

Alice Pinheiro Walla, *Happiness in Kant's Practical Philosophy: Morality, Indirect Duties, and Welfare Rights*
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Pinheiro Walla's *Happiness in Kant's Practical Philosophy* is a well organized, ambitious, and tightly argued study of an aspect of Kant's work that recently has emerged as an area of specialization: the various roles, positive and negative, that Kant assigns to happiness.

The book has six chapters. The chapters build on one another, and there are obvious thematic connections. But, they are largely self-contained as far as their respective theses and arguments are concerned. So, a reader interested in a specific issue can read a later chapter without feeling lost.

Chapter one examines Kant's claim that we have happiness as an end as a matter of natural necessity. Pinheiro Walla distinguishes between a formal and a material concept of happiness in order to argue that it is the formal one that should fill in Kant's claim. Pinheiro Walla then contrasts this claim with Kant's assertion that happiness cannot be the highest end of nature for humans.

Chapter two pushes against the view that Kant's ethics is hostile to happiness. Pinheiro Walla explains that Kant's anti-eudaimonism stems not from ideas about the disvalue of happiness, but rather from an attempt to account for our common sense understanding of moral obligation. As such, as Pinheiro Walla points out, Kant does not spurn happiness, although he does not think it is the be-all, end-all.

In chapter three, Pinheiro Walla analyzes Kant's claim that we have an indirect duty to promote our own happiness. Pinheiro Walla explicates the general notion of an indirect duty, and she argues that "securing our own happiness can become a *direct* duty to oneself" (p. 174) when the natural inclination to happiness is in some way blocked.

Chapter four analyzes the structure and justification of the duty of beneficence. Pinheiro Walla argues that, because of the way Kant grounds this duty, it would be incoherent for it to require individuals to sacrifice their own happiness for the happiness of others. Then, just as she provided a general account of indirect duties in chapter three, Pinheiro Walla provides a general account of the latitude allowed in wide duties.

In chapter five, Pinheiro Walla picks up various problems that arise for Kant's account of wide duties in general and for beneficence in particular. She discusses the trumping thesis, according to which narrow duties always trump wide duties, and she discusses the demandingness objection, according to which Kantian beneficence is (perhaps far) more demanding than even Kant realized.

Chapter six moves into Kant's philosophy of right. Pinheiro Walla refutes the libertarian reading of Kant's political philosophy, pointing out that a Kantian *Rechtsstaat* would have a right to provide poverty relief and other redistributive programs for the least advantaged. The book wraps up with a conclusion that summarizes the main findings of the investigation.

If there is a flaw in Pinheiro Walla's book, it is one that also bedevils the present author's attempts to elucidate Kant's views on happiness, namely: most of the central positions are mistaken. I shall illustrate with three examples.

As noted above, in defending Kant's claim that we necessarily have happiness as an end, Pinheiro Walla distinguishes between a formal and a material concept of happiness. The formal concept is "the need of finite rational agents to adopt subjective principles of action," whereas the material concept is "the agent's specific conception of the ends her happiness must include" (p. 11). Pinheiro Walla then defends Kant's claim on the grounds that, to give up happiness in a formal sense, an agent would have "to adopt the end not to adopt any ends, which is a performative contradiction" (p. 11).

There are various problems here. Pinheiro Walla characterizes the necessity of formal happiness as "*rational* necessity," but also as "*descriptive*" rather than normative—without noticing that these characterizations are in tension (pp. 11 and 12); she argues that happiness, as a state of enduring pleasure, is impossible—without noticing that this concept of happiness does not fit into her formal/material dichotomy (p. 21); and there is room to cavil with Pinheiro Walla's account of the impossibility of rejecting formal happiness—the

performative contradiction vanishes if it is "any *other* end" or if not adopting ends is a principle and not an end. But the most serious problem here, I think, is that Pinheiro Walla's interpretation does not fit the text: Kant's claim is that we necessarily have the end of happiness, not that we necessarily have ends.

Pinheiro Walla's account of beneficence is also precarious. Pinheiro Walla grounds the duty of beneficence in two ways. One involves universalizing the pursuit of happiness: "the promotion of our own happiness is only morally permissible if it can be made into a universal law and this requires including the happiness of all other agents among my ends" (p. 96). The other involves an appeal to maxim-opposites: "Since the categorical imperative can only command the opposite of what it forbids, we have a duty to adopt the ends of others as our own, as opposed to being indifferent to their needs" (p. 96).

In my view, and as I have argued at length elsewhere, whatever the merits of this as a reading of Kant, neither strategy is philosophically probative. The problem with the first may be seen by applying it to an end like becoming an academic (this end is, intuitively, permissible absent such universalization). The problem with the second is that the concept of a maxim opposite is not well defined, and Pinheiro Walla's attempt to make it so does not withstand critical scrutiny.

That is, according to Pinheiro Walla, two maxims are contradictories if but only if the permissibility of one entails the impermissibility of the other, and two maxims are contraries if but only if the impermissibility of one entails the permissibility of the other (p. 108). One issue, relatively superficial, is that Pinheiro Walla has confused contradictories with contraries and contraries with subcontraries. The deeper issue is that the moral properties of maxims do not have these entailment relations.

Turning to indirect duties, Pinheiro Walla argues that "indirect duties concern capacities and inclinations which are *naturally given* in human beings and therefore cannot be *directly* commanded" (p. 79). The idea is that, when the cultivation of these capacities and inclinations provides "support to our capacity of moral agency," then there is an indirect duty to cultivate them (p. 79). Thus, because we have a natural inclination to happiness, and because unhappiness can be a temptation to infringe duty, there is an indirect duty in this case.

However, this interpretation cannot be right. The indirect duty here is not to cultivate the natural inclination to happiness; it is to promote one's own happiness, full stop. So, Pinheiro Walla's account of the in/direct duty distinction does not apply: the inclination to happiness might be naturally given, but happiness is not, and we are left wondering why happiness cannot be directly commanded.

Pinheiro Walla seems to be aware of this problem, and she articulates an alternative explanation, arguing that there can be a direct duty to do something only if we do not have a corresponding inclination (pp. 78, 83, 131). It is in this context that, as noted above, Pinheiro Walla argues that, if the natural inclination to happiness is clouded or lost, "we have a *direct duty* to promote our overall wellbeing" (p. 65).

However, this only creates more problems. On the one hand, on Kant's account, direct duty requires merely the presence of countervailing inclination, not absence of parallel inclination (action that is in conformity with but not from duty, a category highlighted in *Groundwork* I, would be incoherent otherwise). On the other hand, Kant's discussions of indirect duty do not suggest that indirect duty presupposes the presence of parallel inclination. Kant's discussions do not even suggest that indirect duty cannot be directly commanded. For example, Kant asserts that our duties to nonrational animals are indirect in regard to them and direct to ourselves (6: 443). So, the in/direct duty distinction cannot rest on the presence/absence of parallel inclination (*pace* Pinheiro Walla). I note in passing that Pinheiro Walla's admission that the natural inclination to happiness can be clouded or lost suggests that it is something distinct from the formal happiness that she uses in her attempt to defend Kant's claim that we have happiness as an end as a matter of natural necessity, exposing further exegetical problems.

I shall now wrap up on a more positive note.

Pinheiro Walla's book stands as an important contribution to an emerging debate: in my view, anyone interested in the role of happiness in Kant's practical philosophy will have to grapple with her work—and even as I have criticized it, we do well to remember that such criticism is possible only because the text is so rich, so clear, and so well put together.