

# On Happiness

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*Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence*

-Aristotle

It doesn't require the introspection of a yogi to realize, that all the endeavors, which we undertake in life are incremental steps, towards a single entity. Be it physical, emotional or intellectual; in the end, these words become adjectives to the same noun: *happiness*. I believe there will be very few who would argue against this proposition; partly because it is unreasonably supple and partly because it is childishly obvious.

I used the word *life* more casually than it deserves to be used. Certainly, in some sense, the word needs no introduction; life is the reality, and we are all immersed in it from the first instants of our consciousness. However a distinction, seemingly pedantic, can be made in the definitions of life. There exists an *actual* life— the circumstances you are born into, the unchangeable facts, the actual reality. That's the sort of life, you never *see*. Other is the *abstract* life, which you perceive— the abstraction, a sort of transformation to reality, which your consciousness facilitates. This abstraction is fleshed, by an unimaginably long chain of events, originating at one's birth. Since most of these life-events, have an irreducible randomness, each of the 7 billion people, has the right to say '*I have a unique life*'. When I say life, I would mean the abstract life since, by definition, the actual life cannot be perceived.

Although I do not subscribe to any religion in particular, I see life as a problem [*punishment* would be a blindingly inaccurate word, which most major religions profess]. Interestingly enough, the earlier proposition implies that, the solution to each of these 7 billion *unique* lives, belongs to a single class i.e. Happiness. However, the *methods* used to find the solution varies from person to person. The variance originates from the unique abstractions, which each person acquires, even if any number of persons can have the same actual lives.

To solve a problem, we start with a set of assumptions; same goes for life. These assumptions can be as transient as '*I shall find the solution, [ergo, happy] if it rains today*' or as far-reaching as '*I shall be happy if I can spend the rest of my life with her*'. The set of assumptions can be utterly complicated and more often than not dynamic. The complicacy coupled with dynamism, makes happiness very unstable, just as too many assumptions make a solution very approximate.

I envy those who claim to have found happiness, but I would be repelled by someone who comes along and says, '*hey I have a way by which, you can find true happiness*'. No you certainly don't! Being assured of *eternal* happiness might sound very tempting, but it is equivalent to starting with no assumptions at all! It's not only difficult (I was just kidding, it's **very** difficult), most abstract lives won't be supple enough to work with this *null* set. For most, it is the tricky task of designing a *filter* for assumptions. This is where, I shall deliver my bias. I believe a set which depends on least number of emotions, is the optimal set. Why? Emotion, by definition, is irrational. And irrationality precludes its use as a practical filter.

*The locus of happiness should be centered at you.* It sounds ridiculous, may be it is. But it shall certainly cloister you from emotional traumas. Caring for too many [and by caring, I mean *actually* caring, not because of social motives etc.], would make the set unreasonably complex, consequently, your happiness unreasonably unstable. There is no general rule on limiting the number, just because there is no *general* life. But having a filter sewn up, can save a lot of trouble.