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[Essay]

Living Well, Living, and Being

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Abstract

Philosophy of Life contains at least three major approaches to living: philosophies of living well, philosophies of living, and philosophies of being. Western academic philosophy tends to focus on the first two approaches to the relative neglect of the third, in part due to a more theoretical and abstract interest in the issues these philosophies raise. The problem is that arguably the most important feature of all three philosophies concerns how one ought to live, in the face of the myriad problems life presents. It is from this perspective that neglected philosophies of being have their greatest import, as the essay strives to disclose.

INTRODUCTION

There is a problem at the core of modern inquiry regarding the segregation of the production of knowledge from the character of the knower. Ancient conceptions of knowing do not strongly separate these two realms, and when they are distinguished, they still remain situated in relation to one another. The shift is one from forms of wisdom—where wisdom-as-studied is not and cannot not be segregated from wisdom-as-lived—to forms of knowing whose narrower modalities of investigation allow for such segregation. In this essay I explore three approaches to living—philosophies of living well, living, and being—and their relations to wisdom-as-studied and wisdom-as-lived. The background working hypothesis for the three approaches is that 1) philosophies of living well create a space for wisdom-as-studied that can be partially separated (though not wholly divorced) from wisdom-as-lived; 2) philosophies of living also allow for a similar kind of space, although the separation is more tightly constrained; and 3) only in philosophies of being is the coupling between the two mutually accrediting, making any separation problematic at best. Given this hypothesis, the essay strives primarily to disclose that neglected philosophies of being have their greatest value with regard to the kind of life one should lead.

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THREE MAJOR APPROACHES TO THE KIND OF LIFE ONE SHOULD LEAD

There are a number of approaches to the way one ought to construct a life, and insofar as the aim is to live a life worth living granted circumstances making that possible, there are at least three major paths. Pre-theoretically, living well appears to be superior to a life consisting on the whole of mere living, and in turn this sort of life seems preferable to one of vegetative being. This intuition, however, becomes far less clear when further informed by philosophical reflection on the three kinds of life-project.

An exemplar of the first type, living well, is Aristotle's account of the good life, which is organized around *eudaimonia*, and where one's activities are geared toward cultivating the good habits (*hexeis*) that this aim informs. Living well for Aristotle is maximal human flourishing that balances a number of goods across a wide range of considerations (one's upbringing, educators, social class, potential friends, choices, dispositions, *polis*, the irretrievable element of luck, and so forth). This kind of goodness is both robust and immensely fragile, as Martha Nussbaum discusses in her fine work, *The Fragility of Goodness*. If the best sort of life one can lead is Aristotelian, the price paid for flourishing is its fragile nature, and thus the difficulty in achieving and maintaining such a life. It is perhaps for this reason that Aristotle eventually promoted contemplation (*theoria*) as the highest excellence, and partially separated it from forms of *praxis*. Intentionally or not, this opened a space in the Western tradition that would eventuate in the segregation of wisdom-as-studied and wisdom-as-lived.[1]

An exemplar of the second sort of life—a life of learning how to simply live (which often becomes synonymous with learning to live simply)—is largely a reaction to this very fragility. Hellenistic responses to the Greeks give rise to a variety of approaches to living where, by learning the ways of simplicity, one minimizes life's contingencies. Stoicism and Epicureanism are representative of

[1] Baconian methods marking the rise of modern science, which separate empirical and theoretical (especially metaphysical) inquiries, operate within this space opened by Aristotle (in spite of the fact that Bacon was responding to Aristotelian doctrines). What is often forgotten about Bacon is that his vision of science included a program for moral and spiritual reform (see Ravetz 1990, 116-36). Just as Aristotle unintentionally opened the door for separations between wisdom-as-studied (forms of *theoria*) and wisdom-as-lived (forms of *praxis*), Bacon came to stand for separating the activities of scientific (empirical) inquiry from other forms of inquiry—fueling the modern segregation between the production of knowledge and the character of the knower.

life-projects cultivating these arts. If Greek flourishing requires a web that is too fragile to uphold in times of turbulence, the Roman response is to build an "inner citadel" of self that seeks to minimize unreliable and uncontrollable outer forces. Thus living well, eudaimonistically conceived, is replaced with learning to live, shifting the philosophical landscape from one of beautiful, "ornate" fragility to one of simple, "Spartan" resiliency. Such resiliency requires exercise in various theoretical disciplines (e.g., the Stoic study of logic, physics, etc.), where wisdom-as-studied is closely tied to wisdom-as-lived (e.g., training in Stoic logic as an exercise in disciplining judgment).

Lastly there is being, which on this sliding scale of approaches to living is pre-theoretically represented by a kind of pared-down existence, something even more minimal than resiliency. It turns out that from a philosophical point of view, being might be the most interesting and subversive kind of life-project occurring in the Western tradition. Of course Heidegger, under the influence of the Greeks, (in)famously explores the question of Being. He renders Being in existential terms of authenticity, where beyond eudaimonistic conceptions of the good life or Hellenistic conceptions of living resiliently, one comes to heroically affirm/choose one's individual existence. Heidegger's approach is seemingly more "fundamental" in its examination of the human condition, and also suggests radical re-conceptions of how to live which go beyond ornate fragility and Spartan resiliency. But should Being be cashed out in existential terms of authenticity?

I suggest that there are hidden traditions of being quite different from Heidegger's project, to which he was deeply indebted (May 1996). These traditions also bring on board elements from philosophies of living well and living, while attempting to move beyond both. *Being* in this wider sense concerns the spiritual or mystical aspects of philosophy/religion, which were intertwined with ancient approaches to wisdom (East and West) but have over time become separated to varying degrees. Being from a spiritual standpoint remains true to philosophy as a way of life, whose life-project seeks what it means to live well (in a maximal sense), in the process of having to deal with the innumerable problems that living presents (requiring resiliency), and, most crucially, whose arc of inquiry redounds to one's very life-project, one's very being. It is here especially that wisdom-as-studied cannot be segregated from wisdom-as-lived—given their mutually accrediting activities, the space between the two collapses for philosophies of being.

SELF/EGO AND ITS RELATIONS TO THE THREE APPROACHES

If Heideggerian Being were taken as our starting point for being-as-spiritual, its ties to heroically overcoming inauthenticity would be problematic for a number of reasons.[2] Most importantly, being need not carry such a laden sense of self, as there are other paths to authenticity—delineated by a wide diversity of religious-philosophical worldviews—that aim at the dissolving of self.

The "axis" of living well, living, and being (in spite of their not being ordered from most to least desirable) has an underlying theme that allows for comparison in terms of authenticity, charitably understood. The conceptions of self which these life-projects promote range along this axis from possessing a robust, healthy sense of self at one extreme, to the dissolving of self at the other extreme.

Philosophies of living well generally presume a robust sense of self at the core of their worldviews. For example, while ancient Greeks disapprove of excessive forms of self (*pleonexia* receiving cardinal Greek disapproval), it still remains that excellences (especially *megalopsychia*) promote a healthy sense of self. Excellences are "healthy" not merely because they are habits of self for a person of practical wisdom; they are also situated as means between various extremes that are *socially* configured and geared towards self-realization in relation to *like-minded* individuals (think of the list of Aristotelian excellences and how each is a reflection of "beautiful"/*kalos* self-development that is socially respectable).[3]

Philosophies of living, by contrast, place less emphasis on a sense of self, if only because they seek to shore up life's contingencies by constructing inner citadels to protect the accoutrements of self from the sharp edges of the world. While these citadels are constructed by reducing or pruning certain of the self's capacities, a stubborn residue still remains. For example, the Epicurean cultivation of *ataraxia* is part of a self-sufficient life that husbands one's garden of simple pleasures. This isn't an emptying out of self, given the self's manifold cravings; rather it is an abatement of self—a reduction in appetite with a

[2] Perhaps the foremost issue concerns the racially charged tone of Heidegger's language; in addition to Heidegger's black notebooks, see Habermas's reflections: http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2015-10-16-habermas-en.html.

[3] Arguably when this type of social cohesiveness breaks down, one begins also to see further fractures between wisdom-as-studied and wisdom-as-lived.

corresponding acquisition of new-found appreciation for pleasant simplicity.[4]

Other philosophies of living include revised Aristotelian approaches to environmental considerations, where the standard list of excellences is transformed in light of contemporary problems raised by climate change and its ilk. Simplicity is emphasized as a key virtue, which strikes a complex balance between forms of overconsumption and underconsumption (see Gambrel and Cafaro 2010). Curbing the self's needs, wants, and desires in the face of modern materialism's seductions is a key feature of this revised version of Aristotle, where living well becomes an exercise in learning how to live more efficiently. The social dimension here is present yet subdued in favor of emphasizing the sorts of virtues one ought to cultivate to lead a non-materialistically efficient life.[5]

One might thus be inclined to infer that *more* socially informed conceptions of self can focus on living simply but without the typical entrapments of self/ego. While this would be partially correct, a good example of how key residues of self/ego nevertheless remain occurs in Japanese philosophy, especially with respect to aesthetics (e.g. *wabi-sabi*), where a sophisticated simplicity strikes a balance between functional beauty and social and natural considerations. A ceramic master who creates a focal bowl of rustic beauty is sensitive to a field of social and natural considerations, such as its use in tea ceremony and bringing out the natural "grain" (as it were) of the clay. While there is no self here that conscientiously manipulates, there remains a highly skilled and socially informed self that is able to harness flow (compare Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Still, ego/self is still present in such states of aesthetic flow.

However when taken to an extreme, maximal states of flow result in selfless creation, of the sort manifested by Zen masters who pour their *kiai*/spirit into various artistic artifacts. This soteriological form of flow brings us to the last sort of approach to living, philosophies of being. As alluded to earlier, accounts of Being that place emphasis on a particular brand of authenticity presume a sizable sense of self in the background.[6] Such accounts are better characterized

[4] And so in this circumscribed social context, it is feasible to monitor the pursuits of wisdom-as-studied and wisdom-as-practiced, which Epicurean communes foster.

[5] This contemporary kind of "Epicurean-Aristotelianism," as it were, may or may not be tied to communes; the curtailed wisdom studied and practiced here is largely a response to materialism's excesses.

[6] Although Nietzsche appears closely affiliated with this brand, there are sympathetic interpretations of Nietzsche that place him ultimately closer to forms of being that empty out self (see Lampert 1986).

as philosophies of living—perhaps even of living well (depending on the "size" of ego that qualifies as authentic)—but not philosophies of being, at least insofar as the common denominator of spiritual and soteriological forms of being is the release of self.[7] There is a profound resonance present across traditions where laboring away at realizing being, and its struggle to release the entrapments of self/ego, issues in an overflowing, cosmic spirituality. The next section explores the central features of soteriologically oriented philosophies of being.

PHILOSOPHIES OF BEING AND INQUIRY

Modern academic philosophy has become largely divorced from wisdom-as-lived. Instead, technical issues concerning wisdom are discussed and investigated but are not integrated into one's being—inquiry-as-scholarship takes the place of inquiry-as-self-accrediting. We live in times that are "after virtue" (*a la* Alasdair MacIntyre), and accordingly, academic studies of philosophies of living well place little if any emphasis on actually living well and what that entails in terms of personal cultivation. The same also tends to hold for modern discussions of philosophies of living. Perhaps, then, because of this milieu, philosophies of being (as spiritual pursuits tethered to the care of self) are relegated to either religious studies or religion as practiced, but are not generally viewed as intellectually rigorous enough for sophisticated philosophical inquiry.

Might more serious consideration of the gap between inquiry-as-scholarship and inquiry-as-self-accrediting help to remedy this situation? Possibly, although the self-deceptive entrapments of good faith remain present here as they do in any inquiry: even if one takes seriously the personalistic commitments that a study of Buddhism, for example, requires—moving beyond merely being a Buddhologist and integrating to some significant extent the object of one's studies with one's own practices—the perpetual problems associated with the machinations of ego make precarious any claim to a simple remedy. Thus taking seriously philosophies of being—why they ought to matter to philosophical

[7] In Chinese philosophy, for example, differing conceptions (and misunderstandings) of self have been at the heart of disputes between Confucians and Buddhists—philosophies which tend to align with living well and being, respectively. It is also interesting to note that there are complications to this classification: for example, certain strains of Pure Land Buddhism are more closely related to philosophies of living or even living well, and in the *Analects* (e.g., 17.19) there are gestures towards a Taoist life of being.

inquiry—becomes an issue not merely of living or living well, but of one's being as situated in a modern world overrun with the very things all three philosophies have traditionally warned against.[8]

The correlate of philosophies of being in religious traditions is also known as their mystical aspects, or more broadly what Aldous Huxley calls *Perennial Philosophy*. There is a central element of faith operating throughout, where a root-metaphor of this philosophy is a ladder of love through which one aspires to arrive at a place of cosmic being. Huxley interestingly contrasts Perennial Philosophy with what is often labeled *religious faith*, in the strong, ossified sense of dependence on legalistic forms and rituals, and containing at its core a substantial though unacknowledged strain of ego. It is a moral inversion of what the highest practitioners of religious traditions represent, namely the kenotic character and beatitude of spiritual masters. Perennial Philosophy affirms three other senses of *faith* to the exclusion of this strong sense of *religious faith*.

The three primary senses of *faith* for Huxley are that of trust, authority, and verifiability (Huxley 1945, 234).[9] They are at the heart of Perennial Philosophy, and also delineate some of the central features of what I am calling *philosophies of being*. Huxley writes:

> The core and spiritual heart of all the higher religions is the Perennial Philosophy; and the Perennial Philosophy can be assented to and acted upon without resort to [religious faith]…There must, of course, be faith as trust—for confidence in one's fellows is the beginning of charity towards men, and confidence not only in the material, but also the moral and spiritual reliability of the universe, is the beginning of charity or love-knowledge in relation to God. There must also be faith in authority—the authority of those whose selflessness has qualified them to know the spiritual Ground of all being by direct acquaintance as well as by report. And finally there must be faith in such propositions about Reality as are enunciated by philosophers in the light of genuine revelation—propositions which the believer knows that he can, if he is prepared to fulfill the necessary conditions, verify for himself. (Huxley

[8] A warning that also applies to this essay, as it precariously straddles inquiry-as-scholarship and inquiry-as-self-accrediting.

[9] There are deep parallels here with the philosophy of Michael Polanyi and his account of tacit knowing (see Takaki 2016).

1945, 236-7)

From a contemporary point of view and in line with Huxley's writings, it can be further added that trust incorporates a wider sensibility than mere belief in a singular conception of God (thus enabling the key comparative insight that across diverse traditions there are similar though not identical conceptions at work); that the authority of such practitioners is bound up with a surplus and mystery overflowing their very acquaintance and report; and that, correspondingly, verifiability goes far beyond flatly propositional terms (especially given the highly metaphoric prose of many Perennials), where "Reality" is semiotically enfolded into the structure of soteriological realizations.[10]

As applied to philosophies of being, what further examination of these dimensions reveals is that ascending the arduous ladder of "love" (*agape*, *yoga* aiming at *Atman* and/or *Brahman*, the mystical and non-dual nature of the Tao, etc.) requires entraining in the emptying out of self. Such entraining, in turn, utilizes techniques that assist in bringing us closer to the ground of being. This raises the issue: what sorts of techniques inform various conceptions of emptying out?

TECHNIQUES/EXERCISES AND BEING

There is a rich repository of cross-cultural techniques which aim at consummate spiritual realization. In the Western tradition, the ancient term for a "spiritual technology" of self is *askesis*. Pierre Hadot draws attention to an array of these techniques/spiritual exercises from roughly antiquity to medieval times (Hadot 1995), and which interestingly are present in all three philosophies (see also Dubisson 2011).[11]

With respect to philosophies of being, it is the early Christian tradition (especially the Desert Fathers/Mothers) that exercises the emptying out of self. For example, certain techniques appropriated from the Stoics aim at curbing the

[10] See Takaki 2016 for an expanded sense of a cosmic spiritual sensibility that adds to this Perennial Philosophy, from a contemporary point of view.

[11] It is ironic that the now-alienated conception of philosophy-as-lived is most intimately tied to what it means to have a life-philosophy, and that this conception—of the mutually accrediting poles of wisdom-as-studied and wisdom-as-lived—was at the heart of ancient philosophical and religious worldviews, emerging during what Karl Jaspers calls the *Axial Age* (see Armstrong 2006).

trajectory of representations (with their bundle of associations) via assenting or not—the office of judgment—to an initial presentation. We are to keep watch "over the first inklings of the pernicious thoughts by means of which the serpent tries to creep into our souls. If we do not admit the serpent's head [the initial presentation]…we will not admit the rest of its body [the trajectory of the representation]" (*Philokalia* vol.1, 76). The early Christian analogue of Stoic judgment (by which we assent or not to variegated presentations) is discernment/watchfulness, which is also a Western parallel to Eastern notions of mindfulness. Discernment is a habit formed via what we assent (or do not assent) to, as we navigate through life's perils. However, it differs from similar Stoic and Aristotelian notions (e.g., *boulesis*) since humility is a key virtue situating what other habits we ought to acquire.

In this respect, early Christian discernment/watchfulness more closely resembles forms of mindfulness that are likewise hinged to cultivating the emptying out of self (letting go of attachments which give rise to *dukkha*). As with mindfulness practices, discernment requires a *continual* watchfulness over the entrapments of ego:

> One type of watchfulness consists in scrutinizing every mental image or provocation…A second type of watchfulness consists in freeing the heart from all thoughts, keeping it profoundly quiet and still, and in praying. A third type consists in continually and humbly calling upon the Lord Jesus Christ for help. A fourth type is always to have the thought of death in one's mind. (*Philokalia* vol.1, 164-5)

These exercises are spiritual technologies whose aim is *kenosis*, in hopeful arrival at the highest form of love (*agape*). What makes them a part of a philosophy of being in contrast to a philosophy of living is that there is no inner citadel of self being constructed (although there is a kind of resiliency cultivated, to be sure); while calm and equanimity are both present in a humble Christian saint and, say, a resilient Stoic sage, the profound difference concerns the contour of their inner landscapes—one consisting of a walled fortress, the other breaking down the walls of self.

Other philosophes of being when practicing the emptying out of self tend to combat the same sorts of temptations (in Christian terms) which ego encounters. For example, the five hindrances in Buddhism—sense-based desires, ill will,

torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt (see Shaw 2006, Chapter 3)—are broadly similar in function and consequence to Christian temptations such as pleasures of the flesh, wrath, sloth, avarice, and pride (see *The Life of Antony* for illustrations). Pleasures of the flesh are countered by fasting; wrath—which is the absence of love and blinds one to the recognition of God ultimately as love (compare William Law's *Spirit of Love*)—is countered by compassionate understanding; sloth is countered by vigils and continual prayer; avarice is countered by selfless love of others through Christ; and pride is countered by humility. What all remedies have in common is the struggle to empty out self, which is paralleled by Buddhist recommendations for combatting the five hindrances: sense desire is countered with an image of the foul (or by catching and extinguishing what arises before its trajectory manifests itself); ill will is countered through loving kindness; sloth and torpor are countered by stirring effort; restlessness and worry are countered by calming the mind (e.g., via *vipassana* techniques); and doubt is countered by proper attention (Shaw 2006, 49).

It should be mentioned at this point that the notion of emptying-out-self, narrowly construed, may appear to differ from other soteriological notions, most especially as are present in variegated manifestations of technique-rich Yoga. Here the goal is to release the everyday-self to achieve union with the larger cosmic-Self. While this seems to be the very opposite of the emptying out of self (again, narrowly construed), from a wider perspective it differs only cosmetically from the previous examples. For the very aim of union with the divine is achieved by releasing the entrapments of ego so as to bring into view the "Self" as cosmic. This perhaps isn't surprising, since Yoga is deeply related to Buddhist practices, in both a historical and soteriological sense. Indeed, as Georg Feuerstein suggests, "the Sanskrit word *yoga* [union] stands for 'spiritual discipline' in Hinduism, Jainism, and certain schools of Buddhism. Even when the term is not explicitly used, these three great traditions are essentially Yoga. Thus Yoga is the equivalent of Christian *mysticism*, Moslem *Sufism*, or the Jewish *Kabbalah*" (Feuerstein 2003, 3).

While techniques vary across traditions, what matters is the significant similarity of entrainment and purpose to these spiritual exercises. Perhaps Western philosophy, too long yoked to the "profane" Christian tradition (as contrasted with its mystic dimensions), has as a result left philosophies of being largely unexplored. In the remainder of the essay I hope to disclose why this

austere project still has philosophical interest worth pursuing, in addition to its intrinsic calling towards arguably the highest kind of lived wisdom.

FRAGILITY, RESILIENCE, AND ANTI-FRAGILITY

The three philosophies have deep parallels to what Nassim Nicholas Taleb calls *fragility*, *resilience*, and *anti-fragility* (Taleb 2014). He intends these largely as epistemic categories for understanding an assortment of phenomena, most especially the at times chaotic behavior of the world of finance, but he also recognizes their intimate bearing on the arts of living.

Focusing first on the world of finance, Taleb argues that a number of the governing assumptions of mainstream economics and its applications to finance are inaccurate. As a simple illustration of the three categories, take some investment portfolio consisting of a variety of stocks. A fragile portfolio (think of a risky, "beautiful" hedge fund for the elite) seeks high returns with high risk, and assumes in the background normally distributed risk, where behavior is essentially random and markets ebb and flow accordingly. By contrast, a resilient portfolio assumes less risk and seeks a more modest rate of return over a longer run—e.g., having a diversified set of investments as is recommended by portfolio theory (which similarly presumes normally distributed risk).

But what if the governing assumptions behind both fragile and resilient portfolios only appear to model markets correctly because of roughly compatible behavior in well-behaved scenarios, obscuring what is really going on? This is where Taleb's notion of anti-fragility gains traction, as it employs ideas from chaos, fractals, and complexity that challenge mainstream Gaussian-type assumptions (see also Mandelbrot and Hudson 2004). The problem with mainstream models is that they discount what Taleb calls potential *fat tails* or *black swans* which threaten to upheave such nicely behaved regimes (see Taleb 2001 and 2007). The basic idea is that Gaussian regimes are like white swans—they signify what we tend to encounter and thus inductively project to the larger population. However there are also low probability events—black swans—that not only falsify our inductive expectations, but are also systemically part of the markets we only partially understand with Gaussian-type tools.[12] It is through this challenging of the received order that

[12] Taleb corroborates his ideas with Benoit Mandelbrot's explorations of chaos and complexity in finance. The upshot is that the tools afforded by chaos and complexity theory—in particular fractals

Taleb introduces his notion of anti-fragility.

To continue with the portfolio example, anti-fragility would correspond to investments that take into account black swans, and even stronger, actually thrive in such low-probability events (like the 2008 economic crash). These investments aren't fragilely profitable during times of prosperity (yet tragically shattered during times of economic upheaval), nor are they accurately characterizable as moderately resilient through times of both prosperity and upheaval (which would correspond to much of Benjamin Graham's advice in his classic *The Intelligent Investor*); rather they remain stoically "calm" during times of prosperity, and then actually prosper in times of crash and chaos. They thus have the benefit of resiliency during times of peace, and additionally *flourish* during the periods that would devastate fragile forms of living well. Hence such approaches are classified as anti-fragile—as something more than simply resilient.[13]

The market example parallels the three philosophies of living well, living, and being, most especially the conjecture that the power of philosophies of being resides in their anti-fragile nature. Given this conjecture, anti-fragile philosophies might continue to be largely ignored in contemporary academic philosophy in part due to the novelty of anti-fragility—a concept that occurs against the backdrop of the likewise largely disregarded topics of chaos, complexity, fractals, etc.—and in part because anti-fragility is easily though mistakenly confused with resilience.[14] But more than these reasons, philosophies of being have already been partitioned off from modern, reason-based conceptions of what inquiry is and ought to be about—the tacit "credentialism" of modern philosophy and academia in general.

Philosophies of being, by arduous entrainment in spiritual exercises that empty out self, "flourish" in climates that most would classify as chaotic, trying, and austere.[15] These "regimes of chaos," as it were, are often marginalized by

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and their scaling relations, and their implementation in computer simulations—offer a far more illuminating and realistic model of market behavior (Mandelbrot and Hudson 2004).

[13] Anti-fragility is centrally tied to mathematical ideas for Taleb; here I expand on its root-metaphor in applying it to philosophies of being.

[14] As an inversion of this mistake, Taleb I think incorrectly classifies Seneca as an exemplar of a practitioner of anti-fragility, as his (eclectic) Stoicism is better classified as a resilient philosophy of living.

[15] What such exercise hopes to eventuate in is a state of liberation (*satori*, beatitude, etc.), where even in the face of apparent disorder resides a deeper kind of "enchantment" associated with calm and love (see Takaki 2016).

mainstream philosophy and inquiry more broadly. It should be kept in mind, though, that such regimes need not be as drastic as, say, times of deep economic depression or social upheaval. The perennial problems associated with the difficulties of life suffice—expressed across time and culture by notions like fallenness, *dukkha*, *avidya*, disharmony, and so forth—and it is here where philosophies of being shine most brightly.

Even more urgently, modern living's problems have acquired a global character (climate change and what is sometimes called *really existing capitalism*, to name just two), where it is no longer enough to focus merely on forms of living well or living, given the emergence of increasing and systemic chaos (the systemic risks incurred by discounted externalities paving the way for environmental crises, and the systemic risks leading to the 2008 financial crisis). While modern philosophy does have resources to attempt to grapple with these problems, perhaps a neglected resource can offer the richest set of responses to current and future times of increasing fragility. This I suggest is what philosophies of being can offer, as tied to the notion of anti-fragility.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary incarnations of philosophies of living well, living, and being tend to be impoverished compared to their root sources. While this general pattern of flattening occurs throughout history, there are also "hidden" traditions that seek to pursue the deepest embodiments of these philosophies. This is nowhere more true than in philosophies of being, where training like a "spiritual athlete" recognizes that many are called, but few are chosen. Living a genuine life of beautiful fragility is difficult enough, and by comparison pursuing a life of authentic resilience is even more difficult. If this is the case, a life of being is the most difficult of all, as it makes the highest of demands upon us: the emptying out of self. But such a path also promises the highest of durable rewards—an anti-fragile peace, calm, and enchantment that are part and parcel of that state of being.

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