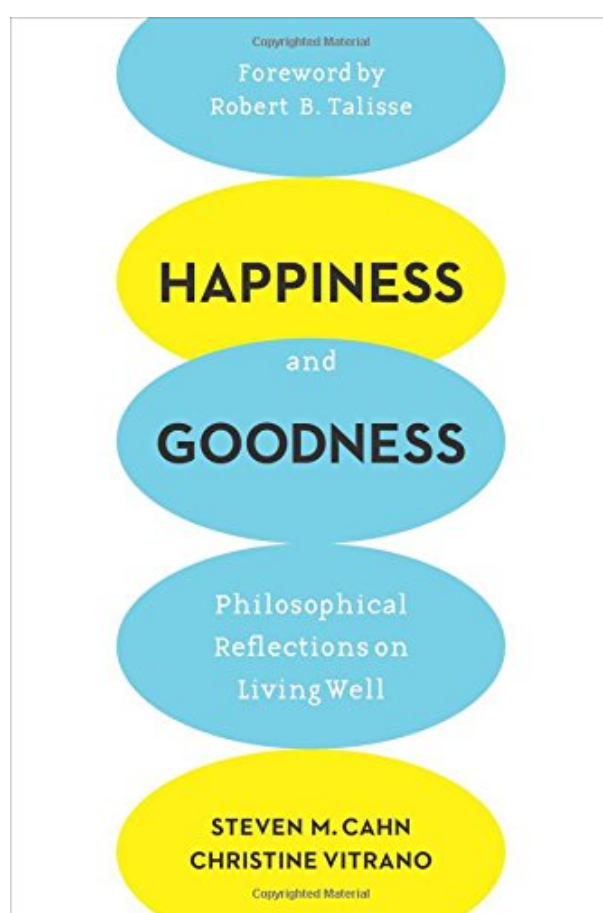


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PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON  
LIVING WELL BY STEVEN M. CAHN,  
CHRISTINE VITRANO**



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**HAPPINESS**

and

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Philosophical  
Reflections on  
Living Well

**STEVEN M. CAHN  
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Review

Happiness and Goodness reminds me of a Socratic dialogue. The absence of jargon and use of realistic examples in this book make philosophy accessible to all interested in improving their lives.

(Andrea Tschemplik, American University)

Happiness and Goodness is a phenomenal book that offers innovative and penetrating insights into the most fundamental questions of human concern, such as happiness, love, morality, death, and God. Drawing from a vast array of philosophical, religious, and literary sources, Steven M. Cahn and Christine Vitrano brilliantly challenge long-standing assumptions about what it means to live a satisfying and successful life. They also have an uncanny ability to transmit their ideas in a vivid and enjoyable fashion by providing colorful vignettes and everyday life stories. I, for one, could not put the book down.

(Dov Weiss, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

This crisply written and incisive book draws on ancient thought and contemporary examples to develop a compelling account of living well.

(David Shatz, Yeshiva University)

I can't remember the last time I read a book about ethics that was so fascinating.

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## About the Author

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How should we evaluate the success of each person's life? Countering the prevalent philosophical perspective on the subject, Steven M. Cahn and Christine Vitrano defend the view that our well-being is dependent not on particular activities, accomplishments, or awards but on finding personal satisfaction while treating others with due concern.

The authors suggest that moral behavior is not necessary for happiness and does not ensure it. Yet they also argue that morality and happiness are needed for living well, and together suffice to achieve that goal. Cahn and Vitrano link their position to elements within both the Hellenistic and Hebraic traditions, in particular the views of Epicurus and lessons found in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Written in an accessible style and illustrated with incisive vignettes drawn from history, literature, films, and everyday life, *Happiness and Goodness* is a compelling work of philosophy for anyone who seeks to understand the nature of a good life.

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Good start but fizzled at the end

By bronx book nerd

This book started out with a bang, went into a couple of tailspins and then fizzled out like a wet firecracker. The philosophical duo of Cahn and Vitrano, both professors in New York City's CUNY system, started with a clear and actually very funny exposition of what it means to live a good life. In very clear steps, they explained how one could be moral and unhappy, moral and happy, immoral and happy and immoral and unhappy. They also pretty much laid to rest the notion that true happiness is only available to those who engage in loftier activities, like attending the opera or reading classical literature. No, a person can be happy watching professional wrestling or collecting string, for that matter. At times, I was actually laughing out loud at some of their comments, like when they equated repetitive actions to the philosophical enterprise of writing papers to elicit responses, a cycle that can go on forever. Then, the wheels fell off the bus. Sorry to say this, but their treatment of God as a player in morality was shallow and amateurish. A little reading of 2,000 years of theology might help. Specifically, God is not subject to moral standards; he is those moral standards. Finally, the book ended rather weakly, with an ultimate appeal to living the good life via a combination of living according to the wisdom of the Book of Ecclesiastes and to the teachings of Epicurus, summarized in the statement "Be good and enjoy." I don't want to poo poo this book too much. Along with the disappointing bits, there is a lot of good philosophy and some very interesting material. In particular, the book's first few chapters are an excellent example of philosophical argumentation, modelling how both sides of an issue can be presented and dissected in the search for truth.

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