

# Hedonism And Eudemonism In Aquinas--not The Same As Happiness



## An Interactivist-Hermeneutic Metatheory for Positive Psychology

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**ABSTRACT.** Drawing on Bickhard's interactivism along with philosophical hermeneutics, we outline a plausible ontology of human action and development that might serve as a metatheory for positive psychology. Our non-dualistic metatheory rests on a distributed notion of agency. The kinds of morally imbued social practices that are identified by hermeneutic theorists constitute one level of agency. At the first level of agency, persons are already committed, at least by implication, to folk psychologies that cover positive emotion, positive traits, and positive institutions. Higher levels of agency and knowing emerge through the process of development. The higher knowing levels incorporate the capacity for conscious self-reflexive awareness, which permits the person to consciously deliberate and form theories of the good person and the good life. These more consciously formed positive folk psychologies are always in a dialectical relationship with the more implicit and embodied understandings of the good life as manifested in social practices, emotional experiences, and habitual thoughts. We suggest that this framework helps to account for the 'diversity of goods' that underlie our lives and to clarify the relationship that the professional positive psychologist will have with his or her native folk psychology.

**KEY WORDS:** critical psychology, cultural psychology, flourishing, good life, happiness, individualism, interactivism, philosophy of social science, positive psychology, well-being

Critics both within and outside of psychology have persuasively argued for a number of years that despite aspirations to be an ahistorical, value- and culture-free science, psychological theory, research, and practice are all heavily influenced by Western values and assumptions. Today's positive psychology runs the same risk, as the papers in this special issue attest. The uncritical transmission of culturally specific and contestable values and assumptions

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