

Happiness – For Life

In the introduction to the AIS Resources is this paragraph:

“What is happiness? Is it real, or an illusion? How do you get it? Does it take work? Is it achievable? Does it depend on fate and luck? Does it come from others, serving and sacrificing for their needs? Alone, could you be happy? Rich or poor, could you still be happy? Free or enslaved, could you still be happy? Could you be happy, yet despise yourself? Do you deserve any happiness at all? Should you even want to be happy? Isn't suffering the normal state, the universal constant, and happiness a fleeting delusion? Isn't it safer to just get by, or more fun to just let loose and do whatever you feel like doing? Why make of happiness such a big, serious deal? Why struggle and hope for it? Why not just resign to the misery and malevolence in life? Why seek happiness? . . . Finding the answers is a vital part of happiness, if you want to choose it, if you want to choose life -- because your happiness is, really, the ultimate, moral purpose of your life.” <https://www.astraeansociety.org/resources.html>

For the past year at AIS, pointers have been presented, in diverse forms and aspects, to illustrate and outline in essential terms the principles and standards for a real, reasoning, rightful, and romantic life – a noble life of seeking and holding truth, goodness, and beauty. The ultimate moral purpose of such a life is happiness.

Happiness is a state of well-being that proceeds from the continuous self-improvement and relentless achievement of the values that sustain and further one's life. Happiness flows from understanding and practicing the virtues of rationality, productiveness, and pride, of independence, integrity, honesty, and justice. Happiness is the chosen highest purpose and reward of a moral, successful, flourishing life. Happiness is yours for the making.

(As an aside, contrast this ethics of purposeful happiness with the view of a Christian Pragmatist like the popular academic and pseudo-individualist, Jordan Peterson – who says he "acts as if God exists" and who writes in his book, *12 Rules for Life*: “the inevitable suffering that life entails can rapidly make a mockery of the idea that happiness is the proper pursuit of the individual. . . . [Life] has more to do with developing character in the face of suffering than with happiness.” He also has said in his Youtube videos that, “Happiness is for stupid people at amusement parks.” For Peterson, Jesus is the “transcendent” exemplar of morality, who should be emulated in a life of suffering and sacrifice. Consistent with all this is his asserting, in more Youtube videos, that he does not “regard Ayn Rand as a great mind...not sufficiently sophisticated”, although he “enjoyed” reading her “superficial” novel, *Atlas Shrugged*.)

To explain further about happiness are these quotations from Ayn Rand, who has said of herself, that she's “chronically happy”. Following the quotations is a video of an informative and inspiring lecture on “The Pursuit of Happiness” by a professor of ethics, Tara Smith, a sincere scholar of Ayn Rand's Objectivist Ethics.

Unless you, too, are “chronically happy”, in a constant “state of non-contradictory joy”, you could benefit from paying more attention and focus to your virtues for happiness, as referred to on this FB page the past year and compiled and posted on the AIS Resources.

[*Monart Pon*]

=====

Ayn Rand on Happiness:

Ayn Rand on Happiness:

My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.

“About the Author,” *Atlas Shrugged*, Ayn Rand

In psychological terms, the issue of man’s survival does not confront his consciousness as an issue of “life or death”, but as an issue of “happiness or suffering”. Happiness is the successful state of life, suffering is the warning signal of failure, of death. Just as the pleasure-pain mechanism of man’s body is an automatic indicator of his body’s welfare or injury, a barometer of its basic alternative, life or death—so the emotional mechanism of man’s consciousness is geared to perform the same function, as a barometer that registers the same alternative by means of two basic emotions: joy or suffering. Emotions are the automatic results of man’s value judgments integrated by his subconscious; emotions are estimates of that which furthers man’s values or threatens them, that which is for him or against him—lightning calculators giving him the sum of his profit or loss.

But while the standard of value operating the physical pleasure-pain mechanism of man’s body is automatic and innate, determined by the nature of his body—the standard of value operating his emotional mechanism is not. Since man has no automatic knowledge, he can have no automatic values; since he has no innate ideas, he can have no innate value judgments.

...

Happiness is that state of consciousness which proceeds from the achievement of one’s values. If a man values productive work, his happiness is the measure of his success in the service of his life. But if a man values destruction, like a sadist—or self-torture, like a masochist—or life beyond the grave, like a mystic—or mindless “kicks”, like the driver of a hotrod car—his alleged happiness is the measure of his success in the service of his own destruction. It must be added that the emotional state of all those irrationalists cannot be properly designated as happiness or even as pleasure: it is merely a moment’s relief from their chronic state of terror.

Neither life nor happiness can be achieved by the pursuit of irrational whims. Just as man is free to attempt to survive by any random means, as a parasite, a moocher or a looter, but not free to succeed at it beyond the range of the moment—so he is free to seek his happiness in any irrational fraud, any whim, any delusion, any mindless escape from reality, but not free to succeed at it beyond the range of the moment nor to escape the consequences.

...

The maintenance of life and the pursuit of happiness are not two separate issues. To hold one's own life as one's ultimate value, and one's own happiness as one's highest purpose are two aspects of the same achievement. Existentially, the activity of pursuing rational goals is the activity of maintaining one's life; psychologically, its result, reward and concomitant is an emotional state of happiness. It is by experiencing happiness that one lives one's life, in any hour, year or the whole of it. And when one experiences the kind of pure happiness that is an end in itself—the kind that makes one think: "This is worth living for"—what one is greeting and affirming in emotional terms is the metaphysical fact that life is an end in itself.

But the relationship of cause to effect cannot be reversed. It is only by accepting "man's life" as one's primary and by pursuing the rational values it requires that one can achieve happiness—not by taking "happiness" as some undefined, irreducible primary and then attempting to live by its guidance. If you achieve that which is the good by a rational standard of value, it will necessarily make you happy; but that which makes you happy, by some undefined emotional standard, is not necessarily the good. To take "whatever makes one happy" as a guide to action means: to be guided by nothing but one's emotional whims. Emotions are not tools of cognition; to be guided by whims—by desires whose source, nature and meaning one does not know—is to turn oneself into a blind robot, operated by unknowable demons (by one's stale evasions), a robot knocking its stagnant brains out against the walls of reality which it refuses to see.

"The Objectivist Ethics", in The Virtue of Selfishness, by Ayn Rand, 1964

Happiness is the successful state of life, pain is an agent of death. Happiness is that state of consciousness which proceeds from the achievement of one's values. A morality that dares to tell you to find happiness in the renunciation of your happiness—to value the failure of your values—is an insolent negation of morality. A doctrine that gives you, as an ideal, the role of a sacrificial animal seeking slaughter on the altars of others, is giving you death as your standard. By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man—every man—is an end in himself, he exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose.

But neither life nor happiness can be achieved by the pursuit of irrational whims. Just as man is free to attempt to survive in any random manner, but will perish unless he lives as his nature requires, so he is free to seek his happiness in any mindless fraud, but the torture of frustration is all he will find, unless

he seeks the happiness proper to man. The purpose of morality is to teach you, not to suffer and die, but to enjoy yourself and live.

...

Happiness is not to be achieved at the command of emotional whims. Happiness is not the satisfaction of whatever irrational wishes you might blindly attempt to indulge. Happiness is a state of non-contradictory joy—a joy without penalty or guilt, a joy that does not clash with any of your values and does not work for your own destruction, not the joy of escaping from your mind, but of using your mind’s fullest power, not the joy of faking reality, but of achieving values that are real, not the joy of a drunkard, but of a producer. Happiness is possible only to a rational man, the man who desires nothing but rational goals, seeks nothing but rational values and finds his joy in nothing but rational actions.

Just as I support my life, neither by robbery nor alms, but by my own effort, so I do not seek to derive my happiness from the injury or the favor of others, but earn it by my own achievement. Just as I do not consider the pleasure of others as the goal of my life, so I do not consider my pleasure as the goal of the lives of others. Just as there are no contradictions in my values and no conflicts among my desires—so there are no victims and no conflicts of interest among rational men, men who do not desire the unearned and do not view one another with a cannibal’s lust, men who neither make sacrifices nor accept them.

“This is John Galt Speaking”, in *Atlas shrugged* by Ayn Rand, 1957

Tara Smith – Professor of Moral Philosophy at University of Texas, author of *Viable Values: A Study of Life as the Root and Reward of Morality* (2000), and *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics: The Virtuous Egoist* (2006) – presents a lecture (2012) on: “The Pursuit of Happiness.- And the Tools for Attaining It”, Pt. 1 (lecture) & Pt. 2 (Q&A)

Pt 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6W3XsLxMFIY>

Pt 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHbna0cvEsE>

=====