



The Quiet Ego and Human Flourishing

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Abstract

The quiet ego interprets the self and others by balancing concerns for their welfare and cultivating their growth (Bauer and Wayment, in: Wayment, Bauer (eds) *Transcending self-interest: psychological explorations of the quiet ego*, American Psychological Association Books, Washington, DC, 2008). A growing body of research shows that the Quiet Ego Scale (QES; Wayment et al. in *J Happiness Stud* 16:999–1033, 2015a, *Front Psychol* 6:1–11, 2015b) relates to numerous measures of human flourishing. The present three studies of college students and adults situate the quiet ego within a framework of value orientation and actualization that organizes constructs of human flourishing in terms of motives (including moral motives), well-being (as hedonic satisfaction and eudaimonic meaningfulness, including moral fulfillment), and wisdom (Bauer in *The transformative self: personal growth, narrative identity, and the good life*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2021). Results from samples of college students and adults suggest that the QES corresponds to: (1) mainly humanistic and eudaimonic (including moral) motives; (2) hedonic and especially eudaimonic well-being (including moral fulfillment); and (3) motives, well-being, and wisdom independently. The discussion considers the quiet ego in terms of Epicurean *ataraxia* and Buddhist *upekkha*, a model of a good life that, like the quiet ego, emphasizes equanimity.

Keywords Quiet ego · Flourishing · Motivation · Well-being · Wisdom · Moral

The quiet ego refers to a manner of interpreting the self and others that balances concerns for their welfare and fosters their growth (Bauer & Wayment, 2008; Wayment & Bauer, 2018). A growing body of research has demonstrated how a quiet ego fits within the sprawling constructs of human flourishing and the good life. The aim of the present studies is to situate the quiet ego within a model of human flourishing that is rooted in orientations and actualizations of value (Bauer, 2016, 2021). The present studies first test the theoretical value orientations of the quiet ego in terms of humanistic and eudaimonic (including some moral) motives. The studies then test in two hypotheses whether the quiet ego corresponds to independent qualities of the actualization of value orientations for hedonic satisfaction, eudaimonic meaningfulness (including moral fulfillment), and eudaimonic wisdom.

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1 The Quiet Ego

We start by contrasting noisy and quiet egos. The noisy ego clamors for attention, fishes for compliments, pines for praise, and accepts perspectives only that validate the self, especially in the present moment (see Campbell & Buffardi, 2008). The quiet ego is marked by humility but is not humiliated (Exline, 2008), especially in the face of threats to one's ego ideals (Kesebir, 2014). The quiet ego takes a less-defensive stance toward the self and others (Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b). The quiet ego makes the self "small" in the manner of psychosocial complexity, awe, respect, and reverence for the Other (Perlin & Li, 2020; on the Other, see Freeman, 2014). But the quiet ego is not a squashed or a silenced ego. Instead, it is the strong, humble type of ego.

The quiet ego is more verb than noun, where "ego" refers more to *self-generating thinking* than to any self-concept or identity that is generated. The quiet ego has four dimensions: ego-ideal-detaching awareness, interdependent/inclusive identification, perspective-taking, and growth-mindedness (Bauer & Wayment, 2008; Wayment & Bauer, 2017). To rephrase those terms, respectively, the quiet ego is characterized by an equanimity of mind that acknowledges the good and the bad in one's observations, compassion in one's view of others (interpersonally and collectively), curiosity to learn alternative points of view, and a long-term perspective on the self and others with a mind to facilitate their development.

We emphasize that a person need not exhibit all qualities of a quiet ego to "have" a quiet ego—nor even to exhibit any one quality to a very high degree. Indeed, a quiet ego is a matter of degree: The measure of a quiet ego, like the construct itself, employs the metaphor of ego volume, from relatively quiet to relatively noisy. Furthermore, the four dimensions of a quiet ego may involve distinct phenomena, but they function as a dynamic gestalt that *is* the quiet ego. Any of the four dimensions may temper or enhance any other dimension to yield a quieter ego than would otherwise be the case. For instance, ego-ideal-detaching awareness focuses on one's present attention (whether thinking about the past, present, or future), whereas growth-mindedness focuses on longer-term processes of humanistic concerns. Each facilitates and keeps the other in check.

The gestalt of these dimensions is demonstrated empirically by the 14-item Quiet Ego Scale (QES; Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b), which has a higher-order structure that fits the data better than the four component parts (see also Liu, 2022). The QES has correlated with numerous measures of human flourishing at a moderate level of magnitude (Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b), most notably: hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, wisdom-related measures that feature perspective-taking and identity exploration, humility, savoring, authenticity, the motives and need fulfillments of self-determination theory, self-compassion, generativity, presence of meaning, self-transcendence, low hostility, pro-environmental attitudes, resilience, and coping self-efficacy. The QES corresponds to growth motivation, growth values (particularly universalism, benevolence, and self-direction), and a balance between self-focused and other-focused values (Wayment & Bauer, 2018).

In periods of life transition, such as unemployment, QES correlates with psychological health and lower stress (Wayment et al., 2018). Among mothers of children with autistic spectrum disorder, QES correlates with social support, post-traumatic growth, and less rumination (Wayment et al., 2019a). Among university students who knew a victim of a campus shooting approximately three days prior to measurement, QES correlated with higher levels of grief and solidarity but not with distress, highlighting the quiet ego as a functionary of compassion and a buffer to ill health (Wayment & Silver, 2021). Among Buddhist meditators, quiet ego characteristics mediates the relation between mindfulness

and self-rated health (Wayment et al., 2011). Yet in another study of adults, mindfulness mediates the relation between QES and eudaimonic well-being (Liu et al., 2021). Adults' QES correlates with self-concept clarity, psychological well-being, self-competence, and self-liking, with a path from QES through self-concept clarity and then to the other variables (Liu et al., 2022a, 2022b). QES has been shown in Italy to predict hedonic and eudaimonic well-being when controlling for psychological entitlement, self-deception, gender, and age (Boin & Voci, 2019). In two samples of Spanish adults, QES correlated with benefits from and intentions to continue prosocial activities (Vecina et al., in press). In a sample of Italian teachers, QES indirectly predicts work engagement through compassion satisfaction (Buonomo et al., 2021). In a sample of adults in Singapore, QES predicts life satisfaction, although self-compassion mediates this relation (Chew & Ang, 2021). Among adults who identify with Do-It-Yourself (DIY) activities around the home (i.e., designing, building, or repairing), QES either predicts subjective well-being or mediates the relation between well-being and positive DIY experiences (Collier et al., 2020). Among salespeople, QES correlates with adaptive selling behavior and selling performance (Gilbert et al., in press).

In experimental studies, first-year college students who have heard three weekly sessions of a Quiet Ego Contemplation (QEC) recording show reduced oxidative stress and mind-wandering, compared to a control group (Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b). In an online experiment, adults who have received a QEC show increased levels of trait emotional intelligence (EI) and eudaimonic well-being than does a control group, with a path from the QEC-versus-control group to QES outcomes to trait EI to eudaimonic well-being (Liu et al., 2022a, 2022b). Hospital healthcare workers who have received sessions of the QEC show reduced compassion fatigue and heightened cognitive appraisal skills and self-rated health (although with no control group; Wayment et al., 2019a, 2019b).

Overall, the quiet ego has been shown both to correlate with and to yield a wide range of qualities of human flourishing—notably including well-being, moral concerns, and wisdom. Earlier we mentioned that the “ego” is a term that refers to “self-generating thinking.” The self that is generated by a *quiet* ego is summed up as *the transformative self* (Bauer, 2021)—the self-identity of a person who identifies with the cultivation of balanced, humane growth for the self and others as a path toward a good life. However, no study has yet situated the quiet ego construct within an overarching, theoretical framework of human flourishing.

2 Human Flourishing as Value Orientation and Actualization

The term *human flourishing* encompasses a sprawling range of goods in life. Two competing models of these goods in philosophy (for millennia) and psychology (for decades) are *hedonia* and *eudaimonia*. Hedonia claims that pleasure is the ultimate good, whereas eudaimonia claims that pleasure is neither necessary nor sufficient as an ultimate good, that something more is needed, such as meaning, wisdom, moral concerns, vitality, or growth (e.g., Huta & Waterman, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Tiberius, 2013; Vittersø, 2016; Waterman, 2013). Theoretically the quiet ego corresponds to both hedonic and eudaimonic goods, with an emphasis on the latter. The Value Orientation and Actualization (VOA)

framework explains how component parts of value account compatibly for hedonic and eudaimonic goods in life, without collapsing one into the other (Bauer, 2016, 2021).¹

VOA helps explain four claims about *pleasure* and *meaning*: (1) they are *superordinate* terms for goods that distinguish hedonia and eudaimonia (respectively), (2) they are *necessary candidate* goods in life, (3) they are *irreducible* to each other, and (4) they function on *different levels of context*. As a superordinate term, *pleasure* incorporates the hedonic goods of not only *pleasurable experience* (more at: *pleasurable experiencing*) but also *evaluations of satisfaction* (Haybron, 2008; see also Diener et al., 2006).² In contrast, the superordinate term *meaning* here refers to the breadth of eudaimonic goods, such as meaning (in all its forms), meaningfulness (including all forms of non-hedonic well-being), complexity and richness of meaning-making (in all their forms), wisdom, virtues (moral and otherwise), and the development of any of these goods over time (Bauer, 2016; Oishi & Westgate, 2021; Steger, 2016). As *necessary candidate* goods, pleasure and meaning are necessary to consider in a comprehensive theoretical model of a good life, but higher levels of neither pleasure (e.g., life satisfaction) nor meaning (e.g., wisdom) must be present in an actual life for that life to be considered good. We consider the claims of *irreducibility* and *contextuality* as we explain VOA below.

VOA distinguishes value orientations (in short, *wanting* a good, whether consciously or unconsciously) from value actualizations (in short, *having* or having *manifested* a good in one's life). When we say that one's life *has* satisfaction, meaningfulness, or wisdom, these are value actualizations. Value actualization comes in two non-overlapping forms: value fulfillment (the core element of well-being) and value perspectivity (the core element of wisdom that distinguishes thinking wisely from feeling wise and other forms of well-being). These components of VOA allow for different combinations of goods. In the present study, we target a combination of three goods: hedonic well-being (satisfaction), eudaimonic well-being (meaningfulness), and eudaimonic wisdom (Bauer et al., 2008; Bauer et al., 2022; see also Oishi & Westgate, 2021).³ Next we explain the components of VOA and how they yield those three goods. See Table 1 for a summary.

¹ VOA also explains component parts the transformative self and, more broadly, *euaitalic personhood*, which emphasizes a good *life* as a dynamic, organismic process of uncountable goods, rather than as merely "having" specific *goods* in life (Bauer, 2016, 2021; Bauer et al., 2022). Philosophically, *euaitalic personhood* emphasizes that culturally valued personality characteristics (as in virtue ethics; MacIntyre, 1981), such as a quiet ego, develop in situational contexts (Doris, 2002), but in notably narrative, dialogical, thickly cultural (Ricoeur, 1990; Taylor, 1989), and contractualist manners (Scanlon, 1998).

² Satisfaction with life (defined variously but notably in Diener et al., 1985) is probably the most commonly measured form of hedonic well-being (and then combined with positive and negative affect, as in "subjective well-being" in Diener et al., 2006). The oft-cited "emotional" and "cognitive" aspects of hedonic well-being (used to depict emotionality and life satisfaction), while important to consider, strike us as an overly positivistic division, as all pleasurable experiences and all evaluations of satisfaction each involves a synthesis of emotion and cognition. For example, satisfaction is a cognitive evaluation *of affect*. Even scales of positive and negative affect ask effectively for cognitive assessments of one's affective states.

³ VOA can yield a model of two superordinate categories of the good in life, based on the difference between value fulfillment and value perspectivity: well-being and wisdom. The model of three goods includes value fulfillment in its two forms (hedonic satisfaction versus eudaimonic meaningfulness) plus wisdom. Notably, three basic elements of *narrative* meaning-making—narrative tone, theme, and structure—precisely convey core, non-overlapping qualities of these three goods in life—happiness, meaning, and wisdom (Bauer et al., 2022). VOA also yields a model of four categories (happiness, meaning, wisdom, and growth over time of the first three; Bauer, 2016) or five categories (the previous four plus basic survival-and-safety concerns; Bauer, 2021).

Table 1 How the value orientation and actualization framework corresponds to measures and categories of goods in life

Value orientation	Value Actualization	
	Value Fulfillment (Good in life)	Value Perspectivity (Good in life)
Pleasure value/motive	Pleasure/satisfaction ^b (Happiness; hedonic well-being)	Affect complexity and coherence ^c (Wisdom)
Meaning value/motives ^a	Meaningfulness ^c (Love ^d ; eudaimonic well-being)	Meaning complexity and coherence ^e (Wisdom ^f)

^aMeaning here refers to all value orientations that emphasize concerns other than pleasure-without-context (noting that pleasures within contexts are meanings; Bauer, 2016), such as forms of intimacy (or any other communal motive), power (or any other agentic motive), moral concerns like care, and ideological orientations like humanism versus materialism

^bThe fulfillment of pleasure or satisfaction—i.e., *having* or experiencing pleasure or satisfaction—refers to hedonic well-being, an assessment of satisfaction *without regard to specific contexts of meaning* (e.g., satisfaction with life and subjective well-being; Diener et al., 2006; Haybron, 2008)

^cThe fulfillment of meaningfulness—i.e., *having* or experiencing meaningfulness—refers to eudaimonic well-being, an assessment of satisfaction *within specific contexts of meaning* (e.g., relationships, mastery, purpose, growth; Ryff & Singer, 2008). Importantly, the satisfaction of meanings that are grounded in humanistic value orientations (versus materialistic or egoistic value orientations) are especially salient for well-being, particularly in an enduring sense (e.g., Bauer & McAdams, 2010; Kasser et al., 2002, 2014; Kasser & Ryan, 1996)

^dLove here is defined very broadly, referring not only to meaningful relationships (with the people we love) but also to meaningful activities and beliefs (the things we love to do and the principles we love), and moral concerns (e.g., caring for people we love). In other words, love as a value fulfillment here refers to the fulfillment of communal, agentic, or moral value orientations (Bauer, 2021)

^eComplexity is more uniquely salient to wisdom than is coherence, which corresponds more to well-being than to wisdom—a finding that is especially pronounced in research on narrative meaning-making (Adler et al., 2016; Bauer et al., 2022; McLean et al., 2020). Affect complexity (e.g., Labouvie-Vief, 2003), despite its focus on affect, is eudaimonic and is an important part of wisdom (Bauer & Park, 2010)

^fValue perspectivity differentiates wisdom from love and meaningfulness (Bauer et al., 2022) but involves value perspectivity on particularly *humane* value orientations (Bauer, 2021)

Value orientations refer to desires for types of goods that serve as motives for action or interpretation, whether consciously or unconsciously. A value orientation may function as a specific type of value, motive, need, drive, pleasure, meaning, belief, reason, purpose, sake, or basis for justification (see Baumeister, 1991; Rohan, 2000; Scanlon, 1998; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). A value orientation is not necessarily chosen consciously; motives and needs (all of which are value orientations) often function without awareness. Both implicitly and explicitly, value orientations motivate action and shape our interpretations. Value orientations include the motives for a quiet ego (and a noisy ego). Some value orientations involve moral concerns (e.g., the motive to help others), while other value orientations—even eudaimonic ones—are not necessarily moral (e.g., the motive to do something well). Value orientations motivate the person to actualize those value orientations in organismic, self-organizing, and cybernetic ways—noting that these ways may in fact either foster or hinder human flourishing (Bauer, 2021; see also Brandtstadter, 1999; Deci & Ryan, 2012; Carver & Scheier, 2012). Most models and forms of flourishing in psychology and philosophy, including the quiet ego, emphasize value orientations that are humanistic or humane rather than materialistic or egoistic (even if the goods are not explicitly framed as such;

see Fowers et al., 2017; Kristjánsson et al., 2021; MacIntyre, 1981; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Schwab, 2020; Sheldon, 2004; Taylor, 1989).

Earlier we mentioned the claim that pleasure and (broadly construed) meaning are irreducible to each other. Following thousands of years of scholarly debate, we claim that neither is more “ultimate” than the other (see Bauer, 2021). In a compatibilist, pragmatist, and pluralist effort (see de Freitas Araujo & Osbeck, 2023), VOA posits that value is the nexus of pleasure and meaning. The very notion of a good—here cast as a value orientation—is itself part pleasure and part meaning (see also Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). On one side of the coin, value arises as cold, conceptual meanings are imbued with warm, emotional pleasure: A semantic meaning becomes a value (and becomes valued) once it is felt as good. Put another way, value arises *as meaning* about which we *feel* something personal (Taylor, 1989). On the other side of the coin, a value arises as warm, emotional pleasures are imbued with meaning: A fleeting pleasure ceases to be fleeting once it is associated with some meaning that extends the pleasure over time. So a value is an enduring pleasure. Or put another way, a value arises as a *desire* that we have a *reason* to have (Scanlon, 1998). In other words, a value is at once a pleasurable meaning and a meaningful pleasure (for elaboration on value as the nexus of pleasure and meaning, see Bauer, 2016, 2021). Finally, ideas of either pleasure or meaning can serve as a value orientation (e.g., as a motive to actualize pleasure or meaning).

Value actualizations come in two forms: value fulfillment (the subjective fulfillment of value orientations) and value perspectivity (the objective perspectivity of value orientations). In a nutshell, value fulfillment deals relatively more with *feeling good* (e.g., satisfied) about oneself in a world of others, compared to value perspectivity, which deals relatively more with *thinking well* (e.g., complexly and coherently) about matters of the self and others (noting again that each involves both emotions and cognitions; Bauer & McAdams, 2004a, 2004b, 2010).⁴ Value fulfillment characterizes common constructs of *well-being* (whether hedonic or eudaimonic), whereas value perspectivity characterizes common constructs of *wisdom* (which is strictly eudaimonic).

Value fulfillment refers to the *subjectively* assessed degree to which a value orientation is satisfied (e.g., Haybron, 2008; Oppenheim-Weller et al., 2018; Tiberius, 2015). Value fulfillment may be hedonic or eudaimonic. Hedonic value fulfillment refers to the *satisfaction of the value orientation of pleasure* (i.e., hedonic well-being, which again includes pleasurable experience as well as evaluations of satisfaction; Haybron, 2008; Diener et al., 2006). Eudaimonic value fulfillment refers to the *satisfaction of various value orientations of meaning* (i.e., a sense of *meaningfulness* and eudaimonic well-being; Martela & Steger, 2016; on meaningfulness as fulfillment, see Wolf, 2010).

While hedonic and eudaimonic value fulfillment both involve assessments of satisfaction, they differ in their degree of *contextuality*, at least in psychological measures (Bauer, 2016, 2021). Measures of hedonic value fulfillment assess *satisfaction without regard to the specific contexts of meaning in life in which that satisfaction arises* (noting that “life” satisfaction refers not to a context of life but to the whole construct of life itself). In other

⁴ Here we mean “feeling good” versus “thinking well” in loose terms: All forms of well-being and wisdom involve both thinking and feeling. Still, within the scope of eudaimonia, eudaimonic well-being is the “feeling good” (even in cases of meaningfulness) side of eudaimonia (which is not part of classically Aristotelian eudaimonia), whereas wisdom is the “thinking well” side (i.e., excellence in thinking, which is central to Aristotelian eudaimonia).

words, hedonic satisfaction refers to *satisfaction itself* (i.e., an evaluation of having pleasure). In contrast, measures of eudaimonic fulfillment assess *satisfaction within contexts of meaning*. In other words, eudaimonic meaningfulness refers to the *satisfaction of meanings in life* (i.e., an evaluation of having meaning). Measures of eudaimonic well-being assess not merely how satisfying one's life is but more specifically how *meaningful* one's life is—an assessment of satisfaction either within specific contexts of meaning in life (e.g., relationships, mastery, purpose, growth, etc. in Ryff & Keyes, 1995) or with meaning (not pleasure) in life generally (Steger et al., 2006).⁵

Furthermore, some measures of eudaimonic value fulfillment focus on the satisfaction of *moral* value orientations (e.g., compassion, gratitude, altruism, generativity). These measures are essentially forms of “moral meaningfulness” or “moral well-being” (or more broadly, eudaimonic well-being). However, measures of moral meaningfulness are generally *not* considered to be measures of well-being per se. However, we argue that the self-report items of these measures emphasize *fulfillment in the context of moral meanings* (i.e., *moral value orientations*), so these moral measures are in effect measures of eudaimonic value fulfillment and eudaimonic well-being.⁶ Along these lines, most measures of eudaimonic well-being (although see Keyes, 1998) are internalist (concerned for one's own meaningfulness), whereas Aristotelian eudaimonia is externalist (concerned for the welfare of others, Haybron, 2008).

Value perspectivity refers to the organizational structure by which one thinks about a value orientation (and its fulfillment). More specifically, value perspectivity is the *objectively* assessed degree to which a value orientation is interpreted *complexly and coherently*, regardless of the degree to which one feels a subjective fulfillment of that value orientation (Bauer, 2016).⁷ We note that value perspectivity is *baked into each interpretation* of

⁵ A context *is* a meaning (Baumeister, 1991), not a pleasure. So eudaimonic goods inherently feature context, whereas hedonic goods do not. Pleasure does not refer to the context in which it is had. But meanings incorporate pleasures (which indicate which semantic meanings are personally meaningful or valued). The broadest measures of “meaning in life” (e.g., Steger et al., 2006) do not assess specific contexts of action or experience (as in Ryff & Keyes, 1995) but rather target general meaning in life. Such measures are eudaimonic because they focus on meaning (and thus context) rather than pleasure, even if that context is thin. See Bauer (2016, 2021) for elaboration.

⁶ Not all eudaimonic concerns are moral concerns. Similarly, not all virtues are moral virtues. On the question of virtues, we further note that this empirical study takes an approach that conforms to the parameters of virtue ethics, given that the study's method involves assessments of presumed virtuous personality characteristics. However, we note that virtue ethics far from exhausts the ethical expanse of the quiet ego, which functions as both a state and a trait (Bauer & Wayment, 2008). As noted earlier, a quiet ego (like other qualities of a transformative self) arises for everyone in dynamic, developmental, dialogical, cultural contexts (Bauer, 2021).

⁷ By “objectively,” we mean, operationally, “by consensus objectivity,” especially as assessed by multiple, trained experts (as in “performance” measures of wisdom; Staudinger & Glück, 2011). Thus value perspectivity taps into the objectivist criterion of Aristotelian eudaimonia that is not captured by psychological measures of eudaimonic well-being. For Aristotle, eudaimonia is assessed not by subjectively “feeling good” or even “feeling meaningfulness” but rather by exhibiting excellence (arete) in philosophical or practical wisdom, with objectivist criteria (a form of consensus objectivity, as judged by experts on wisdom, namely philosophers). For eudaimonic models in psychology that do include such objectivist—and externalist—criteria, see Bauer et al. (2005), Fowers et al. (2017), Grossmann (2017). Well-being studies are entrenched in subjectivist fulfillment. The call to redefine *well-being* as “the wellness of one's being” (Bauer, 2021), where “wellness” means not merely subjective assessments of fulfillment but also objectivist criteria of wisdom and externalist concerns such as moral motives and adaptive behavior, is probably asking too much. For a framework that maps measures of goods in life according to subjectivist, objectivist, internalist, and externalist qualities, see the Inside/Outside Framework in Bauer (2016).

value orientation and shapes its meaning. Value perspectivity is itself a value actualization because it reflects the *demonstration of one's already having developed* the capacity to think complexly and coherently. Importantly for wisdom, the complexity dimension of value perspectivity is what distinguishes simple and egoistic versus complex and multiperspectival interpretations of a single value orientation, thereby rendering different meanings for the same value orientation (Bauer et al., 2019a, 2019b). For example, the value (orientation) of “freedom” can be conceptualized to mean “I can do whatever I want” (simple, egoistic) versus “My free actions affect other people’s freedoms that I ought to consider” (complex, multiperspectival). Higher degrees of value perspectivity incorporate more perspectives or points of view that are baked into any one thought of any one value orientation or meaning.

Value perspectivity is the critical element of meaning-making that differentiates wisdom from well-being (where wisdom means something more than merely feeling good about doing supposedly wise things, which is ultimately a value fulfillment; Bauer, 2021). Here we are especially concerned with those psychological constructs of wisdom as *phronesis* (including constructs like psychological maturity, identity exploration, and perspective-taking), which harnesses complexity of thinking to matters of humanistic and humane or moral value orientations (e.g., Bauer et al., 2019a, 2019b; Grossmann, 2017; Kristjánsson et al., 2021; Loevinger, 1976; Staudinger & Glück, 2011). Notably, this kind of wisdom has ties to theories of structural, social-cognitive development, measures of which tend *not* to correlate with hedonic well-being; (e.g., Bauer & McAdams, 2004a, 2010; Bauer et al., 2005; Helson & Wink, 1992; King & Noelle, 2005; King & Raspin, 2004; King et al., 2000; Westenberg & Block, 1993).⁸

3 The Quiet Ego and Human Flourishing in the Present Studies

The quiet ego theoretically taps into humanistic motives and both wisdom and well-being (as both satisfaction and meaningfulness). In three studies, we test three overarching hypotheses based on the theoretical frameworks of the quiet ego and VOA.

H1 *The Value Orientations of the Quiet Ego.* Overall, we hypothesize that the quiet ego corresponds to eudaimonic and humanistic motives. First (H1.1), we expect that the QES will correspond to *motives* for primarily *meaningful experiences* of the self and others rather than for merely *satisfactory evaluations of self-image* (i.e., value orientations for eudaimonic meaning and humanistic experience rather than for hedonic satisfaction and egoistic evaluation). H1.1 is based on the theoretical value orientations of the quiet ego (Bauer, 2008, 2021; Bauer & Wayment, 2008; see also Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Second (H1.2), we expect that the QES will correspond simultaneously and independently to motives for two forms of motivation for eudaimonic growth—experiential and reflective—that aim toward value fulfillment and value perspectivity, respectively (Bauer et al., 2015). H1.2 is based on the quiet ego’s value orientations for both meaningfulness and wisdom, respectively (Bauer, 2008). Third (H1.3; Studies 2 and 3 only), we expect that the QES will

⁸ However, recent evidence suggests a “triangular” relation between wisdom and well-being, such that wisdom tends to involve well-being, but well-being does not tend to involve wisdom (Glück et al., 2022).

correspond to moral motives that emphasize humanistic value orientations (e.g., care and fairness, but not necessarily authority, loyalty, or purity; Haidt, 2007).

H2 *The Quiet Ego and Value Fulfillment.* We expect that the QES will correlate with measures of hedonic and eudaimonic (including moral) well-being, given the quiet ego's tendency to allow for hedonic pleasure, eudaimonic meaning, and moral concern (Bauer & Wayment, 2008; Wayment & Bauer, 2018; Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b). However, we expect that the QES will correspond primarily to eudaimonic rather than hedonic well-being. This hypothesis extends H1.1, here focusing on measures of value fulfillment rather than value orientation.

H3 *The Quiet Ego and Value Perspectivity (vs Value Fulfillment).* We expect that the QES will correlate with measures of wisdom. Furthermore, we expect that the QES will correspond independently to measures of well-being (whether hedonic or eudaimonic) and wisdom. This hypothesis extends H1.2, here focusing on value fulfillment and value perspectivity rather than on motives for them (Bauer, 2008, 2021).

H4 *Independence of the Value Facets in Predicting the Quiet Ego.* We expect that eudaimonic and humanistic motives (value orientation), well-being (value fulfillment), and wisdom (value perspectivity) each captures independent qualities of the quiet ego. Narrative measures of these value facets have independently predicted measures of wisdom (Bauer et al., 2022). Here we test whether self-report measures of value facets predict QES independently.

4 Study 1

This study compares QES with three measures of value orientation that distinguish humanistic from materialistic/egoistic as well as eudaimonic from hedonic value orientations (for H1.1), experiential and reflective growth motivation (for H1.2), measures of (hedonic) subjective well-being and two forms of eudaimonic well-being (for H2), and a measure of identity exploration as value perspectivity, which taps into the construct of wisdom (for H3).

4.1 Method

4.1.1 Participants

Participants were college students from a university in the Midwestern U.S.A. who received course credit for their participation ($n=132$; M age = 19.26, $SD=1.39$). Women comprised 62% of the sample, men comprised 37%, one individual did not report their gender, and ethnicities were as follows: African-American (0.8%), Asian-American (4.5%), European-American (69.7%), Latinx-American (1.5%), Middle-Eastern-American (0.8%), and Other (20.5%). Three participants did not report their ethnicity (Table 1).

4.1.2 Measures

Quiet Ego. The Quiet Ego Scale (QES; Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b) measures a compassionate self-identity, conceptualized as the theoretical intersection of four psychological characteristics: ego-ideal-detaching awareness, inclusive identity, perspective taking, and growth. Fourteen items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) and include statements such as “I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world,” “I feel a connection to all living things,” and “When I’m upset at someone, I usually try to put myself in his or her shoes for a while.” Higher scores indicate greater quiet ego characteristics. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.79.

Hedonic, Eudaimonic, Humanistic, & Egoistic Motives for Activities (HEHEMA). The first author revised the nine-item Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives for Activities scale (HEMA; Huta & Ryan, 2010). The revised HEHEMA scale reframed each item in two ways that distinguished humanistic versus egoistic forms of both hedonic and eudaimonic motives. Hedonic motives aim toward *satisfaction*, eudaimonic motives aim toward *meaningfulness*, humanistic motives aim toward *desirable experience*, and egoistic motives aim toward *evaluations* of status (Bauer et al., 2019a, 2019b). The 18 items were reduced to 12 items. The items fall in four clusters as follows (Bauer et al., 2017), with PCA loadings in parentheses for each item of the present study. Hedonic humanistic motives aim toward *pleasurable experience*: “Seeking to take it easy” (0.90), “Seeking fun” (0.92), and “Seeking pleasure” (0.93). Eudaimonic humanistic motives aim toward *meaningful experience*: “Seeking to [...] learn or gain insight” (0.84), “Seeking to use the best in yourself” (0.86), and “Seeking to do what you believe in” (0.85). Hedonic egoistic motives aim toward *individualistic, status-driven satisfaction*: “Seeking respect” (0.69), “Seeking a sense of independence” (0.84), and “Seeking emotional security” (0.94). Eudaimonic egoistic motives aim toward *individualistic or status-driven meaningfulness*: “Seeking to pursue excellence for the sake of being the best” (0.82), “Seeking to be perfect” (0.91), “Seeking to perform according to the highest of established standards” (0.82). Cronbach’s alphas for the four subscales, respectively, were 0.94, 0.84, 0.68, and 0.81.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Aspirations. The Aspirations Index (AI; Kasser & Ryan, 1993) contains 105 items that ask participants to rate seven qualities of life (wealth, fame, image, personal growth, relationships, community, and health) along three prompts: (a) how important, (b) how likely to happen, and (c) how much already attained each quality is. Each quality of life contains five items. Participants were presented with goals or aspirations they hoped to accomplish over the course of their lives and rated these items, each on a seven-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very*). Items include: “To be a very wealthy person,” “To be admired by lots of different people,” “To keep up with fashions in hair and clothing,” “To grow and learn new things,” “To share my life with someone I love,” and “To help people in need.” For this study, only six of the qualities were measured (health was not included). Furthermore, only the first of the three prompts (“How important?”) was asked, as it functions as a measure of value orientation. This resulted in a 30-item scale of personal values with six qualities of life, each with five items. Cronbach’s alphas for wealth, fame, image, personal growth, relationships, and community were 0.90, 0.84, 0.87, 0.77, 0.91, and 0.89, respectively. Finally, the first three qualities were grouped into an aggregate measure of Extrinsic Motivation, and the other three qualities were grouped into an aggregate measure of Intrinsic Motivation, with Cronbach’s alphas of were 0.93 and 0.91, respectively. We report only the aggregate measures for reasons of space.

Growth Motivation. The Growth Motivation Index (GMI) has eight items to measure the extent to which people claim to be motivated by concerns that revolve around two facets of personal growth: experiential and reflective (Bauer et al., 2015). Participants rate how often they pursue activities and relationships on a seven-point scale (1 = *never*, 4 = *periodically*, 7 = *always*). The GMI has demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity (Bauer et al., 2015). Experiential-growth (GMI-Experiential) items include “I try to form my personal goals in life around my deeper interests” and “I strive to make my relationships better in the future.” Reflective-growth (GMI-Reflective) items include “I ask my friends what they think and feel about current issues so that I can understand other points of view” and “I actively seek new perspectives on how to live my life, even if these new perspectives mean I’ve been wrong.” GMI-Experiential functions as a value orientation that aims toward (and correlates primarily with measures of) value fulfillment and well-being/meaningfulness—and notably a eudaimonic and humanistic (versus hedonic and egoistic) value orientation. In contrast, GMI-Reflective functions as a value orientation that aims toward (and correlates primarily with measures of) value perspectivity and wisdom/maturity (Bauer et al., 2015). Given that both subscales measure motives for humanistic growth, regressions on the two subscales are often needed to distinguish their particular orientations toward value fulfillment or value perspectivity. Cronbach’s alphas were GMI-Experiential, 0.73, and GMI-Reflective, 0.82.

Subjective Well-Being. Subjective Well-Being (SWB) is a standardized aggregate of life satisfaction, positive affect, and (inversely scored) negative affect (Diener et al., 2006). The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWL; Diener et al., 1985) is a well-validated, simple, five-item measure of overall life satisfaction. Participants assessed items like “I am satisfied with my life” and “If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.” Items are rated on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (Diener et al., 2010) is a 12-item, five-point scale with two subscales that assess the tendency to experience positive affect and negative affect in the past 4 weeks. Cronbach’s alphas were: SWL, 0.85; positive affect, 0.76; negative affect, 0.79. SWB is a hedonic value fulfillment, focused on satisfaction of pleasure without reference to specific contexts of meaning.

Basic Psychological Need Fulfillment. The Basic Psychological Need Scale (which we call BPNF to emphasize its emphasis on value fulfillment; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné, 2003) is a 21-item scale that measures the satisfaction of self-determination theory’s three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Thus the BPNF functions as a measure of eudaimonic value fulfillment (i.e., of satisfaction in those three contexts of meaning). Cronbach’s alphas were: autonomy, 0.71; competence, 0.52.; relatedness, 0.83. We were primarily interested in the overall degree to which specific needs were satisfied, so we created an aggregate measure for which Cronbach’s alpha was 0.86. BPNF is a eudaimonic value fulfillment, focused on satisfaction within contexts of specific kinds of meaning.

Harmonious Passion. The two-factor, 12-item passion scale measures harmonious and obsessive passions (Marsh et al., 2013; Vallerand et al., 2003). Each subscale was assessed by six items on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The prompt asks participants to “think about a specific activity that you like, that is important to you, and in which you invest a significant amount of time on a regular basis.” This subscale includes items like “This activity is in harmony with the other activities in my life” and “My activity is well-integrated in my life.” The obsessive passions subscale includes items like “I have an almost obsessive feeling about this activity” and

“This activity is so exciting that I sometimes lose control over it.” Cronbach’s alphas for the two subscales were 0.79 and 0.83, respectively.

Identity Exploration. The Information Orientation subscale of Berzonsky’s (1989) Identity Style Inventory (ISI-info) measures the facet of psychosocial maturity that deals with identity exploration (notably as a form of value perspectivity, not fulfillment). ISI-info assessed how much participants think they search for information on relevant situations, explore new perspectives, and seek an elaborated understanding of psychosocial life. Participants rated 11 items on a seven-point scale the degree to which items are “very much like me” or “not like me at all.” Cronbach’s alpha for ISI-info was 0.74.

4.2 Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics and correlations appear in Table 2. Regressions appear in Table 3.

H1.1 (humanistic and eudaimonic value orientations) HEHEMA, AI, and GMI-Experiential each measured the distinction between humanistic and egoistic value orientations. QES correlated with all subscales of HEHEMA, AI-Intrinsic (but not AI-Extrinsic), and GMI-Experiential. To tease apart the salient value orientations of HEHEMA, we regressed QES on the three salient HEHEMA subscales simultaneously and found that both the hedonic humanistic and eudaimonic humanistic subscales remained significant. Therefore, the quiet ego corresponded primarily to three different measures of eudaimonic and humanistic value orientations, largely as expected (although hedonic motives were also significant, provided that they were also humanistic).

H1.2 (experiential and reflective growth motivation) GMI-Experiential and GMI-Reflective each correlated with QES. A simultaneous regression of QES showed that both GMI-Experiential and GMI-Reflective were independently predictive, as expected. Therefore, the quiet ego corresponded to two motives of humanistic, eudaimonic growth that aim toward the cultivation of both well-being (i.e., value fulfillment) and wisdom (i.e., value perspectivity). Therefore, the quiet ego corresponded primarily to eudaimonic rather than hedonic measures of well-being and value fulfillment.

H2 (hedonic and eudaimonic value fulfillment) SWB served as a measure of hedonic value fulfillment, whereas basic psychological need fulfillment (BPNF aggregate), and harmonious passion (HP) served as measures of eudaimonic value fulfillment. QES correlated with SWB, BPNF, and HP (but not obsessive passion). We then ran two separate regressions of QES on SWB and each measure of eudaimonic value fulfillment. In each case, we found that the eudaimonic measure, but not SWB (the hedonic measure), remained predictive (although we note that SWB was marginally significant in each case). In an omnibus regression of QES on well-being measures, we found that only HP, but neither SWB nor BPNF, remained predictive.

H3 (value fulfillment vs value perspectivity) Identity exploration (IE) served as the measure of value perspectivity, and QES correlated with it. In three separate simultaneous regressions of QES on IE and each measure of value fulfillment, IE and the value fulfillments (SWB, BPNF, and HP) independently predicted QES. In an omnibus test we found that SWB and IE remained significant (and BPNF and HP were marginally so). Therefore,

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and correlations for Study 1

	QES	HedHum	EudHum	HedEgo	EudEgo	AI-Int	AI-Ext	GMI-E	GMI-R	SWB	BPNF	HP	OP	IE
QES														
Hed Hum	.34***													
Eud Hum	.49***	.25**												
Hed Ego	.37***	.39***	.35***											
Eud Ego	.31***	.16	.30***	.65***										
AI-Int	.48***	.15	.49***	.21*	.18*									
AI-Ext	.16	.22*	.10	.54***	.70***	.18								
GMI-Exp	.44***	.29**	.47***	.29**	-.01	.42***	-.19*							
GMI-Ref	.45***	.26**	.09	.30***	.29**	.19*	.23**	.30***						
SWB	.26**	.34***	.22*	.07	-.08	.05	-.17	.34***	-.04					
BPNF	.34***	.21*	.33***	.00	-.12	.43***	-.23*	.58***	.00	.35***				
HP	.42***	.20*	.41***	.03	.09	.34***	-.11	.52***	.28**	.28**	.50***			
OP	.17	.12	.07	.26**	.39***	-.08	.31***	.05	.33***	-.03	-.22*	.28**		
IE	.58***	.19*	.42***	.23**	.29***	.34***	.14	.43***	.55***	.04	.11	.31***	.17	
M	3.73	5.38	5.72	4.95	4.69	6.13	4.10	5.62	4.32	0.00	4.83	5.23	3.67	4.92
SD	.43	.96	1.07	1.00	1.40	.70	1.16	.95	1.24	1.00	.66	1.10	1.35	.77

QES, Quiet Ego Scale; HedHum, HEHEMA Hedonic Humanistic subscale; EudHum, HEHEMA Eudaimonic Humanistic subscale; HedEgo, HEHEMA Hedonic Egoistic subscale; EudEgo, HEHEMA Eudaimonic Egoistic subscale; AI-Int, AI-Intrinsic Total (aggregate of Growth, Relationships, and Community); AI-Ext, AI-Extrinsic Total (aggregate of Wealth, Fame, and Image); GMI-E, GMI-experiential subscale; GMI-R, GMI-reflective subscale; SWB, Subjective Well-Being (aggregate of z-scored SWL, PA, and inverse NA); BPNF, Basic Psychological Needs Fulfillment, aggregate; HP, Harmonious Passion; OP, Obsessive Passion; IE, Identity Exploration (Identity Styles Inventory—Information Orientation)

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Table 3 Regressions for Study 1

	B	SE	β	<i>p</i>
<i>H1.1: QES on humanistic and egoistic motives</i>				
Hedonic humanistic motivation	1.22	.52	.19	.020
Eudaimonic humanistic motivation	2.13	.46	.37	.000
Hedonic egoistic motivation	.62	.65	.10	.338
Eudaimonic egoistic motivation	.44	.43	.10	.310
<i>H1.2: QES on growth motives (VO) for well-being & wisdom</i>				
Experiential growth motivation	.54	.12	.34	.000
Reflective growth motivation	.43	.10	.35	.000
<i>H2: QES on hedonic and eudaimonic VF</i>				
Subjective well-being	.07	.04	.16	.066
Basic psychological need fulfillment	.19	.06	.28	.002
<i>H2: QES on hedonic and eudaimonic VF</i>				
Subjective well-being	.07	.04	.16	.059
Harmonious passion	.03	.01	.38	.000
<i>H2: QES on hedonic and eudaimonic VF</i>				
Subjective well-being	.06	.04	.13	.138
Basic psychological need fulfillment	.08	.06	.13	.185
Harmonious passion	.02	.01	.33	.000
<i>H3: QES on VF and VP</i>				
Subjective well-being	.10	.03	.24	.000
Identity exploration	.32	.04	.57	.000
<i>H3: QES on VF and VP</i>				
Basic psychological need fulfillment	.18	.04	.28	.000
Identity exploration	.31	.04	.55	.000
<i>H3: QES on VF and VP</i>				
Harmonious passion	.02	.01	.27	.000
Identity exploration	.28	.04	.50	.000
<i>H3: QES on VF and VP</i>				
Subjective well-being	.06	.03	.15	.043
Basic psychological need fulfillment	.10	.05	.14	.074
Harmonious passion	.01	.01	.15	.058
Identity exploration	.29	.04	.51	.000
<i>H4: QES on VO, VF, and VP</i>				
Eudaimonic humanistic motivation	.10	.03	.24	.002
Reflective growth motivation	.06	.03	.18	.021
Subjective well-being	.09	.03	.20	.004
Identity exploration	.21	.05	.37	.000

VO, value orientation; VF, value fulfillment; VP, value perspectivity

the quiet ego corresponded independently to both value fulfillment as well-being and value perspectivity as identity exploration, a facet of wisdom.

H4 (independence of value facets) We first ran a simultaneous regression of QES on all the variables that remained predictive in the preceding three analyses. We then ran

subsequent regressions of QES by eliminating those variables that were not predictive, eventually arriving at a most parsimonious model. In this study, the most parsimonious model did include independent variables from all three facets of value: eudaimonic humanistic motives and GMI-Reflective (value orientations), SWB (value fulfillment), and identity exploration (value perspectivity).

5 Study 2

This study compares QES with a measure of value orientation that distinguishes humanistic from materialistic/egoistic and eudaimonic from hedonic value orientations (for H1.1), experiential and reflective growth motivation (for H1.2), a measure of five moral motivations (for H1.3), measures of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, plus generativity, all as value fulfillments (for H2), and a measure of identity exploration as value perspectivity, which taps into the construct of wisdom (for H3).

5.1 Method

5.1.1 Participants

Participants were college students from a university in the Midwestern U.S.A. who received course credit for their participation ($n = 307$; M age = 18.93, $SD = 1.26$). Women comprised 49% of the sample, men comprised 47%, 4% did not report their gender, and ethnicities were as follows: African–American (2.9%), Asian–American (1%), European–American (83.7%), Latinx–American (3.6%), Middle-Eastern–American (2%), Native American (0.3%), and Other (2%). Fourteen participants did not report their ethnicity.

5.1.2 Measures

Quiet Ego. The QES (Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha was 0.71.

Growth Motivation. The GMI (Bauer et al., 2015) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha for GMI-Reflective and GMI-Experiential were 0.73 and 0.78, respectively.

Moral Foundations. The 32-item Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al., 2011) measures Haidt's (2007) five moral foundations in six items each, plus two filler questions. The MFQ functions as a form of value orientation. The MFQ contains moral relevance and moral judgement items that pertain to care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and purity. Participants are asked "When you decide whether something is morally right or wrong, to what extent are the following consideration relevant to your thinking?" Participants then rate moral relevance items on a six-point scale (1 = *not at all relevant*, 6 = *extremely relevant*). Moral judgment items are also rated on a six-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). Moral relevance items include: "Whether or not someone suffered emotionally" and "Whether or not someone violated standards of purity and decency." Moral judgement items include statements such as "Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue" and "Justice is the most important requirement for a society." Cronbach's alphas for care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and purity were 0.71, 0.68, 0.64, 0.60, and 0.61, respectively.

Subjective Well-Being. SWB (Diener et al., 2006) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alphas were: SWL, 0.84; positive affect, 0.85; negative affect, 0.86.

Psychological Well-Being. Psychological well-being (PWB) was measured using Ryff and Keyes' (1995) well-validated, multidimensional scale. PWB consists of six dimensions of well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. These six subscales contain seven items each. Participants rate the degree to which they agree with 42 items relating to well-being, each on a six-point scale (1 = *completely disagree*, 6 = *completely agree*). For reasons of space, we report only on the aggregated mean of the other five subscales. Cronbach's alpha for the aggregate score was 0.96.

Generativity. The Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992) is a well-validated measure of the sense of having been generative in one's life, i.e., of *having contributed* to the welfare of future generations and society. Thus the LGS is a measure of eudaimonic value fulfillment. However, LGS is not a measure of well-being in the typical sense; rather, it is a measure of moral value fulfillment. Also, some LGS items deal with contributions to society, and such concerns tend to function like measures of value perspectivity in the U.S. (Bauer et al., 2020). Indeed, LGS corresponds to measures of both well-being and wisdom/maturity (Bauer et al., 2015; McAdams et al., 1986). The LGS contains 20 items that participants rate on a four-point scale to which they agree with statements like "I feel as though I have made a difference to many people" and "I feel as though I have done nothing of worth to contribute to others" (reverse scored). Cronbach's alpha for the LGS was 0.83.

Identity Exploration. The Information Orientation subscale of Berzonsky's (1989) Identity Style Inventory (ISI-info) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha for ISI-info was 0.79.

5.2 Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics and correlations appear in Table 4. Regressions appear in Table 5.

H1.1 (humanistic and eudaimonic value orientations) QES correlated with GMI-Experiential, as in Study 1, showing the expected tie between the quiet ego and a humanistic, eudaimonic motives.

H1.2 (experiential and reflective growth motivation) GMI-Reflective also correlated with QES. A simultaneous regression of QES showed that both GMI-Experiential and GMI-Reflective were independently predictive, as expected and as found in Study 1. Therefore, the quiet ego corresponded to two motives of humanistic, eudaimonic growth that aim toward the cultivation of both well-being (i.e., value fulfillment) and wisdom (i.e., value perspectivity).

H1.3 (moral value orientations) QES correlated with all five subscales of MFQ. A simultaneous regression of QES showed that only the care and fairness subscales of the MFQ remained predictive, as expected. (However, as for the hypothesized *reason*, we did not establish whether the care and fairness subscales were more humanistic in value orientation than were authority, loyalty, or purity. We test this in Study 3.)

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study 2

	QES	GMI-E	GMI-R	C	F	L	A	P	SWB	PWB	LGS	IE
QES												
GMI-E	.50***											
GMI-R	.44***	.50***										
MFQ-Care	.39***	.44***	.52***									
MFQ-Fairness	.38***	.46***	.48***	.70***								
MFQ-Loyalty	.26***	.21***	.38***	.34***	.38***							
MFQ-Authority	.28***	.24***	.38***	.31***	.35***	.66***						
MFQ-Purity	.35***	.37***	.40***	.47***	.44***	.40***	.52***					
SWB	.56***	.39***	.12*	.21***	.09	.26***	.23***	.22***				
PWB	.63***	.52***	.20**	.32***	.18**	.20**	.24***	.24***	.78***			
LGS	.64***	.34***	.48***	.20**	.19**	.20**	.22***	.25***	.56***	.67***		
IE	.49***	.44***	.45***	.30***	.30***	.15*	.14*	.25***	.37***	.40***	.44***	
M	3.58	4.75	5.86	2.48	2.30	1.98	1.90	1.65	0.00	4.29	2.82	4.56
SD	.39	.93	.95	.89	.80	.81	.80	.85	.89	.59	.38	.83

QES, Quiet Ego Scale; GMI-E, GMI-experiential subscale; GMI-R, GMI-reflective subscale; MFQ, Moral Foundations Questionnaire; C, MFQ-Care; F, MFQ-Fairness; L, MFQ-Loyalty; A, MFQ-Authority; P, MFQ-Purity; SWB, Subjective Well-Being (aggregate of z-scored SWL, PA, and inverse NA); PWB, Psychological Well-Being, aggregate; LGS, Loyola Generativity Scale; IE, Identity Exploration (Identity Styles Inventory—Information Orientation)

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 5 Regressions for Study 2

	B	SE	β	<i>p</i>
<i>H1.2: QES on growth motives (VO) for well-being & wisdom</i>				
Experiential growth motivation	.16	.02	.39	.000
Reflective growth motivation	.10	.02	.24	.000
<i>H1.3: QES on moral motives (VO)</i>				
MFQ-care	.08	.04	.16	.049
MFQ-fairness	.09	.04	.20	.014
MFQ-loyalty	.04	.04	.07	.329
MFQ-authority	.01	.04	.02	.759
MFQ-purity	.06	.03	.13	.068
<i>H2: QES on hedonic & eudaimonic well-being (VF)</i>				
Subjective well-being	.08	.04	.18	.035
Psychological well-being	.30	.06	.48	.000
<i>H2: QES on hedonic and eudaimonic VF</i>				
Subjective well-being	.06	.04	.14	.086
Psychological well-being	.16	.06	.25	.009
Generativity	.40	.07	.39	.000
<i>H3: QES on VF and VP</i>				
Subjective well-being	.19	.02	.44	.000
Identity exploration	.15	.02	.32	.000
<i>H3: QES on VF and VP</i>				
Psychological well-being	.21	.04	.32	.000
Generativity	.33	.07	.33	.000
Identity exploration	.10	.03	.21	.000
<i>H3: QES on VF and VP</i>				
Subjective well-being	.05	.04	.12	.127
Psychological well-being	.14	.06	.21	.023
Generativity	.34	.07	.34	.000
Identity exploration	.11	.03	.23	.000
<i>H4: QES on VO, VF, and VP</i>				
Reflective growth motivation	.09	.02	.23	.001
Psychological well-being	.23	.04	.35	.000
Generativity	.28	.06	.28	.000
Identity exploration	.06	.03	.12	.044

VO, value orientation; VF, value fulfillment; VP, value perspectivity

H2 (hedonic and eudaimonic value fulfillment) SWB served as a measure of hedonic value fulfillment, whereas PWB and LGS served as measures of eudaimonic value fulfillment. QES correlated with SWB, PWB, and LGS. To compare the two measures of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, we ran a regression of QES on SWB and PWB simultaneously and found that both remained predictive of QES, unlike Study 1 and not as predicted. When adding LGS to that model, we found that PWB and LGS remained predictive of QES, but SWB did not. Therefore, as in Study 1 but not as decisively, the quiet ego corresponded primarily to measures of eudaimonic rather than hedonic value fulfillment.

H3 (value fulfillment vs value perspectivity) IE again served as the measure of value perspectivity, and QES correlated with it. A simultaneous regression showed that SWB and IE independently predicted QES. In an omnibus regression of QES on value fulfillments, PWB, generativity, and IE continued to predict QES, but SWB no longer did. Therefore, the quiet ego corresponded independently to both value fulfillment as well-being and value perspectivity as identity exploration, a facet of wisdom.

H4 (independence of value facets) We followed the same statistical procedure as in Study 1 to arrive a most parsimonious model, which here again yielded independent variables from all three facets of value: GMI-Reflective (value orientation), PWB and generativity (value fulfillments), and identity exploration (value perspectivity).

6 Study 3

This study of adults compares QES with three measures of value orientation that distinguish humanistic from materialistic/egoistic and eudaimonic from hedonic value orientations (H1.1), experiential and reflective growth motivation (H1.2), a measure of five moral motivations (H1.3), measures of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, plus four measures of moral value fulfillment (H2), and two measures of value perspectivity that tap into the construct of wisdom (H3).

6.1 Method

6.1.1 Participants

Participants were adults who were all alumni from a university in the Midwestern U.S.A. and were each paid \$100 for their full participation ($n=114$; M age=49.62, $SD=11.87$). These data were from a larger study of narrative identity, well-being, and wisdom (but not QES, self-report motives, or moral fulfillments; Bauer et al., 2022). Women comprised 57% of the sample, men comprised 43%, and ethnicities were as follows: African–American (0.9%), European–American (89.5%), and Latinx–American (1.8%). Nine participants did not report their ethnicity.

6.1.2 Measures

Quiet Ego. The Quiet Ego Scale (QES; Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha was 0.71. Higher scores on this measure indicate greater quiet ego characteristics.

Hedonic, Eudaimonic, Experiential, & Evaluative Motives for Activities. The HEHEMA scale (a revision of Huta & Ryan, 2010) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alphas for the subscales were: Hedonic Humanistic, 0.84; Eudaimonic Humanistic, 0.81; Hedonic Egoistic, 0.94; Eudaimonic Egoistic, 0.68.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Aspirations. The Aspirations Index (AI; Kasser & Ryan, 1993) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alphas for the aggregated measures of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations were 0.83 and 0.89.

Growth Motivation. The Growth Motivation Index (GMI; Bauer et al., 2015) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha for GMI-Reflective and GMI-Experiential were 0.74 and 0.60, respectively.

Moral Foundations. The 32-item Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al., 2011) is described in Study 2. Cronbach's alphas for care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and purity were 0.67, 0.62, 0.70, 0.71, and 0.60, respectively.

Subjective Well-Being. SWB (Diener et al., 2006) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alphas were: SWL, 0.87; positive affect, 0.82; negative affect, 0.80.

Psychological Well-being. Psychological well-being (PWB; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) is described in Study 2. Cronbach's alpha for the aggregate score was 0.88.

Generativity. The Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha for the LGS was 0.83.

Altruism. The Altruistic Personality Scale (Rushton et al., 1981) contains 14 items and assesses intentions related to altruistic behaviors. Participants rate items on a scale from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). Items include: "I would make changes for someone I did not know" and "I would voluntarily look after a neighbor's pet or children without being paid." Cronbach's alpha was 0.83.

Compassion. The Santa Clara Brief Compassion Scale (Hwang et al., 2008) is a five-item scale that measures compassionate, or altruistic, love. Participants rate items on a seven-point scale (1 = *not at all true for me*, 7 = *very true for me*) and include statements such as "When I hear about someone (a stranger) going through a difficult time, I feel a great deal of compassion for him or her" and "I would rather engage in actions that help others, even though they are strangers, than engage in actions that would help me." Cronbach's alpha was 0.92.

Gratitude. The Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ; McCullough et al., 2002) contains six items assessing the frequency and intensity of grateful experiences and are rated from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Items consist of statements such as "I have so much in life to be thankful for" and "Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone" (reverse scored). Cronbach's alpha was 0.75.

Identity Exploration. The Information Orientation subscale of Berzonsky's (1989) Identity Style Inventory (ISI-info) is described in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha for ISI-info was 0.71.

Three-Dimensional Wisdom. The Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale (TDWS; Ardel, 2003) contains 39 items and assesses affective, cognitive, and reflective forms of wisdom. In addition to the three subscales, there is an aggregate variable and items are rated on a five-point scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 5 = *strongly disagree*). Participants rate items such as, "Simply knowing the answer rather than understanding the reasons for the answer to a problem is fine with me," "Sometimes I get so charged up emotionally that I am unable to consider many ways of dealing with my problems," and "I don't like to get involved in listening to another person's troubles." Cronbach's alpha for the aggregate scale was 0.87.

6.2 Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics and correlations appear in Tables 6 (for H1 variables) and 7 (for H2 and H3 variables). Regressions are reported in Table 8.

H1.1 (humanistic and eudaimonic value orientations) HEHEMA, AI-intrinsic, and GMI-Experiential each measured the distinction between humanistic and egoistic value

Table 6 Descriptive statistics and correlations for Study 3 (H1: QES and value orientations)

	QES	HedHum	EudHum	HedEgo	EudEgo	AI-Int	AI-Ext	GMI-E	GMI-R	C	F	L	A	P
QES														
HedHum	.16													
EudHum	.42***	.12												
HedEgo	-.01	.26**	.10											
EudEgo	.07	-.05	.16	.27										
AI-Intrinsic	.50***	.26**	.47***	.14	.03									
AI-Extrinsic	.08	.34***	.09	.53***	.40***	.18								
GMI-E	.29**	.20*	.20*	.11	.19*	.44***	.19*							
GMI-R	.53***	.15	.45***	.12	.15	.48***	.21*	.17						
MFQ-Care	.32**	.20*	.28**	.03	-.07	.34***	.03	.11	.27**					
MFQ-Fairness	.24*	.28**	.21*	.04	-.07	.25**	.06	.04	.31***	.60***				
MFQ-Loyalty	-.10	-.15	.06	.08	.08	.00	-.04	.01	-.22*	.19*	.12			
MFQ-Authority	-.08	-.09	-.05	.11	.05	.03	.13	.09	-.25**	.05	-.01	.69***		
MFQ-Purity	-.16	-.16	-.01	-.10	.00	.06	-.21***	.03	-.38***	.14	-.04	.63***	.64***	
<i>M</i>	3.74	5.52	6.70	4.40	3.82	5.88	2.74	5.46	4.38	4.53	4.34	3.71	3.94	3.78
<i>SD</i>	.49	.87	.92	1.07	1.31	.69	.90	.74	1.15	.69	.63	.82	.84	1.12

QES, Quiet Ego Scale; GMI-E, GMI, Experiential subscale; GMI-R, Growth Motivation Index, Reflective subscale; HedHum, HEHEMA Hedonic Humanistic subscale; EudHum, HEHEMA Eudaimonic Humanistic subscale; HedEgo, HEHEMA Hedonic Egoistic subscale; EudEgo, HEHEMA Eudaimonic Egoistic subscale; AI-Int, AI-Intrinsic; AI-Ext, AI-Extrinsic; MFQ, Moral Foundations Questionnaire; C, MFQ-Care; F, MFQ-Fairness; L, MFQ-Loyalty; A, MFQ-Authority; P, MFQ-Purity

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Table 7 Descriptive statistics and correlations for Study 3 (H2 & H3: QES and value actualizations)

	QES	SWB	PWB	Gen	Altru	Comp	Grat	IE	TDWS
QES									
SWB	.31**								
PWB	.41***	.65***							
Generativity	.54***	.34***	.54***						
Altruism	.24**	.27**	.33***	.48***					
Compassion	.41***	.20*	.29**	.45***	.38***				
Gratitude	.38***	.48***	.52***	.47***	.29**	.30**			
IE	.48***	.16	.24*	.41***	.30**	.07	.29***		
TDWS	.66***	.38***	.30**	.44***	.25**	.32**	.32**	.36***	
<i>M</i>	3.74	0.00	4.80	3.02	3.16	4.85	6.36	3.72	3.59
<i>SD</i>	.49	.74	.50	.39	.51	1.33	.58	.53	.35

QES, Quiet Ego Scale; SWB, Subjective Well-Being (aggregate of z -scored SWL, PA, and inverse NA); PWB, Psychological Well-Being, aggregate; HP, Harmonious Passion; Authenticity, Authen, Authenticity Scale, aggregate; Generativity, Gen, Loyola Generativity Scale; Altruism, Altru, Altruism Scale; Compassion, Comp, Santa Clara Brief Compassion Scale; Gratitude, Grat, Gratitude Scale, IE, Identity Exploration (Identity Styles Inventory—Information Orientation); TDWS, Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

orientations. QES correlated with the HEHEMA eudaimonic humanistic subscale (but not the other subscales), AI-Intrinsic (but not AI-Extrinsic), and GMI-Experiential. Therefore, no regression was needed to demonstrate that the quiet ego corresponded, as expected, to humanistic and eudaimonic, rather than materialistic and egoistic, value orientations.

H1.2 (experiential and reflective growth motivation) GMI-Experiential and GMI-Reflective each correlated with QES. A simultaneous regression of QES showed that both GMI-Experiential and GMI-Reflective were independently predictive, as expected and as found in Studies 1 and 2. Therefore, the quiet ego corresponded to two motives of humanistic, eudaimonic growth that aim toward the cultivation of both well-being (i.e., value fulfillment) and wisdom (i.e., value perspectivity).

H1.3 (moral value orientations) QES correlated with only the care and fairness subscales of MFQ. To extend Study 2, here we note that care and fairness were the only MFQ subscales to correlate with the humanistic subscales of HEHEMA. Therefore, the quiet ego corresponded to the two moral motives that have a humanistic value orientation, namely care and fairness.

H2 (hedonic and eudaimonic value fulfillment) SWB served as a measure of hedonic well-being, whereas PWB served as a measure of eudaimonic well-being. Four moral value fulfillments (generativity, altruism, compassion, and gratitude) also served as measures of eudaimonic well-being. QES correlated with all measures of value fulfillment. We then ran three regressions of QES on value fulfillments. First we regressed QES on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, finding that only PWB (but not SWB) remained predictive. Next, we regressed QES on SWB and the moral value fulfillments, finding that only generativity and compassion remained predictive. Finally, we regressed QES on those variables that remained predictive in the first two regressions, finding that all three remained

Table 8 Regressions for Study 3

	B	SE	β	<i>p</i>
<i>H1.2: QES on growth motives (VO) for well-being & wisdom</i>				
GMI-experiential	.21	.03	.49	.000
GMI-reflective	.14	.05	.20	.012
<i>H2: QES on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (VF)</i>				
Subjective well-being	.02	.10	.02	.860
Psychological well-being	.48	.11	.46	.000
<i>H2: QES on hedonic well-being and moral VF</i>				
Subjective well-being	.11	.08	.12	.183
Generativity	.53	.12	.43	.000
Altruism	-.06	.08	-.06	.559
Compassion	.13	.04	.28	.000
Gratitude	.06	.08	.07	.437
<i>H2: QES on VF</i>				
Psychological well-being	.25	.10	.25	.010
Generativity	.43	.12	.34	.000
Compassion	.12	.04	.26	.001
<i>H3: QES on well-being and wisdom (VF and VP)</i>				
Psychological well-being	.37	.08	.36	.000
Identity exploration	.35	.07	.37	.000
<i>H3: QES on well-being and wisdom (VF and VP)</i>				
Psychological well-being	.18	.08	.17	.037
Three-dimensional wisdom	.79	.11	.57	.000
<i>H3: QES on VF and VP</i>				
Psychological well-being	.06	.08	.06	.477
Generativity	.21	.10	.17	.037
Compassion	.08	.03	.18	.011
Identity exploration	.19	.07	.20	.005
Three-dimensional wisdom	.62	.12	.44	.000
<i>H4: QES on VO, VF, and VP</i>				
Reflective growth motivation	.12	.03	.27	.000
Compassion	.09	.03	.19	.006
Three-dimensional wisdom	.72	.11	.51	.000

VO, value orientation; VF, value fulfillment; VP, value perspectivity

predictive. Therefore, we found further support for H2—that the quiet ego corresponded primarily to eudaimonic rather than hedonic well-being (including value fulfillments).

H3 (value fulfillment vs value perspectivity) The two measures of value perspectivity—IE and three-dimensional wisdom (aggregate TDWS)—each correlated with QES. Two regression of QES, one on PWB and identity exploration simultaneously and another on PWB and TDWS simultaneously, showed that well-being and wisdom measures independently related to QES, as in the previous studies. As an exploratory test, we regressed QES on measures of value fulfillment and value perspectivity that were predictive in previous regressions. We found that only generativity, compassion, identity exploration, and

TWDS all remained predictive of QES, but PWB no longer did. Therefore, we continued to find support for the quiet ego's independent ties to both well-being and wisdom, but now with the caveat that the well-being in question had more to do with moral value fulfillment (namely compassion) than with well-being as commonly defined.

H4 (independence of value facets) We followed the same statistical procedure as the previous studies to arrive at a most parsimonious model, which here again yielded independent variables from all three facets of value: GMI-Reflective (value orientation), compassion (value fulfillment), and TDWS (value perspectivity).

7 General Discussion

The present studies situate the quiet ego within a framework of human flourishing in terms of humanistic and eudaimonic motivation, well-being as both satisfaction and meaningfulness, and wisdom. We discuss the findings of the three studies in terms of VOA, moral concerns, hedonia, and eudaimonia. Then we further situate the quiet ego in terms of *ataraxia* and *upekkha*, the ancient Epicurean and Buddhist concepts of equanimity.

H1 The Quiet Ego Emphasizes Humanistic and Eudaimonic Value Orientations

Past research has shown that QES relates to growth motivation, growth-oriented values like universalism, benevolence, and self-direction, and intrinsic versus extrinsic motives (Wayment & Bauer, 2018; Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b). The present studies frame measures of value orientation in terms of humanistic and eudaimonic motives, which theoretically lie at the heart of the quiet ego (Bauer, 2021; Bauer & Wayment, 2008). For H1.1, across the three studies, QES holds ties primarily to *motives for meaningful experience* (humanistic and eudaimonic motives), notably compared to three other hybrid motives: satisfying experiences (humanistic and hedonic motives), meaningful self-image (eudaimonic and egoistic motives), and satisfying evaluations of self-image (hedonic and egoistic motives). For H1.2, across the three studies, QES holds independent ties to two forms of humanistic, eudaimonic motives—experiential and reflective growth motivation—that aim toward well-being and wisdom, respectively. For H1.3, in the two relevant studies, QES corresponds primarily to moral motives toward care and fairness (which correspond to humanistic motives), relative to moral motives toward authority, loyalty, and purity (which do not tie to humanistic motives). Thus we find consistent support for the three parts of our first hypothesis—that the quiet ego corresponds to eudaimonic more so than hedonic motives and especially humanistic more so than materialistic/egoistic motives.

H2 The Quiet Ego Emphasizes Eudaimonic Fulfillment

Past research has shown that QES relates to hedonic and eudaimonic measures of well-being (Boin & Voci, 2019; Chew & Ang, 2021; Collier et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2022a, 2022b; Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b), but not whether hedonic or eudaimonic well-being holds a closer tie to QES. QES also holds established ties to measures of *moral* value fulfillment, such as compassion and generativity (Buonomo et al., 2021; Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b), which we argue are measures of eudaimonic well-being, broadly defined. Theoretically, the quiet ego has ties to well-being

primarily through eudaimonic meaningfulness rather than merely hedonic satisfaction (Bauer, 2008, 2021; Wayment & Bauer, 2017). In Study 1, hedonic well-being (measured as subjective well-being; Diener et al., 2006) no longer remains predictive of QES when controlling the eudaimonic value fulfillments of either basic psychological need fulfillment or harmonious passion. In Study 2, both hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being (measured as psychological well-being; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) simultaneously and independently predict QES. However, hedonic well-being no longer remains predictive of QES when controlling for both eudaimonic well-being and generativity. In Study 3, a study of adults, hedonic well-being no longer remains predictive of QES when controlling for either psychological well-being alone or the moral value fulfillments of generativity and compassion. Thus we find fairly consistent support across the three studies that the quiet ego corresponds to eudaimonic well-being (including moral value fulfillments) more so than to hedonic well-being—that is, to meaningfulness more so than to satisfaction.

H3 The Quiet Ego Aims toward Well-Being and Wisdom

Past research has shown that QES relates to measures of well-being and wisdom-related constructs like identity exploration and emotional intelligence (Liu et al., 2022a, 2022b; Wayment et al., 2015a, 2015b), but not whether QES corresponds equally to both well-being and wisdom. Theoretically, the quiet ego balances not only concerns for the welfare of the self and others but also concerns for both social-emotional development (which yields well-being or value fulfillment) and social-cognitive development (which yields wisdom or value perspectivity; Bauer, 2008, 2021). In Study 1, identity exploration and each of the three measures of value fulfillment (i.e., well-being, broadly defined) predict QES independently. In Study 2, identity exploration and well-being (especially eudaimonic well-being and the moral value fulfillment of generativity) independently predict QES. In Study 3, measures of eudaimonic well-being (especially moral value fulfillments) and wisdom independently predict QES. Thus we find consistent support that the quiet ego corresponds fairly equally to well-being and wisdom. In other words, the quiet ego is not merely about feeling meaningful but also about thinking complexly and humanely about the self and others.

H4 The Independence of Motives, Well-Being, and Wisdom

These studies mark the second empirical test of the theoretical independence of facets of the VOA model. Each study here reveals a different set of measures in the final solution, but in all three studies we find that motives (value orientations), well-being (value fulfillment), and wisdom (value perspectivity) independently predicted QES. Notably, the salient motives have a humanistic and eudaimonic orientation, with reflective growth motivation being predictive in all three studies. As for well-being, we find hedonic (Study 1), eudaimonic (Study 2), and moral (Study 3) value fulfillments all capture unique qualities of QES. As for wisdom, TDWS outpredicts identity exploration in Study 3, whereas identity exploration remains predictive in Studies 1 and 2, where it is the only measure of wisdom. Overall, we find that measures of motives, well-being, and wisdom—as examples of value orientation, fulfillment, and perspectivity—tap into unique qualities of the quiet ego.

7.1 The Quiet Ego as Equanimity

Future research might focus on one of the quiet ego's theoretical qualities that is difficult to study: equanimity. The Epicurean concept of *ataraxia* and the Buddhist concept of *upekkha* refer to equanimity—but *not* merely as the sense of feeling peaceful or tranquil (as typically studied in psychology; e.g., Vandepitte et al., 2022). Rather, *ataraxia* and *upekkha* include qualities of mind that *result in* having satisfaction, moral virtues, or heightened capacities for reasoning (Flanagan, 2011). Epicurean *ataraxia* and especially the Buddhist concept of *upekkha* refer to equanimity as a mode or state of mental processing through which one interprets the self and the world while keeping egoistic value orientations at bay—much like a quiet ego (Bauer & DesAutels, 2019).

Equanimity in this sense functions not only as a value fulfillment (of having peacefulness or tranquility) but also as value perspectivity and wisdom. Equanimity deepens to the degree one has examined one's ideals and has kept them from dominating one's interpretation of a situation. An emotional sense of tranquility *without sufficient value perspectivity* is more of a lucky contentment than a cultivated equanimity (in either the Epicurean or Buddhist sense). Epicurus “urge[s] us to cultivate an impartial perspective [...]. It is valuable because it enables us to detach ourselves from the things that people ordinarily prize, including life itself”—a process of keeping our preconceived notions and ideals in check (Tsouna, 2009, p. 259). *Ataraxia* requires the application of empirical logic in interpreting ordinary experience (Taub, 2009)—which is to say, a high degree of value perspectivity.

As the present studies show, the quiet ego corresponds to wisdom as much as to well-being. The quiet ego's dimension of ego-ideal-detaching awareness may clear an open space for broader, deeper, and ideal-contradicting perspectives, while the quiet ego's dimension of curiosity and perspective-taking motivates the seeking of those new perspectives. Furthermore, the quiet ego's dimension of growth-mindedness provides direction for what to do with the insights garnered from the equanimity of ego-ideal-detaching awareness and perspective-taking. Epicurus and Buddha are both concerned with a therapeutic or growth-minded method for dropping their illusory (e.g., ego-ideal-dominating) views by coming to a deeper understanding of those views that renders impossible any pat belief in them (Conze, 1959; Tsouna, 2009).

However, we wish to emphasize that the ego need not function at the level of *ataraxia* or *upekkha* to be deemed “quiet.” Again, the quiet ego is relative to the noisy ego in degrees of ego volume. But for those who are interested in just how quiet an ego can get: Equanimity as either *ataraxia* or *upekkha* involves the *transcendence of* or *freedom from* both the feeling states of value fulfillment and the thinking states of value perspectivity. As such, *ataraxia* and *upekkha* are largely defined negatively (Conze, 1959; Gill, 2009), as the absence of maladaptive or misleading views of the self or world that derive from egoistic ideals (Warren, 2009). For Epicurus, *ataraxia*, “insofar as it consists of absence, could not feel like anything to be *in*” (Woolf, 2009, p. 173). Such states are, like mystical experiences, ineffable and are difficult to sustain or to cultivate (James, 1902). *Upekkha* emerges at the higher stages of meditation—at the third of four *dhyanas*, or meditative stage-states, when “all ‘relations’ both with the sensible world and with memory” are suspended (Eliade, 1958, p. 171), which is a state of “affective detachment” (Bucknell, 1993, p. 381), not unlike that of *ataraxia*. At the fourth *dhyana*, even subtle ideas of pure existence, the self and others as in Martin Buber's I-Thou (see Wirth, 2020), or emptiness (Huntington, 1989) dissolve, resulting in a deeper level of

equanimity and a “state” of mind characterized by “non-dual” mindedness (e.g., Dunne, 2011). Here the ego is extremely (perhaps even idealistically) quiet, but not passive. Here the ego is detached from ego ideals, compassionate and existentially interdependent, radically open and curious, and humanistically engaged in ways that naturally facilitate growth.⁹

8 Conclusion

The quiet ego refers to an aspect of human flourishing that emphasizes how the person interprets the self and others in ways that foster balance and growth in the self and others. We find in three studies that the quiet ego relates independently to qualities of human flourishing in terms of the VOA model: mostly to humanistic and eudaimonic motives in its value orientations, to hedonic and especially eudaimonic (including moral) well-being in its value fulfillments, and to humane wisdom in its value perspectivity.

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Declarations

Ethical Approval All three studies were approved by the ethics review board of the University of Dayton regarding research involving human participants and informed consent. The first author is a co-editor of the *Journal of Happiness Studies*.

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⁹ Finally, we note that the mere preoccupation with actualizing qualities like a quiet ego is a luxury. Drawing on Nussbaum’s (2011) Capabilities Approach and empirical data (e.g., Tay and Diener, 2011), we argue that societal structures of power are arranged such that value orientations for a quiet ego (and other experientially-concerned values) may be a theoretical right for all but are less likely to be actualized if one lives with any of various forms of marginality or oppression (Bauer, 2021; Bauer et al., 2022). Yet we also take Maslow’s (1968) perspective that, effectively, once more freedoms are had, one’s concerns for qualities like a quiet ego become not only more prevalent but also more likely to be realized in one’s life and experience.

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