconsidering the above passages, emphasizing certain terms and looking at phrases previously omitted.

In terms of what the passages say, there are two important qualifications. Kant speaks of the possibility of *thinking* a certain moral happiness which *can well be*

called happiness. This is far from stating that there is a kind of happiness which is moral happiness. Also he says that *some people* still make a distinction between moral and physical happiness. Kant seems to be simply reporting facts about what can possibly be thought and what some people think. He is not offering a defense of this distinction. These qualifications suggest that Kant is not committed to the claim that moral happiness is a kind of happiness. If there were any further doubt, the following makes it clear that Kant is not proposing there is such a thing as moral happiness.

In both of the above passages, Kant goes on to make a judgment about the concept of moral happiness. He calls the concept of moral happiness "a self-contradictory nonentity [*ein sich selbst widersprechendes Unding*]" (MM,33/6,377) and claims that the term "contains a contradiction [*einen Widerspruch in sich enthält*]" (MM,45/6,387). Though Kant is willing to note that the concept of moral happiness has a definition, he is unwilling to defend such a notion of happiness, and, in fact, thinks it is contradictory. Thus, the references in Kant's texts to moral happiness in no way support the idea that there is a kind of happiness which is intelligible or mental. Kant rejects the concept of moral happiness on grounds that a happiness which is not grounded on empirical causes contradicts the general definition of happiness which refers to a sensible state of affairs.

Next, there is an important ethical fragment in which Kant links happiness to moral contentment [*Zufriedenheit*].¹⁵ This fragment seems to make happiness an intelligible or moral state or at the very least it makes happiness dependent on a prior intelligible or moral state. Kant apparently identifies happiness with an intelligible or moral state in these passages. "Happiness is not something sensed but something thought" (S,129/19,278). Persons have the ability "to create happiness even without the comforts of life" and this, he says, "is the intellectual (aspect of happiness)" (ibid.). Hence, "happiness is a product of one's own

human reason" (S,130/19,282). These claims certainly make happiness an intelligible and not a sensible state.

In other passages, Kant establishes a more explicit connection between happiness and moral contentment. Here he maintains that happiness is derived from or conditioned by a person's contentment with his or her moral state. He says, "happiness must be derived from an a priori basis approved by reason" (S,128/19,277). So, there is "a certain stock of contentment [*Zufriedenheit*] necessary and indispensable, without which no happiness is possible" (ibid.,278). Kant also speaks several times about "the principle of self-contentment [*Selbstzufriedenheit*]" as "the condition" or "the formal condition" for all happiness (ibid.,280-81). According to these claims, happiness is conditioned by self-contentment and is a product of reason.

Clearly, in this fragment, Kant defines happiness at least partially in terms of morality. There is not here a strict separation between happiness and virtue. Self-contentment, the satisfaction people take in being moral agents and in having acted morally, is a condition for happiness and so links happiness and morality. Happiness, if it involves self-contentment, would have an intellectual, moral aspect, and could not be defined simply in terms of the sensible realm.

Yet, there are two reasons to be cautious about concluding that Kant identifies happiness with an intelligible state of self-contentment or even that he considers moral contentment to be a condition of happiness. First, in terms of what this fragment says, there is no identification of happiness and self-contentment. Kant says happiness is not possible without self-contentment and that there is an intellectual aspect of happiness. The passage does not say that self-contentment is happiness. Nevertheless, even if moral contentment is only a condition of happiness, it connects happiness to the intelligible realm. It ties happiness to morality in a way that goes beyond any definition of happiness as a sensible state or as satisfaction with a sensible state.

However, this fragment provides the only evidence there is that Kant thought of self-contentment as a condition for happiness. L. W. Beck does not consider the Reflexion to be representative of Kant's critical writings on ethics.¹⁶ Certainly, given all the indications there are from Kant's critical and later works that happiness involves a sensible state, I believe we must dismiss this early attempt to link moral contentment and happiness.

Second, there is strong evidence in Kant's later works that he did not consider happiness to be equivalent to or even tied to moral contentment. In the *Groundwork*, Kant observes that "the more a cultivated reason concerns itself with the aim of enjoying life and happiness [*Glückseligkeit*], the farther does man get away from true contentment [*wahren Zufriedenheit*]" (Gr.63/4,395). Reason however in attaining its end, the establishment of a good will, is capable of its own kind of contentment [*Zufriedenheit*], that is, "contentment in fulfilling a purpose which in turn is determined by reason alone, even if this fulfilment should often involve interference with the purposes of inclination" (Gr.64/4,396). Thus, there is a kind of contentment which comes from having acted morally and this contentment is distinct from and often interferes with happiness.

In the second *Critique*, Kant makes a similar point. He asks whether we have a word to describe that negative satisfaction with existence which accompanies the consciousness of virtue. He answers: "We do, and this word is 'self-contentment' [*Selbstzufriedenheit*]" (CPR,122/5,117). He calls this self-contentment "an analogue of happiness" though he says it arises from the consciousness that we are free in obeying the moral law.¹⁷ This self-contentment may be called intellectual [*intellektuell*] contentment and it is to be distinguished from a sensuous [*ästhetische*] contentment which arises from the satisfaction of inclinations (CPR,122/5,118). The latter, Kant says, "can never be adequate to that which is conceived under contentment" (ibid.). Thus, the contentment that results from the consciousness of a

person's capacity to follow the moral law is different from the contentment or satisfaction that results when inclinations are satisfied. The former is self-contentment, the latter is happiness.

There are two ways of making explicit the distinction between self-contentment and the contentment which is happiness. The first is to note that self-contentment is always a product of freedom or morality unlike the contentment which is happiness. Kant claims that the source of self-contentment is "contentment with one's own person [*Zufriedenheit mit seiner Person*]" (CPR, 123/5, 118) and the consciousness "of freedom in obeying . . . moral maxims" (CPR, 122/5, 117). Happiness on the other hand rests on the satisfaction of inclinations and contentment with what nature bestows, with one's sensible condition (Gr. 61/4, 393; MM, 45/6, 387). Happiness is sometimes described as contentment, but it is clear that it is not equivalent to self-contentment given that the causes of these two contentments are different. Perhaps, as Kant suggests, self-contentment can be said to be "an analogue of happiness" but certainly the two are not identical.

Kant offers a second way of distinguishing between self-contentment and happiness when he labels the former "negative" satisfaction. Self-contentment refers to a negative satisfaction [*ein negatives Wohlgefallen*] with one's condition (CPR, 123/5, 118) in which one is conscious of needing nothing (CPR, 122/5, 117). Self-contentment rests on no particular feeling (*ibid.*). Inner satisfaction is merely negative with reference to everything which might make life pleasant (CPR, 91/5, 88). However, happiness indicates a gratification (CPR, 122/5, 117) and depends upon a positive participation of feeling (CPR, 123/5, 118). Hence, Kant concludes that the comfort that comes from acting morally "is not happiness, not even the smallest part of happiness" (CPR, 91/5, 88). Thus, self-contentment and happiness are not equivalent or necessarily linked because the former is a negative satisfaction (the state of recognizing no needs or ignoring

needs) and the latter is a positive satisfaction (the state of gratifying needs).

Finally, there are indications in Kant's works that suggest he identifies happiness and bliss (*Seligkeit*). For instance, in the Preface to the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant shows the contradiction in the thinking of the eudaemonist and, in doing so, he seems to use happiness and bliss as synonyms. Kant says that for the eudaemonist, the motive for acting virtuously is the satisfaction that comes from doing one's duty, that is, "this bliss, this happiness" (MM,33/6,377). Hence, according to the eudaemonist, a person performs his or her duty only when the person foresees he or she will thereby be happy. But Kant points out it is only when a person observes duty that he or she can "hope to be happy [*glücklich*] (or inwardly blissful [*selig*])" (MM,34/6,377). Here happiness and bliss are taken to refer to the same state.

In another place, when Kant considers the ideal of holiness, he states that this ideal contains the strongest motive "that of happiness beyond this world" and he refers to this motive as "that of happiness [*Glückseligkeit*] or blessedness [*Seligkeit*]" (LE,10/M,13). In discussing the doctrine of Christianity, Kant claims that the well-being proportionate to holiness of morals which is bliss [*Seligkeit*] stands "under the name of happiness [*Glückseligkeit*]" and is thought of as attainable only in eternity (CPR,133/5,128-29).

These passages suggest that happiness can be described as bliss. In one sense, the strong sense, happiness and bliss seem to be synonyms. Bliss is offered as an explanation of the meaning of happiness. In another sense, the weak sense, bliss does not explain happiness, rather it is one kind of happiness and so it stands under the name of happiness. In this case, bliss refers to a happiness beyond this world.

Kant describes bliss in these ways. "Blessed" designates "a perfect well-being independent of all contingent causes in the world" (CPR,128n/5,123n). A bliss or an

inborn possession would “presuppose a consciousness of our self-sufficiency” (CPR,24/5,25). Given this account of bliss as a state of independence from the sensible world and given Kant’s earlier discussion of happiness as a sensible state involving inclination, it is impossible to argue that bliss and happiness are synonyms. Indeed, Kant says clearly that happiness or contentment with our existence “is not . . . an inborn possession or a bliss” (ibid.). At best, the weaker sense of connection, that makes bliss one type of happiness, is possible. Perhaps bliss is one kind of happiness; a happiness beyond this world, a happiness in eternity, a happiness in having done a person’s duty. Exactly what Kant means by such a happiness beyond this world is not known nor is it clear by what right such a state can be called happiness. But it is clear that although Kant sometimes identifies happiness and bliss, they cannot be equated. If it is acceptable to allow for various types of happiness (and it is not at all clear that it is) then bliss may be named such a type, just as may moral happiness and self-contentment. To employ a term that Kant uses in regard to self-contentment, bliss may be an “analogue” of happiness. It is like happiness in that it is a state of well-being but it is unlike happiness in that the cause or source of it is different than that of happiness.

III. Conclusions and Implications

The previous section considered descriptions of three separate states which are similar to and sometimes identified with the state of happiness. Although Kant occasionally calls moral happiness, self-contentment, and bliss happiness, none of these states is in a strict sense happiness. This argument was made on the basis of Kant’s claims themselves. Now, there is one more passage in which Kant differentiates among these states in a way that is helpful to understanding their relationship.

In a passage in the second *Critique*, Kant distinguishes self-contentment, happiness, and bliss. He says: