

Chemical Happiness and the Meaning of Life

1. What is the methodology followed by Harari in the prescribed extract? He has used the methodology of argument. He argues against the traditional spiritual perception regarding happiness.
2. What is Harari's observation of human happiness? His observation is that human happiness is the result of chemical processes taking place in the human brain. So happiness is a state of mind.
3. Why does a person who has just won a lottery jump with joy? A person who has just won a lottery jumps with joy because he is reacting to the various hormones coursing through his blood stream, and to the storm of electric signals flashing between different parts of the brain.
4. What is Harari's reaction to the statement that married people are happier on average than singles? He thinks happiness produces marriage and not the other way round. The serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin bring about and maintain a marriage. People who are born with cheerful biochemistry are generally happy and content. Such people are more attractive spouses and they are less likely to divorce. It is far easier to live with a happy and content spouse than with a depressed and dissatisfied one.

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5. How does Prozac lift people out of depression?

Prozac is fluoxetine, an anti-depressant prescribed for people who are suffering from anxiety, depression or panic. It raises their serotonin levels.

6. What all, according to Harari, does lasting happiness come from?

Lasting happiness comes from seeing one's life in its entirety as meaningful and worthwhile.

It also comes from manipulating the biochemical system of people by increasing their serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin levels.

7. What, according to Harari, is Huxley's perception of happiness?

Huxley thought that happiness is the supreme value and psychiatric drugs replace police and the ballot as the foundation of politics. Each day, every person takes a dose of 'soma' a synthetic drug, which makes people happy without harming their productivity and efficiency.

8. What lesson does Harari prove by comparing a medieval French peasant to a modern Parisian banker?

The lesson Harari proves that happiness is not the result of where we live or how much money we earn; to explain this he took a simple example of life of a medieval French peasant to a modern Parisian banker. When the peasant completes his hut, he gets the same happiness as the banker when he pays his last installment on his penthouse. The banker is not one iota happier than the peasant.

Unemical Happiness and the Meaning of Life

9. What are Harari's observations about the French revolution?

The revolutionaries killed the king, gave the land to the peasants, declared the rights of man, abolished noble privileged and waged wars against the whole Europe. But nothing of these changed the French biochemistry. Those who were happy before the revolution were happy after that also.

10. What does Aldous Huxley speak of happiness in 'Brave New World'?

Huxley thought that happiness is the supreme value and psychiatric drugs replace police and the ballot as the foundation of politics. Each day, every person takes a dose of 'soma' a synthetic drug, which makes people happy without harming their productivity and efficiency. The World State that governs the entire globe is never threatened by wars, revolutions, strike or demonstrations and people are happy with their current conditions whatever they may be.

11. What is the paradox about happiness that Daniel Kahneman explains?

Kahneman found that when counting moments of joy and moments of drudgery, bringing up child turns out to be an unpleasant affair. It consists largely of changing nappies, washing dishes and dealing with temper tantrums. Yet most parents declare that their children are their chief source of happiness.

the Meaning of Life

Explain Chemical happiness with examples.

Chemical happiness means happiness is produced by the chemicals serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin present in our system. Our mental air conditioning system has some freedom of movement. So the conditioning system of happiness varies from person to person. He sets the level of happiness on a scale from one to ten. Some have the level between six and ten, stabilizing at eight- they were born with a cheerful biochemistry system. Some people have the level between three and seven, stabilizing at five- they were cursed with gloomy biochemistry system. To show this Harari compare a medieval French peasant to a Parisian banker. The peasant lived in an unheated hut and the banker with all latest technological gadgets. We would expect the banker to be happier than the peasant. Mud huts or splendid homes do not determine our mood. Serotonin does. When the peasant completed his mud hut his serotonin was at the level of X. Similarly when the banker paid the last installment for his penthouse his serotonin level was also X. Consequently the banker was not one iota happier than his ancestor the peasant. Then he took another example to show the great collective events, the French revolution. The revolutionaries killing the king, gave lands to the peasants, declared the rights of men, abolished noble privileges and waged wars against the whole Europe but nothing of these changed the French biochemistry. Those who were happy before the revolution were happy than also. Those with a gloomy biochemistry complained about Robespierre and Napoleon as they complained about Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

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The medieval man and modern man is essentially the same in the scale of happiness. Argue.

It is quite right to assert that the medieval man and the modern man is essentially the same in the scale of happiness. Let us compare a medieval French peasant to a Parisian banker. The peasant lived in an unheated hut near the pigsty. The banker goes home to a pent house with all the latest technological gadgets. We would expect the banker to be happier than the peasant. Mud huts or splendid homes do not determine our mood. Serotonin does. When the peasant completed his mud hut his serotonin was at the level of X. similarly when the banker paid the last installment for his penthouse his serotonin level was also X. Consequently the banker was not one iota happier than his ancestor the peasant.

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"The meaning of life" is a critique of the present perception about human happiness.

Discuss.

Harari thinks that human happiness is the result of chemical processes taking place in the human brain. Most biologists maintain that happiness is determined mainly by biochemistry. But they agree that psychological and sociological factors also had a place. Our mental air conditioning system has some freedom of movement. Some set at 25 degrees Celsius and some at 20 degree Celsius. So the conditioning system of happiness varies from person to person. He explains the level of happiness on a scale from one to ten. Some have the level between six and ten, stabilizing with scale of eight- they were born with a cheerful biochemistry system, this person is quite happy even if he/she lives in an alienating city with no money or with diseases. Some people have the level between three and seven, stabilizing with scale at five- they were cursed with gloomy biochemistry system, this person is quite unhappy even if she/he enjoys the support of a tight-knit community with lot of money or with all blessing.

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How does Yuval Harari define meaning of human life and basic human rights?

Harari defines meaning of human life and basic human rights by saying some examples. The present age is far more powerful than our ancestors, but are we much happier? But for some reason, we don't know how to feel the happiness. So to feel the real happiness one should bring meaning to their lives. Basic human rights are a necessary condition to bring meaning to one's lives. Even though happiness is an elusive term, to be happy one need conducive circumstances. Some get meanings to their lives by finding happiness in various ways. The scientist gets meaning to his life by increasing the store of knowledge. The soldier gets it while he fights for his home land, entrepreneurs by building a new company. All find happiness in what they do in different way. When they do what they think is right their chemical levels that bring happiness go up and they feel happy. All these people are as delusional as the medieval people who found meaning in reading scriptures, going on a crusade or building a new cathedral. Happiness is synchronizing one's personal delusions with the prevailing collective delusions.