Questions on Happiness

Classical topics, modern answers, blind spots

ABSTRACT

Happiness is a longstanding theme in Western thought. It came under scrutiny in the following three periods: (1) Antique Greek philosophy; (2) Post-Enlightenment West-European moral philosophy, Utilitarianism in particular; and (3) Current Quality-of-Life research in the rich welfare states. Printed reflections on all this contemplation now fill a hundred meters of bookshelves. This paper takes stock of the progress made on seven classical topics. Are we now any wiser? Or is Dodge (1930) right in his contention that "the theory of the happy life has remained on about the same level that the ancient Greeks left it"? This inventory will differ from the usual review articles. The focus will not be on current technical research issues, but rather on the broader questions that prompted the enquiry. Furthermore, the aim is not only to enumerate advances in understanding, but also to mark the blind spots.

The following issues will be considered:
1) What is happiness?
2) Can happiness be measured?
3) Is unhappiness the rule?
4) How do people assess their happiness?
5) What conditions favour happiness?
6) Can happiness be promoted?
7) Should happiness be promoted?

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Happiness happens when something good or fun or positive happens. It is circumstantial. I get a good parking spot - I’m happy. What is happiness for you? Are you a happy person? Do you think happiness comes from inside or it depends on other people and things? When did you last feel very happy? What happened? How do you show your happiness? Do you share it with others or keep it private? Who are happier, single people or married ones? Why? What. Good day respondent, If we may take few moments of your time to answer few questions about your perception regarding happiness. The data that will be gathered here are treated with full confidentiality of your identity and strictly for academic pu...