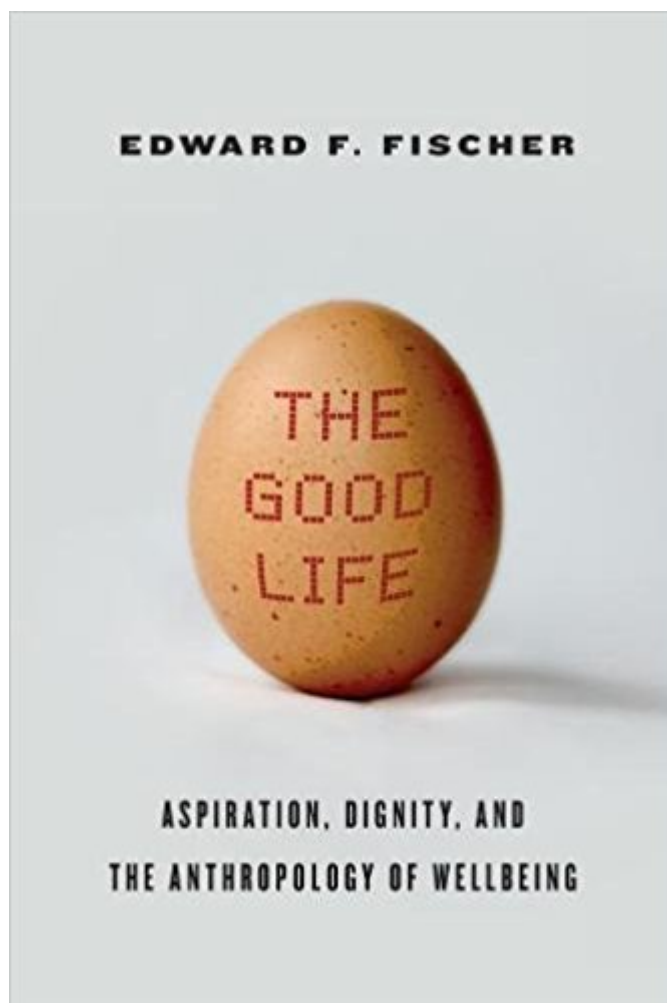


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# The Good Life: Aspiration, Dignity, And The Anthropology Of Wellbeing



## Synopsis

What could middle-class German supermarket shoppers buying eggs and impoverished coffee farmers in Guatemala possibly have in common? Both groups use the market in pursuit of the "good life." But what exactly is the good life? How do we define wellbeing beyond material standards of living? While we all may want to live the good life, we differ widely on just what that entails. In *The Good Life*, Edward Fischer examines wellbeing in very different cultural contexts to uncover shared notions of the good life and how best to achieve it. With fascinating on-the-ground narratives of Germans' choices regarding the purchase of eggs and cars, and Guatemalans' trade in coffee and cocaine, Fischer presents a richly layered understanding of how aspiration, opportunity, dignity, and purpose comprise the good life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Fischer has carved out an important piece of the wellbeing puzzle . . . It will be interesting to see how positive anthropology develops as a new branch of the discipline. That is where anthropology can get exciting." (Benjamin N. Colby *American Anthropologist*) "In this excellent book, Ted Fischer introduces us to Guatemalan farmers and German consumers and shows us how culturally-held values enter into economic decision-making, exposing the similarities that exist even while investigating separate corners of the world. An important contribution to economic anthropology that will be of interest to anyone concerned with the ethical dimensions of economic life." (Jens Beckert *Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies*) "In the burgeoning literature on markets and moralities, *The Good Life* is a benchmark exercise in reconciling well-being, rationalities and in

balancing the study of economic externalities with ethical internalities. It will be of great interest to ethnographers of the economy and to all thinkers concerned with the value of values." (Arjun Appadurai)"Homo economicus, the representative rational actor assumed in economists' models, is a social moron. Fischer's keen eye for social detail reveals how markets populated by actual people often behave very differently from those portrayed in economics textbooks. This delightful book helps explain why policy makers around the world are increasingly attentive to the important distinction between well-being and per-capita income." (Robert H. Frank Cornell University)"A fine anthropological addition to the growing interdisciplinary project of happiness and well-being studies . . . Highly recommended." (B. Weston)

Edward F. Fischer is Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Center for Latin American Studies at Vanderbilt University. He is the author, with Peter Benson, of *Broccoli and Desire: Global Connections* and *Maya Struggles in Postwar Guatemala* (Stanford 2006). He is also the founder of *ManÃ- +*, a social enterprise combating malnutrition.

What a thoughtful and enlightened perspective on how people from such seemingly diverse countries as Germany and Guatemala mindfully participate in the economy in order to drive toward a more deeply purposeful life. I think Dr. Fischer has not only provided an informed glimpse into the international economy, he also champions the idea that the key to living the good life may also include modifying social structures. At the end of the day, Professor Fischer helps us understand that though people live through decidedly different socioeconomic playing fields, we all still tend to want aspiration and opportunity, dignity and fairness, and commitment to a larger purpose. There are so many disciplines and groups of people that could benefit by reading this book - anyone interested in economics, sociology, anthropology, meaning in life, futuristic thinking all come to mind.

Great read for academics who are interested in gastronomy ( study of all thing food related)

Great book.

The Good Life is an entertaining and insightful read for anyone who is interested in understanding what makes a life "good". The book goes beyond the idea of humans as mere consumers of goods, and explores shared values and choices that transgress the laws of pure economic efficiency.

Edward Fischer's ability to compare and contrast two incredibly different societies- urban Germany and rural Guatemala- allows him to generate powerful insights that transcend region and culture. The book left me with a new lens on which to examine how I define "a good life". The book is one of the few that I have read which could be read either for leisure (my situation) or in an academic setting. It is accessible while maintaining its intellectual depth- a rare balance.

Guatemalan coffee and German eggs, together in a book that is not about cooking? And what is "the anthropology of wellbeing"? Just two of dozens of intriguing questions that come to mind and are carefully answered as one starts to read this fascinating new book by a top anthropologist at Vanderbilt. Both brilliantly conceived and engagingly written. Highly recommended.

This book is an excellent read, particularly for global citizens who recognize the importance of local communities, values and dignity. Anyone who is interested in a career in international relations and/or sustainability should read this book and take notes along the way.

The Good Life is a meditative portrait on happiness and what it means in the modern world. A very clear lesson stands out: Fischer shows us that happiness is relative to your surroundings and social situations. Highlighting vastly different cultures, he underlines that there are common themes to happiness that can be attained by most anyone with the right mindset and understanding. He also shows us how to define our own values and ultimately our personal path to happiness. This is a powerful book for anyone looking to expand their cultural awareness and global perspective.

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