

The Good Life

The Golden Rule seems to me like a widely accepted and credible guide to the good life; framed in various ways, positively (what you should do) and negatively (what you should not), it's found in most of the world's major religions but stands independently as well and can be summed up as "do as you would be done by". So everything we would want for ourselves, we should try to make available for others.

It's perhaps necessary to depersonalise it slightly (maybe think in terms of "do as I would my parent/child would be done by") but then there are some obvious goods one would want for oneself/one's parent or child and they include these (there may be others but to me these are the fundamentals):

1. Sufficient food, of sufficient quality.
2. A roof over our heads – safe, secure and affordable.
3. A bright future for our children – good education, lots of opportunities.
4. Health care, sufficient to allow the living out of our natural lifespan in reasonable comfort.

Then if we want to lead a good life, all we have to do is live so that these goods are achievable by everyone on the planet, not just us.

For me, it's clear that the biggest threat to all of the above is climate change. It threatens the global food supply, as well as a bright future for the generations to come. Rising oceans and raging wildfires threaten homes, health, food and lives.

Therefore, for me a good life means being a vegetarian, because meat production is driving deforestation in the Amazon and elsewhere, the deliberate burning of rainforest which adds to climate change effects – and also I don't see why animals should endure suffering on my account (I think the good life means extending respect to other animals as well as man).

It means not flying in aeroplanes. There's no need for it; I can holiday perfectly well in the UK or take a train to the continent if it's really important for me to go abroad.

It means supporting charities which address health issues in the global South and which distribute funding to the very poor.

It means being an active supporter of the only political party which has a credible track record of taking climate change seriously (the Green Party).

The good life means acknowledging that if everyone on the planet is to have the essentials (1-4 above), then we in the global North can't go on with our wasteful, extravagant lifestyles. It means accepting personal responsibility and the empowering knowledge that actually, we can, each and every one of us, make a difference. And once we have understood these truths, then the good life is one which adjusts to reduce consumption and behaviours so that, as far as is possible, the goals we want for ourselves can be shared by all.

There's always room for improvement in every life, but the important thing is to look, to **see** and then to **act**. Start where you are and go on from there. And just like it should, the good life feels – good!