The Virtues of Happiness: A Theory of the Good Life (Oxford Moral Theory)

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As children, we learn life is unfair: bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people. So, it is natural to ask, "Why play fairly in an unfair world? If being immoral will get you what you want and you know you can't get caught, why not do it?" The answers, as argued herein, begin by rejecting the idea that morality and happiness are at odds with one another. From this point of view, we can see how immorality undermines its perpetrator's happiness: self-respect is necessary for happiness, and immorality undermines self-respect. As we see how our self-respect is conditional upon how we respect others, we learn to evaluate and value ourselves, and others, appropriately. The central thesis is the result of combining the ancient Greek conception of *happiness* (eudaimonia) with a modern conception of *self-respect*. We become happy, we life the best life we can, only by becoming virtuous: by being as courageous, just, temperate, and wise as can be. These are the virtues of happiness. This book explains why it is bad to be bad and good to be good, and what happens to people's values as their practical rationality develops.

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