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Examining Happiness for Its Origin and Causes

THE CONCEPT OF HAPPINESS

The very idea of feelings is already out of the scope of tangible reality with one of a few distinct features that unite all emotions: what exactly are the things that create the immaterial sensations that people feel? Happiness is a feeling of general joy and contentment that simply and precisely originates from our pure humanity and the strong, gritty nature of distinct human morality. Happiness is always and definitively one of many reactions to the following: advancement of oneself, advancement of others, and advancement of society, if the reaction is positive relative to the person reacting to the situation.

THE DEFINITION AND ORIGIN OF HAPPINESS

Happiness is the feeling of joy, contentment, and satisfaction, which are all reactions to the three categories I will explain later. This feeling is impossible to describe to someone who has not experienced it, much like the senses. A person blind from birth cannot possibly conceive the idea of sight, exactly like how any person, even if they experienced happiness, cannot explain what happiness is using any type of language that is separate from happiness itself.

Happiness comes from and is based in the human condition. A child feels happiness before they know there is a single word to denote the feeling. Happiness is rigidly built into the blueprint of how most humans operate: emotional responses, while making everyone unique, are strong, institutionalized functions of humanity. Happiness is necessary because we rely on emotion to interact with each other, using it to understand how actions affect others. One can define happiness as joy, contentment, or satisfaction, but what are those feelings? Those feelings are one of many reactions to three different categories of situations, if the reaction is positive.

THREE THINGS THAT CAUSE HAPPINESS

Happiness is because of the advancement of oneself. This cause of happiness is the most common where people perform certain actions and think certain thoughts to advance themselves in the moment: more specifically, making themselves feel distinct and as if their entire state of being has positively progressed. A person who refuses to make their life better or work hard for anything will never be truly happy because they can never experience fulfillment from achievement and will never be able to advance themselves. A greedy person will never be happy because they will never be satisfied with what they have and never will complete the advancement of themselves. In the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness*, Chris Gardner, the main character, gets the job he had been vying for for over six months. After he finds out he got the job, he claims he is happy, saying this next chapter of his life is called “happiness.” In this moment, he is happy, because his hard work for the last half a year had finally paid off and so he has advanced himself; his time is rewarded with a career that would hopefully change his life.

Happiness is also due to the advancement of others and the advancement of society. During the graduation ceremony, a parent feels happy that their child is graduating from high school, thereby happy for the advancement of their child. A Christian priest in the medieval times perhaps was happy because society was currently embracing his religion, thereby happy for the advancement of society by adopting his religion.¹

NOZICK’S CATEGORIES OF HAPPINESS

My categories of what causes happiness require the actual action, or advancement, of something. Nozick argues for three categories of happiness: being happy that something is the case, being happy with one’s life now, and being happy with one’s life as a whole. Nozick’s argument cannot be true because happiness is one thing, which is due to the advancement of

¹ There is a definite distinction between happiness felt about the past, present, and future, which is why I have made explicit mentions to happiness only in the present. Happiness in the past or future will be discussed at another time.

something. There are no different forms of seeing or hearing. There may be variations of sight, like color blindness, but the essence of sight stays the same. There may be different forms of things to hear, like there are different things to be happy about, but the essence stays the same.

One is not happy that their favorite sports team exists, which would be that something is the case; one is happy because of their favorite sports team playing well against other teams, which would be happiness from the advancement of others. If one is happy about world peace existing, they are happy from the advancement of society. Nozick says happiness is also completeness and satisfaction in the moment, but what exactly is that feeling of completeness and satisfaction in the moment? When one is on the bus after their final exam, they are not happy because of some feeling of satisfaction, they are happy because they had finally advanced themselves; their studying and preparation for the exam led to a fulfilling conclusion and the thought of a good grade on the final exam. Nozick also argues that happiness is also satisfaction of one's life as a whole, but what creates this satisfaction? Again, it is the fulfillment after advancement of oneself that creates this satisfaction and this happiness. After a complete reflection of one's positive life, they realize that everything they did led to the current moment, which would be the advancement of oneself and the achievement of their life's actions. The feeling of happiness is the same for all three of Nozick's categories; he is simply differentiating the situations where happiness can exist. My categories of situations that cause happiness are the only things that can cause happiness, and every situation can be placed into one of the groups.

CONCLUSION

There is only one type of happiness: an indescribable concept that relies on experience and one's humanity, and is a positive reaction to the advancement of oneself, others, and society. Everyone feels happiness, but what makes everyone happy depends on the person, and that idea leads to the glorious gift of humanity: free will and choosing one's own individuality.