

Introduction: The Role of the Arts and Humanities in Human Flourishing

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The Oxford Handbook of the Positive Humanities

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Abstract and Keywords

The Positive Humanities are an emerging new field of inquiry and practice concerned with the relationship between the arts and humanities and human flourishing. The first half of this chapter introduces the work of the Humanities and Human Flourishing Project (HHF), a growing international and multidisciplinary network of scholars, researchers, and creators that the editors of this volume have led since 2014 with the aim of establishing the Positive Humanities as a robust field. Among other endeavors, HHF has conducted literature reviews, developed and refined a conceptual model, created and validated a toolkit of measures, and identified five key psychological mechanisms connecting the arts and humanities to human flourishing: reflection, acquisition, immersion, socialization, and expression (RAISE). The second half of this chapter introduces the six parts of this *Handbook*: overview of the Positive Humanities, historical and current trends, flourishing outcomes, pathways from arts and humanities engagement to human flourishing, disciplinary considerations, and public engagement and policy. The aim of the various parts of this *Handbook* is to bring together theoretical, empirical, and applied work to advance the understanding of the range of effects that engagement in the arts and humanities can have on human flourishing. The editors hope this seminal volume will encourage continued cross-cultural and multidisciplinary work in the Positive Humanities.

Keywords: Positive Humanities, arts, humanities, culture, well-being, flourishing, positive psychology, conceptual model, mechanism, policy

The arts and humanities play a vital and manifold role in human flourishing. Stories, songs, pictures, and videos are used to soothe, stimulate, and delight infants and children. More formally, literature, history, philosophy, music, film, and the visual and performing arts play a crucial role in education. These pursuits are also a significant part of the everyday life of adults, offering personal enjoyment and enrichment as well as opportunities for connection with others. At the societal level, the arts and humanities can provide large groups of people with the shared meaning and common purpose necessary for collective thriving. In the words of *The Heart of the Matter*, a report issued by the Ameri-

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can Academy of Arts and Sciences (2013), the arts and humanities are “critical to our pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness” (p. 13).

(p. 4) The Positive Humanities are an emerging new field of inquiry and practice concerned with the relationship between the arts and humanities—collectively referred to as *culture*—and human flourishing (Pawelski, Chapter 2 in this volume). Both *culture* and *flourishing*, of course, are botanical terms. Etymologically, culture refers to the cultivation of plants, with the flourishing of those plants as its goal. Metaphorically, culture refers to the cultivation of human beings, and by extension, to the artistic and intellectual fruits of that cultivation. As implied by this metaphor, human culture should result in human flourishing.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Important as culture is for human flourishing, it can also diminish or destroy it. In societies across time and around the world, flourishing has often been considered a privilege of the elite, and many of the elements of culture have been withheld from the average citizen. In authoritarian societies, culture is often manipulated to diminish the flourishing, and even destroy the lives, of particular individuals and members of targeted groups. But even in more open and inclusive societies, it is clear that the role culture plays is complex, in some ways supporting human flourishing and in other ways suppressing it. In no society is culture fully optimized for individual and collective flourishing.

Because the relationship between culture and human flourishing is complex, its effective assessment is as difficult as it is vital. This assessment has traditionally taken place within the arts and humanities, with much of the work of cultural critique carried out by scholars and creators in areas such as philosophy, literature, history, religious studies, music, art, and theatre. In the last few decades, this work has frequently focused on ways in which culture has fallen short of the ideal of flourishing and has instead given rise to various sorts of pathologies, injustices, and other forms of human languishing. Identifying the shortcomings of culture is clearly of great importance. A danger of these efforts, however, is that they can fixate on the search for failure, minimizing or even ignoring the contribution that culture does and can make to human flourishing. This work can also become quite theoretical, requiring years of training to access and lacking clear avenues of application.

With science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in the ascendancy, declining enrollments in many arts and humanities departments, and students increasingly viewing higher education as vocational preparation, the arts and humanities are often called upon to justify themselves and their role in our contemporary world. Many times these justifications are made in economic terms, citing the impact of museums, performing arts centers, and other cultural organizations on the economies of the cities and regions in which they are located. Sometimes these justifications are made in academic terms, as when philosophy departments point out the high scores their graduates achieve on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). Other times, they are made in vocational terms, with educators tracking (p. 5) the job

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prospects and income levels of arts and humanities graduates. Increasingly, justifications. Economic, academic, and vocational outcomes are undoubtedly important. Nevertheless, they are instrumental effects of culture, and an overemphasis on them can tie the arts and humanities too strongly to external interests, with the risk of distorting their aims and practices. Although the Positive Humanities acknowledge the various instrumental benefits of culture, they emphasize the intrinsic benefits, such as personal enjoyment, individual and societal growth, and meaning-making, that more directly cause or constitute human flourishing (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004; Shim, Tay, Ward, & Pawelski, 2019).

These intrinsic benefits of culture are at the center of our work in the Humanities and Human Flourishing (HHF) Project. HHF is located at the University of Pennsylvania, with one of us (Pawelski) serving as its founding director and the other (Tay) as its founding research director. Understanding the humanities in a broad way that includes the arts, we propose that they have a central role in human flourishing and that this role leads to a variety of outcomes, many of which are definable and measurable. Since receiving our first grant in 2014, and with support from the Templeton Religion Trust, the University of Pennsylvania, and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) (which has designated HHF an NEA Research Lab), HHF has developed into a growing international and multi-disciplinary network of over one hundred fifty humanities scholars, scientific researchers, creative practitioners, college and university educators, wellness officers, policy experts, members of government, and leaders of cultural organizations.

At the beginning of our work, we conducted several literature reviews of scientific research on the relationship between the arts and humanities and well-being. Our systematic review of empirical research on the well-being effects of engagement with history, literature, and philosophy revealed limited work in this area, although the work that has been done (mostly in pedagogical settings) provides initial evidence that engagement in the humanities can have a positive effect on individual well-being (Vaziri, Tay, Keith, & Pawelski, 2019). The results from a mixed studies systematic review we completed of arts and humanities interventions with healthy adults again showed both limited work in this area and initial evidence for the effectiveness of these interventions across a range of human flourishing outcomes, including, for example, increased positive affect, decreased negative affect, higher levels of relaxation and relief from stress, and a greater sense of community and belonging (Shim, Jebb, Tay, & Pawelski, 2020). We conducted the largest meta-analysis to date investigating the relationship between religion/spirituality and well-being, covering more than 250 studies and including well over half a million participants. We found a small but robust correlation between religion/spirituality and life satisfaction, with the strongest results occurring in older individuals, in more religious countries, and in developing nations (Yaden et al., 2021).

(p. 6) Aside from religion/spirituality, these literature reviews revealed surprisingly little robust research examining the role of the arts and humanities in human flourishing. We believe this paucity of research is due, in part, to the lack of theoretical clarity and the absence of a conceptual model. Consequently, we have written several theoretical papers

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(Pawelski, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Pawelski & Tay, 2018), including an introduction to the Positive Humanities (Pawelski, Chapter 2 in this volume), and have developed and refined a conceptual model (Tay, Pawelski, & Keith, 2018; Shim et al., 2019) operationalizing arts and humanities engagement, articulating a broad range of relevant human flourishing outcomes, and identifying a set of psychological mechanisms. We have also developed and validated a toolkit of measures for assessing the role of these psychological mechanisms in different types of arts and humanities engagement (Thapa, Vaziri, Shim, Tay, & Pawelski, 2021). Believing this work needs to be deeply and broadly collaborative, we have brought together empirical researchers and arts and humanities scholars and practitioners across eight different disciplines (philosophy, history, religious studies and theology, literary studies, music, art, theatre, and film) to discuss what each of these disciplines can contribute to the conceptualization and cultivation of human flourishing. To communicate the results of these discussions—and invite others to join the conversation—we have established a book series on The Humanities and Human Flourishing with Oxford University Press. As a complement to this work in the various arts and humanities disciplines, we have developed and edited this *Handbook* to bring together a broad range of scientific approaches and relevant research to advance the empirical assessment of the well-being effects of engagement in the arts and humanities.¹

A Conceptual Model

The conceptual model we have developed includes an operationalization of engagement in the arts and humanities, a broad definition of human flourishing in terms of a wide range of constituent factors, and a set of psychological mechanisms through which these factors may be facilitated (Tay et al., 2018). A brief description of each of these elements of the conceptual model will help contextualize our approach to the empirical assessment of the role of the arts and humanities in human flourishing.

It is notoriously difficult to provide a single, comprehensive definition of the arts and humanities. Instead, we chose to create an integrated conceptual framework, using qualitative analysis to accommodate the wide range of definitions that have been proposed in various contexts (Tay et al., 2018; Shim et al., 2019). This framework focuses on engagement with the arts and humanities and includes three frames. First is the extensional frame, which addresses the *what* of arts and humanities engagement. This *what* focuses on the forms and content of the arts and humanities domain and is variously described (p. 7) as fields (including academic disciplines, creative industries, and public sectors), subject matter, practices, artifacts, and phenomenological experiences. Second is the functional frame, which addresses the *how* of arts and humanities engagement. This *how* focuses on the behavioral and attitudinal aspects of such engagement and is described in terms of activities (e.g., reading, writing, drawing, and dancing), modes (e.g., creating, performing, critiquing, studying, and appreciating), and approaches (e.g., idiographic, interpretive, evaluative, expressive, communicative, and historic). Third is the normative frame, which addresses the *why* of arts and humanities engagement. This *why* focuses on the ends and purposes of the engagement and is described in terms of aesthetic experi-

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ence, individual and societal growth, and meaning-making. In our integrative model, these three frames are not mutually exclusive, and clarity about which frame or frames are being used is important for assessing the human flourishing outcomes of arts and humanities engagement.

Our model includes a wide variety of human flourishing outcomes, ranging from the physiological and psychological to the ethical and social. We are interested in neurological, physiological, and psychological reactions to the direct experience of the arts and humanities; the well-being effects of short- and long-term engagement in the arts and humanities; the enduring psychological competencies to which such engagement can lead; and the impact it can have on character development, ethical attitudes and behaviors, civic engagement, and the advancement of social justice. It is important to note that although our model generally hypothesizes positive effects of the arts and humanities on human flourishing, the actual effects experienced will vary across different contexts. We believe engagement with the arts and humanities is likely to have mostly positive effects, but we understand that some of its effects will be neutral or even negative. And any specific experience, of course, may have a mixture of positive, neutral, and negative effects on various outcomes. For this reason, a *eudaimonic profile* can be helpful for tracking the full range of actual effects in and across different contexts (Pawelski, 2016c). Understanding these context-dependent nuances is important in its own right and is also useful for learning how to optimize the positive effects and minimize any negative effects of arts and humanities engagement.

We further propose that human flourishing outcomes are facilitated through five psychological mechanisms: Reflection, Acquisition, Immersion, Socialization, and Expression, which we refer to via the acronym RAISE.

- 1. Reflection:** An intentional, cognitive-emotional process for developing, reinforcing, or discarding one's habits, character, values, or worldview. The essence of reflection is captured in the Socratic aphorism, "The unexamined life is not worth living."
- 2. Acquisition** (formerly labeled "embeddedness"): The set of socio-cognitive psychological processes—such as experiences of mastery, vicarious experiences, direct encouragement, and positive physiological responses—that underlie the (p. 8) development of particular perspectives, habits, or skills, including self-efficacy, self-regulation, and integrative complexity, among others. The arts and humanities serve to build new positive skills, competencies, and perspectives.
- 3. Immersion:** This is the immediacy that often attends engagement with the arts and humanities. One's attention is captured, resulting in the experiencing of various levels of sensory and emotional states and first-order cognitions, often leading to a feeling of being carried away and disconnected from the worries of everyday life.
- 4. Socialization:** The degree to which individuals experience or take on various roles and identities within communities and cultures. The arts and humanities socialize us to new ways of being as we look through different cultural lenses. Socialization also includes the sharing of experiences and the building of community through activities such as singing in a choir, joining a book club, and attending the theater.

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5. *Expression*: A process of externalizing one's thoughts and feelings that may (but need not) involve others. The arts and humanities are a deep and rich way for people to bring out their ideas, feelings, and perspectives. This can occur in private or public settings and through individual or collective effort.

The outcomes and psychological mechanisms in our model serve as consolidative categories for scientific findings on the empirical effects of engagement in the arts and humanities. Importantly, they point to new ways of measuring the impact of the arts and humanities that harness scientific assessments established in psychology, and especially in the field of positive psychology. We realize this conceptual model presents a challenge to those who argue that the intrinsic benefits of engagement in the arts and humanities cannot be scientifically studied. The authors of the report *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts*, for example, hold that the intrinsic benefits of the arts are more important than their instrumental benefits, but argue that unlike the latter, the former cannot be measured using social scientific methods. They write, "To discuss these intrinsic effects, we need to abandon the more objective view of the social scientist and focus on the personal, subjective response of the individual" (McCarthy et al., 2004, p. 37). We believe that this view presents a false dichotomy. Many social scientists are interested in the individual's personal, subjective response and are developing ever more effective ways of studying it scientifically. Indeed, in the initial articulation of positive psychology, its cofounders, Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2000), indicated that the scientific study of "positive subjective experience" is a central focus of this field (p. 5). Psychology researchers are continuing to develop new instruments (e.g., the Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving [Su, Tay, & Diener, 2014] and the PERMA-Profiler [Butler & Kern, 2016]) and to invent and refine methods (e.g., questionnaires, experience sampling methodologies, and Big Data) for the quantitative and qualitative social scientific study of the subjective experience of human flourishing (Scollon, Kim-Prieto, & Diener, 2003; Woo, Tay, & Proctor, 2020).

(p. 9) Although we do not believe social science must be abandoned when assessing personal, subjective aspects of human flourishing, we do believe it is only one part of what is needed. When research focuses on the intrinsic benefits of culture, it is crucial to see this work as a collaborative enterprise that involves arts and humanities scholars and practitioners, since they have invaluable insights into the nature of human flourishing and the role of the arts and humanities for its cultivation. To be valid, psychological measures in this domain must be guided by the experience and reflection of those who dedicate their lives to the creation and study of culture. It is also important to keep in mind that flourishing involves personal, subjective experience but is not limited to it. Psychology has traditionally focused on the study of individuals, and its perspectives are important for studying well-being. A comprehensive approach to assessing the role of the arts and humanities in human flourishing, however, must also include other human sciences that focus on ways in which communities and societies function.

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We offer our conceptual model in the belief that empirical assessment of the role of the arts and humanities in human flourishing should complement but not replace the more traditional ways scholars have thought and written about culture. The relationship between the arts and humanities and human flourishing is too complex to be understood by using a single approach. We also want to make clear that exploring this relationship is not the same as assessing the worth of the arts and humanities. We believe the full value of the arts and humanities will forever remain beyond the reach of scientific measurement, even though many of their effects are not. It is important not to conflate intrinsic benefits with intrinsic worth, and we repudiate any attempts to use this work to create a hierarchy of cultures, disciplines, or forms of engagement. We do believe, however, that collaborative empirical assessment can be uniquely valuable for measuring a range of definable and observable effects of the arts and humanities on specific aspects of individual and collective human flourishing. This assessment can be informed and supported by the theoretical and conceptual work we have undertaken, by the growing number of reports that are beginning to explore some of these topics,² and by the chapters in this *Handbook*. The great promise of collaborative empirical assessment is not only the creation of new knowledge about the relationship between the arts and humanities and human flourishing, but also the development of evidence-based practices for optimizing the positive effects that engagement in the arts and humanities can have on human flourishing across a variety of cultural contexts.

(p. 10) We are at the outset of the field of the Positive Humanities, where theoretical and empirical questions abound. The overarching goal of this *Handbook* is to review and synthesize theory, research, and empirical evidence on how the arts and humanities can contribute to human flourishing. We turn now to an introduction of the six parts that constitute this volume.

Part I: Overview of the Positive Humanities

In addition to the present chapter, Part I includes a foundational chapter (Pawelski, Chapter 2) that provides a general introduction to the Positive Humanities, clarifying the conceptual contours of this new field, situating it within the context of historical and contemporary approaches to the humanities, describing its connections to the science of well-being and to various domains of practice, and suggesting important future directions for research and application. Together, the introductory chapters in Part I provide the conceptual foundation for the essays in the rest of the volume, which are written by scholars, researchers, practitioners, and other experts addressing key themes and topics in the Positive Humanities.

Part II: Historical and Current Trends

Part II covers historical and contemporary views of the arts and humanities and their relation to human flourishing. We begin with McMahan's Chapter 3, which addresses the

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question: What is the historical role of the arts and humanities in human flourishing? A historical analysis reveals that human flourishing is at the root of the arts and humanities, and there is a growing recognition of the need to return to this initial interest. Shim's Chapter 4 goes on to describe the conceptual and operational definitions of engaging in the arts and humanities, providing clarity on how we can assess behavioral engagement. Importantly, she proposes that engagement with the arts and humanities can be seen in multiple life domains, such as education, work, leisure, and health—but acknowledges that not all instances of engagement necessarily lead to flourishing. Finally, given that arts and humanities outcomes are often contrasted with STEM outcomes (e.g., Vaziri et al., 2019), Vaziri and Bradburn, in Chapter 5, discuss the importance of STEAM, in which the arts (A) are integrated with STEM. The authors provide a systematic review of the literature examining STEAM outcomes and call for more research on this topic.

Part III: Flourishing Outcomes

In Part III, we have chapters discussing the different types of flourishing outcomes that can emerge from engaging in the arts and humanities. In psychology, the concept of human flourishing has prominent ties to subjective well-being (Diener, 1984) and psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), both of which are touched on in several chapters. In Chapter 6, Westgate and Oishi review empirical evidence showing that art, music, and literature can generate rich, enjoyable, and meaningful experiences. In reviewing the (p. 11) scientific literature on meaning in life, Wilkinson and King, in Chapter 7, similarly note the meaning that can come through the enjoyment of the arts and humanities. More specifically, they observe that meaning can be derived through familiarity with works of art and literature, identification with cultural narratives, and broadened perspectives resulting from grappling with difficult art and texts. These positive effects on psychological well-being can also have ameliorative functions. In the area of creative arts therapies and arts-based interventions, Darewych, in Chapter 8, uses case studies to illustrate how such interventions can promote different dimensions of psychological well-being. While these chapters discuss self-reported subjective well-being and psychological well-being, Kenett and Chatterjee propose in Chapter 9 a general, testable neuroscientific framework in which these subjective states may be realized objectively in the brain.

Human flourishing can also take the form of psychological competencies, in which the arts and humanities can build skills and abilities. One barrier to engaging in the arts and humanities is a lack of self-efficacy. In Chapter 10, Maddux and Kleiman use self-efficacy theory to provide practical suggestions to help consumers of the arts and humanities become students and producers of culture. Ciarrochi, Hayes, and Sahdra propose in Chapter 11 that the study of the arts and humanities can build emotion regulation skills, including the identification and affirmation of values, effective use of language, emotional awareness, adjustment of emotion regulation strategies, and perspective-taking.

Human flourishing goes beyond an interest in promoting one's own well-being and competencies. It also involves positive normative outcomes. This includes the development of

character, as reviewed by Ruch and Gander in Chapter 12, where they discuss the relevance of the arts and humanities in developing the Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues. Further, participation in the arts and humanities may uniquely contribute to the character strength of appreciation of beauty and excellence. This theme of excellence is emphasized in Chapter 13 by Jacobs, Berenbaum, and Niemiec, who describe the creation of the first-ever Holocaust and Humanity Museum, which promotes positive behaviors and strengths among visitors.

Part IV: Pathways from Arts and Humanities Engagement to Human Flourishing

Part IV contains chapters that discuss different psychological and behavioral pathways from engagement in the arts and humanities to human flourishing. These are the mechanisms that bring about flourishing through participation in culture. Because of the enjoyable nature of the arts and humanities, it does not come as a surprise that many people are passionate about art, music, theatre, movies, literature, history, philosophy, religion, and other forms of culture. Vallerand, Sverdik, and Bonneville-Roussy document in Chapter 14 how passion—specifically harmonious passion—can give rise to many adaptive outcomes, such as positive emotions, creativity, performance, and identity.

(p. 12) An analysis of the types of positive experiences that sustain longer-term participation and flourishing are presented in several chapters. Vrooman, Finley, Nakamura, and Csikszentmihalyi, in Chapter 15, review how flow states experienced in the arts and humanities are intrinsically rewarding. Flow in the context of the arts and humanities is a vehicle for flourishing and can aid in the cultivation of mastery and wisdom. Along similar lines, Fitzgerald and Green, in Chapter 16, review research on narrative transportation in which readers “lose themselves” in a story. Stories provide both perspective and meaning. Reading literature appears to be associated with better social skills, and restorative narratives may promote recovery and resilience. The arts and humanities can also inspire elevated positive states. In Chapter 17, Valdesolo provides a conceptual framework showing how experiences such as awe, wonder, and inspiration are closely linked both to engagement in the arts and humanities and to human flourishing.

Participation in the arts and humanities also engenders deeper and broader thinking that supports flourishing. Howson and Weller, in Chapter 18, provide three case studies from these domains that use innovative pedagogical practices to enhance critical thinking and reflection. They show how such practices can lead to transformations through which university students develop a greater sense of agency, emotional growth, and flourishing. In Chapter 19, Runco underscores the centrality of creative thinking in the making of art and also reviews the importance of creative thinking for problem-solving and human flourishing.

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The arts and humanities can promote positive engagement at levels beyond oneself. Her- shberg, Niemiec, and Kula present in Chapter 20 qualitative research findings from their “Flourishing Congregation Projects,” in which rabbis modified High Holiday services to promote character strengths and well-being among congregation members. In Chapter 21, Wright-Bevans and Lamont provide a thorough review of research evidence on how the arts and humanities can promote well-being through community building and social support. Chand O’Neal presents in Chapter 22 case studies in Creative Youth Development, which uses a holistic approach and employs the arts and humanities to promote flourishing in youth. These programs teach social skills and facilitate deep connections to help youth from diverse backgrounds build safe and caring communities. Schneider and Fredrickson, in Chapter 23, provide examples of artists who seek to promote a more connected world through their work. Employing Positive Resonance Theory, they highlight how art can generate the co-experience of positive emotions that undergirds community well-being.

Part V: Disciplinary Considerations

In Part V, we turn to specific disciplines within the arts and humanities and consider how each can lead to human flourishing. Chapters in this part provide depth and nuance. They highlight how features of a discipline need to be understood from different perspectives (e.g., performer vs. observer) and describe specific mechanisms in greater detail (p. 13) as they pertain to a particular discipline. We begin in the realm of the arts. Lamont, in Chapter 24, describes how two aspects of music engagement—listening to music and making music—can lead to human flourishing. In Chapter 25, Hetland and Kelley review research showing how the visual arts can promote human flourishing in families, neighborhoods, and municipalities through psychological mechanisms such as immersion, embeddedness (now called acquisition), reflection, and socialization. Chapter 26, by Oatley, highlights how film can evoke emotions that enhance empathy and theory of mind. By demonstrating that projected mental models of others may turn out to be inaccurate, film can invite positive reflection in the viewer. Goldstein and Hayes propose in Chapter 27 that participating in theatre enables embodiment (i.e., physicalization of experience apart from one’s own) and containment (i.e., safe space to explore and express novel experiences), both of which can lead to higher well-being.

Disciplines in the humanities can play a fundamental role in human flourishing by providing a deeper conceptual understanding of the nature of well-being. Ivory and Tiberius, in Chapter 28, review philosophical theories of well-being that underpin psychological research. They describe two primary categories of well-being theories: enumerative theories (which things are good?) and explanatory theories (why are those things good?). They then helpfully detail the specific theories belonging to each category. In Chapter 29, Stearns makes a strong case for the importance of a historical analysis of well-being in order to understand better the key themes that emerge in well-being research and to bring to the attention of researchers other vital ideas that are currently neglected.

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In addition to informing the understanding of well-being, disciplines in the humanities can also promote its practice. In Chapter 30, Schwartz considers the concept of practical wisdom. He reasons that philosophy and literary studies are central for practical wisdom because making wise decisions requires both clear thinking about the telos of human activities and the ability to apply this thinking in particular contexts. Philosophy, he argues, can help with the former, and literary studies with the latter. Kidd, in Chapter 31, explores research examining the effects of reading fiction on mental, personal, and social well-being. He notes the possible positive, negative, and ambiguous effects of reading fiction and calls for more research to address gaps in the findings. Religion, too, has an important place in the humanities, and Pargament, Wong, and Exline propose in Chapter 32 that it is uniquely concerned with enhancing human wholeness. They argue that this wholeness is vital to human flourishing because it provides breadth and depth to life, is life-affirming, and organizes the life journey into a cohesive whole.

Another set of chapters focuses on the interplay between the humanities and disciplines or contexts outside the humanities. In Chapter 33, Greenhalgh, Allen, and Nesteruk describe the interplay between the humanities and business education and show how both promote reflection and creative thinking among students. Reiff-Pasarew reviews in Chapter 34 the history and development of the medical humanities and shows how the field builds meaning and connection for medical providers while also enhancing patient experience and well-being. (p. 14)

Part VI: Public Engagement and Policy

The final part of the volume discusses how the arts and humanities can be integrated into public life and public policy and considers the effects of this integration on human flourishing. Kidd reviews in Chapter 35 the importance of the public humanities, focusing on adult education programs and museums to show how public programs can benefit from humanistic engagement. Continuing with the theme of museums, Bondil and Legari, in Chapter 36, present the pioneering concept of “museotherapy,” which explicitly seeks to promote flourishing in individuals, groups, and communities by reframing the role of art museums. In their view, art museums should go beyond a traditional focus on the presentation of art history, the conservation of art objects, and the support of artists. They argue that art museums should embrace the role of advancing public flourishing by connecting people to aesthetic experiences and to each other.

In Chapter 37, Fisher, Gurwitz, Hill, Kidd, and Muir present a historical analysis of how policies in the United States have sought to promote engagement with the humanities from the early republic to the present. They insightfully note that policy has focused on bringing citizens together through a common understanding of their American experience, but that over time the demographics of those citizens and their understanding of what the American experience is have shifted significantly. In Chapter 38, Gordon-Nesbitt and Howarth describe landmark policy proposals in the United Kingdom. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing was tasked to examine the health and

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well-being impact of attending cultural events and participating in creative activities. This work led to *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*, a report presented to the UK Parliament in 2017. The authors describe the specific evidence in the report that is aligned with the mechanisms of immersion, embeddedness (or acquisition), socialization, and reflectiveness.

Conclusion

As we observed at the outset of this introduction, the arts and humanities play a vital and manifold role in human flourishing. The Positive Humanities seek to understand, assess, and advance this role, supporting the sustained interdisciplinary efforts required to do so. Our goal in this *Handbook* is to present an overview of the current theory, research, and practice in this field to further its establishment as a valued area of inquiry and application. We note that this overview has to be selective, as there is much more relevant work than can be included in a single volume, and that a range of new research is just beginning to emerge. We also note that the content of the chapters we have included, substantial and varied as it is, places us solidly at the beginning of this field, with much more work needed in all directions, especially across a wider diversity of racial and ethnic groups and world (p. 15) cultures. With this in mind, we hope this volume will provide information, direction, and encouragement to arts and humanities scholars and practitioners, scientific researchers, educators, leaders of cultural institutions, philanthropists, policymakers, and others who will help this field grow and thrive. In particular, we look with hope and anticipation to the students who will be inspired by this volume to focus their efforts in this field. We trust we will be able to include their work in future editions of this *Handbook*.

We are excited about the prospects of the Positive Humanities. This dynamic field stands to discover much new knowledge about how the arts and humanities are related to human flourishing. Furthermore, collaborative research in this area will provide a basis for optimizing the well-being effects of engagement in culture for individuals throughout the life span and for communities across the globe. It will enable educators to introduce students to perspectives and practices of human flourishing through cultural engagement; adults to use leisure time in ways that are not merely entertaining but deeply restorative and meaningful; creative industries and cultural organizations to orient themselves toward the cultivation of individual and collective flourishing; the social fabric to be re-woven in inclusive ways that support individual expression, social justice, and community cohesion; and connections to be made across societal divides and between cultures. Drawing from the wealth of past and present cultural experience will make it possible to work together to improve the human experience of the future. Progress toward these transformative aims will require deep and broad collaborations, and we welcome all who would like to be a part of this worthy endeavor.

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Notes:

(1) For more information on the work of HHF, visit www.humanitiesandhumanflourishing.org.

(2) See, for example, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2013; Holm, Jarrick, & Scott, 2015; Daykin et al., 2016; All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Arts, Health and Wellbeing, 2017; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018; Fancourt & Finn, 2019; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and International Council of Museums (ICOM), 2019; Ryff, 2019; Sonke et al., 2019.

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