

## Essay

# Who lives a life worth living?

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For years, philosophers have thought about what makes a life worth living. Recent research in psychology has put new light on that. This paper places itself in-between philosophy and psychology, and the thoughts about well-being. The title of this paper raises one question: Who lives a life worth living? Based on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and subsidiary, recent studies in 'positive psychology', this work shows that the prerequisite for a life worth living is freedom; that is being free to enhance one's capabilities. This form of freedom manifests itself as being strongly related to the logic of sense that is related to capacity. This relationship illustrates that a life can only be evaluated from its immanent mode of existence, and not by some transcendent ideas. Finally, this study discusses some of the differences between a philosophical approach and approaches like positive psychology. In conclusion, it is suggested that future debate about well-being should be less normative.

**Key words:** Well-being, freedom, sense, enhancement.

## INTRODUCTION

*"The time and place are the only things I am certain of. October 3, 1993, Copenhagen, Denmark. Early that morning my mother received a call telling her that her son was dead. He had died from an accidental overdose of heroin. He was 26 years old. At that moment my whole existence collapsed. Not only was I pushed over by the shock, I also realized that I was standing on nothing. There was no metaphysical foundation beneath me. No certainty. The signs that I so far – quite unconsciously or naively – had taken for granted all faded away. A part of my standard belief had been based on scientific statistics that says men who grow up in a healthy middle class family in Denmark are estimated to die between the ages of 75 and 80, not when they are 26. I had never questioned the scientific truth in such judgments. Basically, I had never really questioned the difference between the particular and the general; perhaps even questioned anything at all.*

*Shortly after, a friend of mine asked: "Do you think your brother lived a good life?" In these circumstances, it might be added, what my friend wanted was a short answer, preferably one saying: "Yes, he did." However, I could not reply. It was then a problem began to take form. I wanted to be able to answer this question, not just regarding my brother, but also more generally. I wanted to scrutinize what it is that makes some forms of life more or less worthy than other forms of life. At least common intuition tells us that all forms of life are not worth the same, but on what criteria do we base such judgment. It is not quite clear. One thing is the quantitative arguments that dying at the age of 26 is too early, but that, of course,*

*leaves aside the various qualitative criteria's that one also have to put into consideration. For a simple example, imagine a person who commits murder at the age of 19, he might have to live the rest of his life in prison. Still, even under such extreme circumstances, one might live a life of some worth. Thus, in order to answer the question: "Did my brother live a good life?" I will have to look more broadly regarding what actually contribute in making a life worth living.*

Normally, when one is asked to make a judgment, one needs to establish certain criteria for making such an evaluation (or refer to some ultimate referent as religious people do). The assumption is that a judgment needs a metaphysical foundation, something solid, stable and unchangeable. Otherwise it is impossible to measure, compare and judge. This study does not have any such certainties, which, of course, was the reason why it was not able to judge, or answer the aforementioned question. However, such thing does not exist, perhaps as a result of the collapsing experience. So, instead of choosing one suitable ethics, it was later realized that such position was a pragmatic one. Rorty Richard (2009: 10) states that the truth is something changeable, as 'what is better for us to believe' rather than as 'the accurate representation of reality'. In other words, the evaluation of a life was no longer dominated by an ideal objective truth. Rather, it was related to the presence of a basic idea that might best be described as a "will to live" regardless of circumstances".

Moving on from what initiated this paper, an interesting

questions regarding how to approach the valuation of a life unarmed, that is to say, without a set of meta-values or norms is raised. A tentative thesis is that what makes a life worth living is a will to live, that is to say a will to create.<sup>1</sup> Another way of formulating this is to define a life worth living as a life that gradually enhances its capabilities to overcome the struggles that hinder it to flourish. What makes a life worth living, therefore, is related to the process of 'overcoming' what hinders one in achieving a better life. Consequently, the process of experimentation or testing one's capacity is of importance, not so much a specific outcome. To enhance one's capabilities in life is, obviously, not the same as enhancing one's performance in sport. In sport, due to the constitutive and strategic rules of the game, the distinction between winners and losers are given; in life it is a different matter. In alignment, this research is not concerned in defining "What is a good life?", because it presupposes a given essence, an unchangeable transcendence or metaphysics that represents the good in "the Good life." Rorty calls this 'an unnatural quest for certainty' (2009:228); or, as Nietzsche says: 'Judgment, valuations with regard to life, for or against, can ultimately never be true: they only possess value as symptom,' he continues and ends up concluding that 'the worth of life cannot be estimated' (Nietzsche, 2010:9). This study is in agreement with Nietzsche's view, even though, its aim is to outline some conditions for living a life worth living. However, the tipping point is that one cannot know what makes a life worth living beforehand. Instead, the evaluation is to be found within the process of becoming what one is. Far too often, ethical theories tend to become too abstract, not dealing with whether such a 'worthy' life actually is possible. Thus, this study is not interpretative, but philosophical, with intent to show that a general theory of a life worth living is not possible. It is however not the aim of this study in delivering yet another "How to" - approach. Rather, it is to show some prerequisites for those forms of life that we might claim, more or less convincingly, to be worth living. Such an ethic needs to be grounded in the mode of existence that it wishes to evaluate. This, of course, is a dilemma since it takes away the guiding element of most ethical theory, for instance, the categorical imperative of Kant or a utilitarian ideal of Mill. Still, such change is needed.

Recent studies in 'experimental philosophy' have shown that moral evaluation is relative to culture and socioeconomic variables (Weinberg et al., 2001). This illustrates that a life is embedded in a symbiotic world, where the place or location still matters. As a result, the moral debate in politics often tends to be grounded in the

lowest common denominator; whereas it might be useful to ask: 'What do you mean "we"?' (Weinberg et al., 2001). A moral debate can readily become a matter of power and alliances. The problem is that intuition is related to a person's lived experience, as well as, how well one is able to perceive the world, and, at least the first is easily affected by culture and socioeconomic variables.<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally, moral and ethical theory assume that 'ought implies can' or to put it even stronger that 'ought to imply realistically can' (Knobe and Leiter, 2009). Basically, the ideals or norms should be within reach for the average human being. To a certain extent it is obvious that some people do act morally gracious, but still we might not get to know *how they actually perform* valuable acts (Knobe and Leiter, 2009). Aristotle (2004:6, 12) raised this concern in *The Nicomachean Ethics* as well when he mentioned that *knowing* what is good might not make us more capable of *doing* it. According to Aristotle in *De Anima*, it is virtue that makes one's choice correct, however, such decision (as with any decision) is related with what he calls practical reason or prudence (*phronesis*), that is to say, the capacity to execute what is necessary based on what happens (Aristotle, 1987: 433a, 27). The freedom to execute is placed in-between contingency and necessity. This capacity is intuitively understood as a mixture of doing, knowing and perceiving. Intuition encapsulates one's lived experience (knowing), as well as, one's ability to perceive. The difficult part, however, is that intuition is a bodily capacity. It is not anchored in our brain, but is rather a bodily capacity to act. If we leave out how one perceives, then the distinction between knowing and doing also addresses the classical almost trivial problem of psychology: Does one act in a certain way due to one's character or is it due to environmental influences. The debate seems to favor both, for a simple example, it makes sense that most parents care about the abilities of the teachers teaching their kids, as well as the socioeconomic background of the kids' classmates, just as parents will have to accept that some kids are born more gifted regarding certain abilities. Still, the debate is much more complex.

Often both nature and nurture are defined within a context of perfection that carries religious connotation, even though the perfect does not exist (Pearson, 1999). Instead, each life is a multiplicity that constantly illustrates how boundaries or limits are sometimes fluid and changeable. In other words, when a perfect world with perfect human beings does not exist, it changes the context for dealing with enhancement, growth, development, etc. This is believed to also give sensuous

<sup>1</sup>Deleuze (2002) defines Nietzsche's 'will to power' as a 'will to create'. The aim of this paper, even though it is indebted to the thoughts of Deleuze, is to answer the question that Deleuze, in my opinion, did not answer clearly: "How do we know what to affirm?" And, "How might one affirm that, if it apparently is outside one's capabilities?"

<sup>2</sup> Intuition is here understood as a combination of *knowing* and *perceiving*, for instance, when one knows when one has perceived enough to make a decision. Partly lived experience; partly hyper-attentiveness or aesthetical empathy (that is, the ability to sense the other without reducing the other to one's own experience).

perception a prime role in facilitating better life-conditions. The biologist Lynn Margulis (1999: p. 9) writes:

Living beings defy neat definition. They fight, they feed, they dance, they mate, they die. At the base of the creativity of all large familiar forms of life, symbiosis generates novelty. It brings together different life-forms, always for a reason ...

The reason for establishing relations is to overcome certain obstacles that imprison one's existence such as hunger, but also phenomenon's such as control, coercion, power struggles, etc. In alignment, the more complicated one is able to think, the more substantial one's thoughts are. Similarly, the fewer the aspects that one might reduce what happens into, the less one will understand. A life emerge in-between different aspects, themes or tendencies. For instance, the assumption that *ought* or *should* implies *can*, might not only be too ambitious for some human beings, as well as discriminating, but also – and more importantly – it might not be ambitious enough. It simply, might not notice certain possible relation that might strengthen one's capabilities. This does not need to be complicated; an example could be various forms of team formations where an ongoing constructive feedback (both emotionally and technical) heightens the potential outcome (Amabile and Kramer, 2011).

Aristotle (2004: 5, 1140a) concept of practical reason emphasizes that one does not make unnecessary deliberation about things that are not possible, as well as, thing that one does not have the capacity to affect. One does not enhance one's capabilities by acting like the gangsters John Dillinger or Don Corleone, but use the feedback as encouragement for change. Still, the process of practical reason is not strictly rational, but rather intuitive and hyper-attentive (omission) related to the process itself. For instance, Aristotle talks about doing something for the act alone. To put it simply, as long as we do not know what the human being might be capable of, it is worth doing.<sup>3</sup> It might do better, than what the normative discourse suggests. Especially, if it is allowed or encouraged to defy any neat definition of how a life should be lived. The term "better", however, should here be seen in relation to the aforementioned definition of a life worth living, for instance, what obstacles is it possible to overcome? In this paper, therefore, the central

question is not *a priori*, but a continuous *a posteriori* testing of what actually works. In that sense it is closer to Aristotle than Kant, but even closer to Nietzsche and moral psychology than traditional ethical theory.

These preliminary thoughts underline the difficulty in raising a question that does not implicitly aims at posing or opposing an already given ideal. The difficulty emerges, because such a question will have to propose a possible form of life worth living. A guiding question, therefore, is: "Who lives a life worth living?" This question focuses on the singular life and its immanent modes of existence and addresses how a person might overcome certain obstacles towards living a worthy life, that is to say overcome one's limits. If these assumptions are right, then one can infer something general about how a person who lives a worthy life actually lives. At least, it will help in broadening the debate about well-being by changing the focus from asking: "How one should live" towards asking: "What might lead to a decent life?" – the latter will help us answer the question: "Who lives a life worth living?"

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

In his fine book, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus addresses the problem of philosophy: 'There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy' (Camus, 2005: 1). At least tentatively, Camus's view is accepted. However, this study rather draw attention to the implicit question avoided in Camus's study: whether one form of life is better than another. The logic of Camus is simply: As long as one does not commit suicide, life must be worth living. Yet, he still sees it problematic that some forms of life are not capable of, or worthy of staying alive in spite of all its obstacles. This, of course, shows that it might be possible to overcome such obstacles, for instance, that feeling of life being absurd or chaotic. Camus' question, therefore, still is relevant. It shows that the human being is the only living being that questions the value of living contra the struggles. Is it worth the struggle at all cost? The question that arises from Camus' thoughts is: How to overcome living a life *not* worth living? This is where, for instance, positive psychology offers many empirical founded solutions such as disputation, gratification, cognitive therapy and medication as helpful tools. My suggestion is much more plain, as well as, much more complicated. The main argument is that making life worth living is actually what *makes* it worth living. The striving or trying is at the center. A continuous wrestling with the hurdles of being alive is what brings value to life, because here one gradually enhances one's capabilities. Values are produced in the slipstream of living.

Needless to say, there are many ways to enhance the human being, for instance, disciplines including medicine,

<sup>3</sup>Aristotle's concept of practical reason (*phronésis*) is not science (*episteme*); instead it is much closer to wisdom than thinking, because the latter requires a formal logic. Aristotle, therefore, distinguishes between two forms of intuition, one that he relates to mathematic; for example, it is possible to master mathematics at quite an early age, but to master life, an intuition that is related to life experience is required (2004: VI, viii). Basically, one becomes wise by living. Later, Bergson thinks that intuition is related to wisdom, that is, life experience, but adding that such experience brings correlation between perception and knowledge. Bergson claims that one can anticipate what is going to happen by knowing what has happened as well as what is happening. This, of course, is related to his ideas of time as duration (Bergson, 1999). My opinion is it is not the same that is repeated, but the difference, in that sense intuition is a creative practice.

law, psychology, economics, and sociology. Recent studies tell us that socioeconomic difference influence one's moral valuation, therefore, decision makers discuss issues such as equality and wellbeing in society, because the general intuition is embedded in the way people live. Also, a concept like behavioral-economy shows how it is possible to change the behavior of people due to economic incitements such as tax and regulations, but also by small changes in the context, for instance, the way one designs supermarkets or cafeterias can affect how healthy people eat (Savulescu and Bostrom, 2011; Thaler and Sunstein, 2009). However, my purpose is much more existential even though a life always correlates more or less with its surroundings.

Still, some forms of life are more successful than others. However, the term 'successful' should not be understood within the framework of a modern business logic where career or money would be the criterion, but in an Aristotelian sense. For a simple example, parents might be asked what form of life that they wish or hope for their children. The majority of parents want their children to succeed in life (Urmson, 1988: 12). That's obvious. However, most parents have very different views and ideas about what constitutes success, and how one might live a successful life.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, studies in psychology has moved from underlining self-esteem as the key-factor of success towards stressing willpower, self-control and self-discipline as key-factors. The morale is that to flourish requires hard work and discipline, but once a person accomplishes something, then one will have a higher self-esteem (Baumeister and Tierney, 2012; Duckworth, 2011). Thus, if a parent would imagine a successful life, it would be a life where it is difficult to find ways of how to improve it. It is not perfect, because perfection requires a normative ideal that a person can perform more or less in accordance with (Haybron, 2007). Instead, it is successful due to the immanent modes of existence. It could be a life where one is in control of one's life in the sense that one is capable of using one's strength constructively to overmatch the various forms of power, ideals and norms that might hinder its enhancement. Thus, the person's who lives a life worth living are the one's that succeed, and vice versa.

Luckily, at least from the point of view of developing a theory, there are certain factors that successful lives share, such as self-discipline and willpower, but each person does not desire, want or strive for the same due to one's differences, for instance, one's strength and

capacity. This idea resembles the thoughts presented by Spinoza in his *Ethics* where he stresses that the human being does not strive after something because it is good, but it is good, because the human being strives or wants it (Deleuze, 1988: 20-21). The point is that one strives to both remain in life, as well as, become more alive. Similar, human or existential enhancement requires suitable challenges that might emerge from various collisions and encounter where diverging ideas, thoughts and feelings are at stake. According to Nietzsche (2010: 46), 'where there is a struggle, it is a struggle for power'. Power as an immanent force, that is to say, as a will to live. Nietzsche presents us with a move from *power over* towards *power to*, which is related to freedom as becoming. Furthermore, this is a movement that to some extent is reflected within organizational psychology and the idea of empowerment (Amabile and Kramer, 20011). The main difference is, however, that Nietzsche's power always is a will to create without an end-goal; whereas most business organizations operate with a clear end-goal or a clear desired vision. For Nietzsche living becomes a voyage in immanence, in the unknown forces that challenges one and one's ability to affirm what correlates with one's strength. In a study, Duckworth et al. (2007) ask the question: 'Why do some individuals accomplish more than others of equal intelligence?' The answer they present is 'grit', a concept they define as 'as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress' (Duckworth et al., 2007: 1087-88). Grit, as described here, is an example of how one might enhance one's capabilities. To exemplify, a long-term goal is to terminate all end-goal, because that will make the human being more attentive, but also more inventive and creative. Such sensuous attentiveness is related to an intuitive method, as mentioned earlier. The inventive and creative processes are part of the ongoing process of enhancement of one's capabilities, which, as shown, requires perseverance, willpower and self-discipline. It is hard work to get involved with life. In addition, Deleuze (2002: 1) writes: 'Evaluation, in essence, are not values but ways of being, modes of existence of those who judge and evaluate, serving as principles for the values on the basis of which they judge,' then he concludes: 'This is why we always have the beliefs, feelings and thoughts that we deserve given our way of being or our style of life'. If one feels sad, low on energy and without any desire to live or work, then these thoughts and feeling are the result of that person's style of life. Basically, the person does not take up the challenge; does not try to match what happens; does not transform, does not try to dispute oneself to move away from a mere pessimistic or lazy approach towards a more positive approach. In short, the person lacks 'grit.' This approach constantly balances on the edge of a knife since one needs both to manifests one's willpower, but doing so requires self-control, for instance, when one

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<sup>4</sup>I am aware that a growing amount of life is measured in money; for instance, it has become quite difficult to distinguish between private and working life. Everything is part of the job. Still, everything is also a part of a life. To measure the worth of life in money is basically to reduce a life to a logic that is as simply as the rules of a 100 meter race. The only excuse is that it might be difficult to notice the existence of other values than money, but that, of course, does mean that they do not exist.

refuses to anticipate what takes place by simply classifying it in a well-known system of thought. It requires an ability to take care of one self, which, of course, grows with experience.<sup>5</sup>

In alignment, studies show that lack of self-control is one of the key-factors when a person fails of improvement (Baumeister and Tierney, 2012). If we dwell on the concepts self-control and will-power, then the evaluation of one's feelings and thoughts can be helpful as an instant form of feedback. For a simple example, if a person wants to challenge oneself by participating in a marathon or writing a novel, then any serious deviation from one's planning regarding nutrition, relaxation and practice might cause a lower mood. What the person needs is perseverance, that is to say, the will to go on even when it is tiring, boring or difficult. Thus, a person succeeds, because one outflows or overcomes one's own barriers and convictions. Nietzsche (2010: 64) puts it concisely: 'He uses himself up, he does not spare himself – fatefully, portentously, involuntarily, as a river involuntarily overflows its banks'. Similar, Deleuze (1997: 269) stress that there 'are things one cannot do or even say, believe, feel, think, unless one is weak, enslaved, impotent; and other things one cannot do, feel and so on, unless one is free or strong'. The question is, whether these feelings increase our power of action or not? Basically, whether they enhance the person's capacity to act, or not. Another question is, whether these feelings, thoughts and believes help a person to come into full possession of that power, that is, the power or strength to overcome the feeling of weakness. One grows by overcoming oneself. The psychologist Roger (2004: 188, 191) stresses something similar, when he talks about freeing the individual from defensives. In a paper he writes about 'a movement away from the pole of defensiveness toward the pole of openness and experience'. The purpose of this movement is growth. He states: 'the person who is psychologically free moves in the direction of becoming a more fully functioning person. The assumption is, similar to this paper, that life is 'flowing, changing process in which nothing is fixed ... It is always in process of becoming' (Roger, 2004: p. 27). Every kind of growth or development requires courage and imagination, not just because one will have to expose oneself, but also because one will have to create one's own path through live (Nietzsche, 2010a).

In *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche (2010: 59) writes:

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<sup>5</sup>Just as one might ask: What came first the hen or the egg? One might ask: What came first "To know oneself" or "To take care of oneself". The assumption here is that one gradually gets to know one's strengths and limitations by taking care of oneself. This can also be put differently: Those people who learn from their experiences in a sense where they are ready to change direction in life, or dismiss belief or assumptions based on 'what is better' will most likely also be the one's who are more successful in living a life that flourish. This also emphasize that living a life worth living is not about self-realization rather it is about overcoming oneself, as an continuous process of transformation.

'The worth of a thing lies sometimes not in what attains with it, but is what one pays for it – what is costs for us.'

The price paid for enhancement is often to abandon old convictions and beliefs – including one's own. In alignment, he writes: 'Whatever does not destroy me makes me stronger' (Nietzsche, 2010: 59). It is obvious, or at least it is, that this slogan from 'the military school', as Nietzsche calls it, is not about winners or losers based on specified criterions. Rather, it underlines how any kind of growth or development emerges from trying to match or cope with the various challenging circumstances that one encounters. Thus, enhancement is not about being selfish since helping other people can be quite a developing challenge. Enhancement should always be seen as something singular when it is related to a life.

Thus far, this study provides evidence for the correlation between the thoughts of Deleuze and Nietzsche and recent studies in Psychology. Now, the question is whether the many different concepts, as prerequisites of living a life worth living, can be put together in an aggregate. In addressing this question, the question: "Who lives a life worth living?" must first be addressed. So far, this research has succeeded in dealing only with what seems to constitute a live worth living, and how it can be defined. In continuation hereof, a tentative thesis is that those who live well are free. The argument is that only a free person can become, if not, the person would feel obligated to confirm certain ideals or norms, which might hinder the potential enhancement.

In what follows, this study unfolds the understanding of freedom and considers what normative significance this understanding has. Finally, the research asks what, if anything, it might contribute to our understanding of living a life worth living.

## WHAT IS FREEDOM?

Asking for a definition of freedom can seem as a paradox. Any kind of definition is a way of drawing a line between what is inside and what is outside. With that risk in mind, this research is strictly existential, not political, just as the concept of enhancement and challenge should be seen within this context. Freedom, therefore, can be defined as becoming without a specific end-goal, or as Nietzsche says: 'To have the will to be responsible for one's self ... The free man is a warrior' (2010: 59). This illustrates the strength of taking care of oneself and might give some sense of how one's intuition functions, because the will to create or to act is based on one's previous experiences that might change as one perceives something new. However, one takes responsibility for one's self by testing, fighting, experimenting with one's believe. And, importantly, for Nietzsche such a war is never a war until death, on the contrary, he wants to test – even his own self – to see what is better to believe. The free man is a warrior, because he or she is not afraid of fighting his or her own convictions. For Nietzsche the

goal is to constantly overcome oneself. To clarify this further, freedom is a mixture of courage and imagination, for instance, having the courage to stand against controlling norms or ideals (including one's own beliefs and convictions), but also having the required imagination to create a new way forward. Also, following this new way often requires courage as well. Becoming is an on-going process where each life grows either positively or negatively due to how well it deals with the various encounters it has, for instance, how well it is able to control and discipline itself. Freedom is more or less equivalent to the ability to follow what happens, that is to say investigate the potential of what is expressed in a given circumstance. Deleuze puts it clearly stating:

... [T]o become worthy of what happens to us, and thus to will and release the event, to become the offspring of one's own events, and thereby to be reborn, to have one more birth – to become the offspring of one's events and not one's actions, for the action is itself produced by the offspring of the event' (2004: 169-70).

The actions rise from an encounter with something that stretches our capabilities to the limit. Freedom, is only regarded as certain acts where our capacity, strength or power to act is questioned (Smith, 2011: 134). However, since a life worth living is a life that gradually becomes more by enlarging its capacity to act, freedom is a crucial part hereof. Nevertheless, this form of freedom is not similar to "free will", which is an idea related to certain transcendent norms or ideals. Instead, one is free to will "what happens". Still, it is not a passive acceptance of 'what happens'; rather it deals with how one composes oneself with other forces (other humans, things, ideas, feelings, etc.) as a way to enhance one's power to act (Bryant, 2011: 32). The point is that one strategically accepts what happens, but acts as one deals with the challenge. 'The free man is a warrior', as Nietzsche says. Recalling the example of marathon, then what happens is that the person after a few months of training gets bored, the person is not free to choose this feeling, but free to become with it, for instance, by being more inventive is one's training.

Using this definition of freedom as a way of actively become with what happens instead of choosing between pre-defined options or actions, is not without problems. The idea of becoming as way where a person is able to execute one's strengths is a matter of sense. The question, therefore, is: Whether a person is free to make sense of what happens. In other words, use one's strength to become in possession of more power; or, whether a person is controlled by higher ideals or norms leaving the person weak?; it seems like freedom is related to the logic of sense or at least that freedom is more or less equivalent with the logic of sense. To make our definition of a life worth living even shorter, it might be define as a life that makes sense. Even though such a life only can make sense if it is free, if it is able to overcome

challenges, etc.<sup>6</sup>

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze emphasizes that the event is sense itself; there is no outside, no transcendence. Sense does not exist independently, but inheres in what happens. In other words, the event is not what happens, but rather that which is expressed within what happens. The event is virtual. To recapitulate, the word virtual comes from *virtus* meaning potential or force. Deleuze often couple's the virtual with the actual or actualization, where the latter emphasizes the process by which the virtual becomes visible or expressed. In a phrase taken from Marcel Proust, the virtual is described as something that becomes 'real without being actual, ideal without being abstract' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 156). Therefore, this process of actualization is related to power, strength or capacity, because in order to actualize the virtual one will have to become equal of what happens. This, however, does not mean that one actualizes the event; rather that something emerges in-between, for instance, between a person and his or her encounter with the virtual. Some forces remain unaffected. This underlines, as mentioned, that it is not a matter of "free will," but solely of being free to follow what occurs, and – more importantly – see what it might opens up for, for instance, new ways of living, new ideas, new possibilities. Deleuze says: 'This is why we say that *in fact* we can only infer it directly, on the basis of the circle where the ordinary dimensions of the propositions leads us' (Deleuze, 2004: 23).

A fact is an aggregate of various ideas, things, emotions and forces of life in general that presents different paths that a person might follow. One way of approaching such an aggregate is to focus on what might seem interesting, remarkable, important in determine our potential failure or success, for instance, a person's potential failure or success regarding running a marathon. These categories, however, cannot be known beforehand (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 82).

In other words, one needs to break open the habitual system and see what emerges in-between the various things when they collide and express something. Making sense is a way of ascribing meaning, however, ascribing meaning is a way of expressing one's form of life. How one values, thinks and feels is related to one's mode of existence. Such understanding of meaning is, therefore, closely related to a creative or inventive process of actualization, which again is related with an intuitive approach. Deleuze writes:

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<sup>6</sup> It should be obvious that sense or meaning not is related to an external referent, for instance, a God or an unchangeable ideal. Thus, to put it different, a life worth living is a life where one has a function, where one is useful, for instance, as Wittgenstein (2009) defines meaning in his *Philosophical Investigations*. However, "use" in this paper does not represent, or function in relation to something represented or given. On the contrary, the idea of meaning as "use" is linked to one's encounter with something that put one's knowledge to the limits. The question is whether is one able to overcome one's limitation by *using* one's strengths.

The logic of sense is inspired in its entirety by empiricism. Only empiricism knows how to transcend the experiential dimensions of the visible without falling into Ideas, and how to track down, invoke, and perhaps produce a phantom at the limit of a lengthened or unfolded experience (Deleuze, 2004: 23).

There is something both courageous and imaginative in this logic of sense. Just as there is something almost poetical about this production of sense since the language is used as a tool to create a plane for new experiences such as new expressions that emerge due to an encounter between two or more things. The language forces one to acknowledge what one might not have been able to see before. To put it differently, the language is the link between what one perceives and knows, because it constantly tries to facilitate a space for what one perceives in order for one to get familiar with it. Hereby, the logic of sense does not repeat what has already taken place, but it repeats that which can only be repeated because there is no equal concept for it yet, that is, difference itself. Such difference requires a lot of attention. In other words, it is one's sensitive and sensuous perception that discovers holes in what one might believe to know. The knowledge is put to its limit. And yet, something still brings one forward. This is the courageous and imaginative element of freedom that is crucial for any kind of enhancement. Thus, freedom as becoming refers to the logic of sense where the challenge of the person is to repeat what is new, because this is likely to enhance the capabilities of that person. In other words, the way to orientate oneself when something happens that one might not understand is to keep in mind the long-term goal of a life, the kind of goal that is never fully reached, but stresses how human enhancement makes one more capable of acting in difficult circumstances.

This underlines what Duckworth calls 'grit', or Baumeister calls 'willpower', or what Nietzsche called 'the will to power.' The will to live requires hard work, because to live is to grow.

## THE SETTING

Philosophy has since Plato and Aristotle's focused on the forms of life that are worth living. For example, when Socrates said: 'The unexamined life is not worth living' (Plato, 2002: 38a). Following Plato, then what can be proposed in continuation is that; basically one can never examine one's life enough. Evidently, Plato operated with the ontology of being, whereas this study claims that what is, always is in a process of becoming. The argument, therefore, is quite different. One can never experiment or examine enough with a life, because one cannot know for certain, whether one's potential are fully actualized or, know where one might encounter one's

ignorance. The method is sensitive qua being intuitive. To feel and be well is to become well, that is to say experiment and examine life. Recalling, Camus's question whether a life is worth living or not, then what makes it worth living is one's capacity to make sense, however, make or produce sense without any master-plan. As, Deleuze has stressed many times: We still do not know what a body *can* do (Deleuze, 2002: 39; 1988: 17). This is the premise underlining most new psychology as well, for instance, the concept of 'flow' or 'being in the zone' where one is fully immersed in the task (e.g. cope with what happens). In such a situation a person is fully engaged, and due to this level of engagement one receives instant feedback about how well one is doing. One gets the feedback that one deserves (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Being in flow is closely related to having the strength or power to act. Also, according to Seligman (2011), the process of flow can be accomplished by gratification, which is a way of organizing one's day in order to use one's strengths the best possible way. Getting to know one's strength is a process of actualization, taking care of oneself, similar to the one described earlier. Basically, one can learn to enhance one's strengths in order to be more capable in overcoming certain obstacles. To a certain extent positive psychology and the philosophy presented here overlap. However, there is one important difference. Happiness is not the goal for Deleuze and Nietzsche; rather it is peace at mind. The difference is that the human being in the philosophy of those two, unlike positive psychology, does not try to dispute with what happens, for instance, by putting it into a 'learned optimism'-perspective such as "It does not make sense to base my worth as a teacher on a small percentage of my students" – "First of all, it is true my section is failing behind. But I've got several new recruits ..." (Seligman, 2006: 270-71). For a positive psychologist the point is to avoid a client that thinks his illness is permanent, pervasive and personal. According to Seligman (2006) the 'individuals can choose the way they think' (p. 8). In philosophy, at least the one presented here, the challenge is to belief in this world where, for example, a small amount of my students does like me. This belief is transformed into a Nietzschean 'will to power', that is, a will to create. So, it is not just a matter of one's 'explanatory style' (Seligman, 2006), but rather how one is able to transform what happens into something active. Again, the difference is that Seligman (2006) disputes within a transcendent frame, whereas the power to act takes places in this world. As a consequence the challenge is to become worthy of what happens. Basically, learn to live with the pain. Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 159) write: 'There is a dignity of the event that has always been inseparable from philosophy as *amor fati*: being equal to the event, or becoming the offspring of one's own event – "my wound existed before me; I was born to embody it'. So, whereas positive psychology tries to describe one's feelings and so forth as being related to

a specific situation, or a certain state of affairs, the point here is actually to embrace what happens. This can also be put more simply, positive psychology has a tendency of turning the person into a victim of the circumstances. This, of course, makes positive psychology a moralistic approach even though it claims only to be descriptive. The approach that is presented here is much more affirmative, instead of judging one constantly asks: What does it open up for? What can I learn? What is worth doing again? etc. The challenge is to act as if one actually desired that this specific thing would happen as it did. This is not just a passive acceptance, but requires strength and will. To be at peace with a loss, for example, the loss of a brother, here it does not help that many families constantly loses family members. Instead, it tells one that something is within one's power, whereas something one will have to cope with as it is. The intuitive method presented here is closely related to what Nietzsche meant when he said that what does not kill you makes you stronger. Being able to carry what occurs with a peaceful mind.

In summary, to evaluate a life does not directly imply reaching normative conclusions. Rather, the present suggestions might undermine certain normative conclusions. Instead, to flourish or live a life worth living is closely related to how well one is capable of overcoming one's own limitations. These limitations appear when one encounters something or someone that challenges our knowledge, or to put it differently, that makes one aware of one's ignorance. This ignorance, similar to most philosophical concepts, is then confronted by questioning, testing and experimentation, that is to say, how does one mobilizes one's strength and power to act, to go on living. The main difference between a normative founded approach and an immanent one is that the questions does not intend to bring the other to a certain kind of revelation. Life is not a quiz show. On the other hand, it is to use one's ignorance or limitations to qualify how one will continue. This is actually what this paper tried to accomplish.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, who lives a life worth living? The answer, at least suggested in this study, is quite simply, but nevertheless difficult to practice. First of all, one has to be free to become with what is expressed. Then, one will have to use one's power, self-discipline or grit in trying to cope with what happens. This process opens of for new challenges, for instance, when one becomes aware of one's limitations. The challenge, therefore, is to enhance those capacities that make it possible to cope with the various obstacles that one may encounter. Basically saying how one might use one's ignorance to qualify one's future questions. All obstacles are existential. The point is, of course, not to get rich, but live a better life. Therefore, there is no one solution or how-to approach

that will ensure flourishing or well-being, but the warrior attitude of Nietzsche as an on-going quest to overcome oneself. Some of the decisions that one makes are risky, they are founded in one's intuition that to a certain extent can explain why (that is knowing), as well as, what (that is perceiving), but rarely sufficiently answer how (that is doing). Basically, how did he live a life worth living? Such question is difficult to answer in full. A part of such answer is guessing, but this paper can help us to guess on a more qualified ground even though such ground always is tentative. At least, this study described some conditions that are crucial for a worthy life.

So, did my brother live a life worth living? Based on the previous thoughts, my answer, unfortunately, is no. In short, he was not able to overcome what he encountered as problematic. He was not able to transform it.

In conclusion those who lives a life worth living are the one's that try the hardest. It resembles the famous quote of Samuel Beckett, who in *Worstward Hosays*: 'Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better' (Beckett, 2009: 81). This morale is also present in the work of Aristotle, as well as, in Nietzsche's and Deleuze's and many similiar works. The point is to avoid self-pity or victimization, but to act by pushing one's capacity to its limits. Perhaps, it has always been like that. The only difference is that today a growing amount of ideals and norms blurry this approach. This is however mentioned strongly in this study.

Thus, one might simply ask oneself: Ever tried to become worthy of what happens? In order to enhance one's capabilities one actually will have to try. That could serve as a starting point. And it is probably the best advices.

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