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Souvenir Reflection Number 1

Reflecting on the introduction and first chapter, I find myself drawn to the way happiness is portrayed as both an adventure and a challenge. The notion of wandering in pursuit of something so elusive resonates deeply with me. Our class discussion sparked a few thoughts, leading me to ponder whether happiness is truly about discovering the right place or more about our perception of things.

The concept of quantifying happiness scientifically is intriguing. Ruut Veenhofen and his database almost make happiness seem like a formula, a notion that seems amusing given its personal and subjective nature. The Dutch approach, with its tolerance and strict policies, prompts me to consider how other cultures define happiness. In the U.S., for instance, there's a pervasive pressure to always project happiness, even when we're not. The compulsion to present a happier version of ourselves, especially on social media, is a societal norm that I find particularly unsettling.

Social media has made it impossible for people not to compare their happiness based on everyone else's lives. It has become a virus affecting not just adults and teens but even babies with screen time and iPads. To be clear, I am not against social media as a whole; I appreciate its ability to connect people and share experiences. However, I don't like the dangerous side of people getting hooked on constant validation from others to determine whether they are happy or not every day. There are scientific studies that prove that people's happiness levels decrease when they go on social media because it turns into a neverending 'who is a happier game.' For example, I grew up relying on social media as my form of validation for me to be happy.

Reflecting on my own journey with social media, I remember receiving a phone for my tenth birthday and eagerly setting up my own Instagram account. At that time, my happiness was often tied to the number of likes I received, a simple tap from my viewers. Looking back, I can't believe how much power I gave to these digital validations. I was unaware of my social media addiction during my teenage years, but all I knew was that those Instagram likes made me happy, even if it was just for a moment.

The concept behind 'You can have a disease and not know it, but you can't be happy and not know it' was a fitting interpretation. This idea suggests that happiness is a state of being that we are always aware of, unlike a disease that can be present without our knowledge. When comparing this with my understanding of happiness, I know when I am truly happy and when I am sad or frustrated, like all the times I received higher or lower likes on Instagram. Happiness affects my whole mind and body every day. It is a state of being without worry and distress; depending on those factors, I'll have either a negative or positive attitude for the day.

Another thing that stuck out to me was the bit about moderate consumption leading to greater happiness. It's such a simple idea—balance—but it makes so much sense. Maybe happiness isn't about chasing after something huge, but more about finding that middle ground in everyday life.

All of this just makes me think about my own approach to happiness. I wonder if I am always looking ahead, thinking it'll be better once I reach the next thing. Maybe happiness isn't about the pursuit at all. Perhaps it's maybe just about noticing what's already there.