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# Happiness Versus Happycracy, as an Imperative of Life

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**Abstract:** The concept of happiness has been studied since Greek antiquity. Plato expresses in the "myth of the winged chariot" the impossibility of achieving happiness when man does not master his passions. For Aristotle, happiness was eudaimonia (εὐδαιμονία), which was achieved through the practice of virtue -- understood as the habit of doing good. In our days, authors such as Ellouz and Cabanas (2019) have addressed the issue of *happycracy* and Seligman (2002 and 2009) that of happiness, through Positive Psychology. This article reflects on the concept of happiness in history and its relationship with the three referents of classical philosophy: truth, good and beauty. Education enables the integral development of the person, understood as the achievement of the potential that exists within each person that leads to appropriate behavior, thus achieving that personal well-being that we call happiness. It discusses whether digital technologies can lead us or lead us away from happiness. The article tries to give an answer to questions such as: can we be educated to develop a happy biography? How much influence does education have in achieving happiness? Can effort and work well done be a source of happiness? The cultivation of positive emotions and life goals reinforces self-esteem and empathy, which help to cope with the unavoidable stresses of life. It also critically addresses the concept of *happycracy* and its meaning in relation to positive psychology, as well as to the ideology and interests of all kinds that underlie many of today's marketing proposals for a happy life. In conclusion, we can affirm that achieving happiness and developing a happy personality is a noble human aspiration. Is being happy a right or a duty imposed on us by society? We are sure that it is a right and we know the target, but we do not know the path. Moreover, today's society offers us so many ways to reach the goal that we do not know which one to choose, and as a result we often fail in being happy.

**Keywords:** *Coaching*, Education, Happiness, *Happycracy*, *Mindfulness*, Positive Psychology

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## 1. Introduction

For as long as man has been *homo sapiens*, he has been in search of the three great references of classical philosophy: truth, good, and beauty. Socrates [1] conceived the *truth* as the result of a search process shared with other people that that could be rethought and refined at any time. The instruments he used to find the truth were the reflection and the dialogue which constitute the central element of the Socratic method of truth-seeking. The dialogue takes place through "Socratic dialectic" which used concrete questions as suggested by the dialogue itself. The meaning of the word dialogue (διάλογος) denotes the instrument of exchange of information in search of something.

Socrates' most frequent question was: what is it? (τί ἐστι = ti ésti = what is). Through irony (εἰρωνεία = eironéia = dissimulation), Socrates led his interlocutor into ambiguous

or unsolvable situations in order to make him realize that he was wrong. Irony was the destructive moment of the Socratic dialogue, but it did not arise to humiliate the opponent, but to make him realize his mistake. After this moment came the constructive moment; it was the maieutic -μαϊευτικά τέχνη = techné maieutic. That is, the technique of giving birth to the ideas that are already within one's mind - the soul - in the same way as midwives deliver babies. Socrates was an "obstetrician of ideas" and used maieutic as a tool. Plato recounts this in [2].

Socrates' moral reflection revolves around the notion of *good and virtue* (ἀρετή = areté). Virtue, for Socrates, is a human thing which, among the Greeks of his time, was identified with courage, integrity, honor, physical vigor, etc., and were gifts received from nature or from the will of the gods. Socrates asked himself: what does it mean to cultivate virtue? What are the human behaviors that make them

virtuous? Socrates goes beyond the conception of his fellow citizens and asserts that virtue is "an inner quality of the human being" that can be taught through *paideia* (παιδεία, education) or "training"). Virtue has nothing to do with the exterior of the human being or with public recognition by fellow citizens. One must be virtuous in order to be in accord with one's conscience, says Socrates through Plato [2].

Consequently, for Socrates "the art of good living" is to "behave well" from the ethical point of view. He means that the essential of the human being is to think, reflect, and consequently live in a virtuous way, and, in this way, display these characteristics to the maximum. Reason and virtue are inextricably linked. Virtue becomes knowledge and this becomes wisdom, since human beings can only distinguish what is good or bad through reason and knowledge.

Socrates wonders, at the end of [2] how should we value those who, knowing good, decide to do evil? Socrates says that this is "the greatest example of ignorance." Good old Socrates assumed that "he who knows good practices it." It is the beginning of the *moral rationalism* that had such an influence on the Enlightenment of the 18th century, and that leads to the following conclusions:

- 1) If knowledge leads to virtue (knowing how to distinguish good from evil), ignorance leads to vice.
- 2) Whoever commits a bad action is because he ignores the true good (philosophical optimism regarding human nature and ignorance of anthropological reality).
- 3) Through proper education (*paideia* and *areté*) and the exercise of reason, anyone can know the value of the good and choose it in their behavior.

Socrates' *moral rationalism* can be criticized, since moral action is not an *exclusively rational* action, where all the role is played by reason (intelligence) and think like him that the will has no influence. Rather, we could say that knowing the good is the necessary condition, but not sufficient; it is necessary to choose to do good and that is an act of the will (emotional act) that does not depend only on the rational attitude. That is why Socrates is accused of presenting an ethical intellectualism, that is, of reducing moral action to an act of rational knowledge.

Plato introduces the world of ideas and forms. The idea or form with privileged status is the idea of *good* or *beauty*, which unifies all other concepts and is the cause of them. The resplendent form of good illuminates all other forms. For Plato, good and beauty are the same thing: "What gives the soul the faculty of knowing the idea of good, is the principle of *truth*" [3]. On the other hand, Aristotle affirmed that "virtue is the habit of doing good" [3].

So far we have presented the relationship between the three classical elements of philosophy: good, truth, and beauty. But how does this relate to *happiness*?

Socrates considers that the goal pursued by every human being is to achieve happiness and asks himself the question: what is happiness? He himself answers and identifies happiness with the moral perfection of the person. Consequently, happiness does not lie in riches, material goods, pleasures, etc., but in the perfection and right action of

the individual.

For Socrates, ethics and happiness are identified; only the virtuous man (wise and just) can be truly happy. The wicked and unjust are ignorant and cannot be happy. In [2] Plato puts on Socrates' lips the following words: *I maintain that he who is good and upright, whether man or woman, is happy and that he who is wicked and unjust is unhappy.*"

Summing up, we can say that Socrates identified knowledge with virtue and now we see that he identifies virtue with happiness. Knowledge (wisdom) leads to virtue and virtue leads to happiness. Thus, for Socrates, happiness comes not from material goods and pleasures, but from these three elements:

- 1) *Self-control* (control of bodily drives, control of immediate physical pleasure; without self-control man becomes a wild animal).
- 2) *Inner freedom*. Plato does not speak of the political freedoms and rights of citizens, but of individuals; it is no longer exterior freedom, but interior and personal freedom; to put self-mastery into practice is to become interiorly free and to break any slavery.
- 3) *The self-sufficiency (autarchy) or wisdom of the virtuous man*. The wise and virtuous man does not need things to be happy, for he finds within himself the reasons to be happy.

Plato narrates "the myth of the winged chariot" [2], about the soul and the difficulty of attaining virtue and happiness. The human being resembles a chariot driven by a charioteer (the rational soul) who guides two spirited horses. One of the horses is white, good and beautiful, representing the noble and rational part of the soul; the other horse is dark and ugly, representing the passions to which the soul is subject.

The charioteer's job is to steer the chariot, but this is a difficult job. The strength of the white horse (the good) consists in carrying upwards the heavy, rising towards the place where the gods live (the world of ideas, the intelligible world that cannot be appreciated with the senses), because the world where the gods live is beautiful, wise and good and makes the wings of the chariot grow. The power of the dark horse, on the other hand, leads to the opposite, that is, it drags the world of material things, the sensible world, to the world perceptible through the senses and the passions.

This myth sums up perfectly the proposal that runs through the whole of Platonic philosophy: to radically realise *truth, goodness and beauty* in this life, since "the divine is beautiful, wise and good, and this is what most nourishes and makes wings grow" [2]. The concept "soul" in Plato is the *anima*, that which "animates" us and gives life, just like the rest of the "animals". Disregarding transcendent conceptions, we can say that the soul is like the DNA that has the basic information of each human being and that unfolds in a concrete and distinct personality, from which all our tendencies, our thoughts and our actions arise.

What happens when the charioteer is not able to control the two spirited horses of the winged chariot and is carried away by the passions driven by the ideologies of society? This has been experienced throughout history in totalitarian

regimes with disastrous consequences for humanity (communism, national socialism, etc.). Why does this happen? Because, as Chesterton said, *the problem with not believing in God is not that one does not believe in anything, it is that one believes anything.*" And I would add that when one becomes a god and can set the guiding principles of life, the rules, the laws, the morals, at will, catastrophe is guaranteed. That is why they have been, and still are, the worst regimes that society has suffered, the most destructive, the most murderous, those that turn the human being into a slave, an irrational animal, not a human person, but an animal person not controlled by the charioteer of civilised morality, but by the whim of whoever has the power and names things, - the paradigmatic example of the regimes mentioned above - because whoever has the power to name things is the one who really has the power. The classics would simply say: *quia nominor leo* (because my name is lion).

On the other hand, and continuing with the idea of happiness, Aristotle, a disciple of Plato, started from two premises or hypotheses:

- 1) Man seeks an end when he acts.
- 2) The end that man seeks when he acts is happiness.

For Aristotle, the attainment of happiness is the supreme goal of every human being. He identifies happiness with *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία) Aristotle [3], in the same line as his teachers, states: "Both the common people and the educated men think that to live well and to act rightly is the same as to be happy". To the question of what is good for man, Aristotle replies that in order to know this, one must ask oneself what the end of man's life is. Knowing this, we will know what man must do in order to achieve the good and become happy. *Eudaimonia* is the happiness that provides the integral development of the person; it is to feel good about oneself by feeling inwardly that one has a full and developed life. Consequently, happiness and a full life depend on each individual, on the way he or she acts in each situation and not on external agents.

Virtue in Greek is expressed by the word *areté* (ἀρετή). Areté is the perfect and excellent realization of something; if it is a person, it involves the development of both moral virtues and intellectual capacities. For Aristotle "virtue is the habit of acting well"; it is to behave virtuously in a habitual way, for habit and constant practice is what determines virtue. In [3] Aristotle states:

Socrates believed that the end of life was to know virtue, and to this end he asked, what is the essence of justice, courage, etc.? [...] But the important thing is not to know what virtue is, but how virtues arise. Virtue and vice are associated with concrete actions.

Consequently, in order to be virtuous, it is not enough to know what is good or bad - as Socrates and Plato said - but rather you have to practice good. A good act is better than a good intention. We are not virtuous by nature, but we achieve virtue when we behave ethically in life on a regular basis.

Zeno of Citium (334 BC-260 BC), a philosopher representing Stoicism, held that wisdom, goodness and happiness depend on a comprehensive understanding of

nature and the universe. This understanding comes through knowledge of physics and the natural sciences, epistemology (theory of knowledge) and ethics. Prominent among the Roman Stoics were [4] and [5], the latter of whom studied personal autonomy and freedom as sources of morality. Epictetus distinguishes between what is in our power (our attitude towards life) and what does not depend on us (success in life) and thus differentiates freedom and determinism.

The question of the Stoics was: what must I do to be happy? The answer is that personal happiness is achieved by practicing virtue, which means helping and respecting others. For the Stoics, happiness consists in possessing wisdom and virtue (he who is wise practices virtue). The approach is intellectualist and rationalist and is in the Socratic line. Thus, health and material goods can be good to the extent that they help to practice virtue.

The emotional state that leads to happiness is defined in Hellenistic philosophy by the word *ataraxia* (ἀταραξία), which is the union of two words and means *absence of disturbance*.

It is an emotional state characterized by imperturbability and calmness of the emotions thanks to inner peace and the diminishing of desires and passions that disturb our mood. "It is not a matter of having too much, but of desiring too little" say the Stoics. According to this approach, ataraxia would be the way to achieve full happiness without external disturbances.

Plato in [2] and [2] says that the practice of "laws would make a city happy", and so Aristotle considered politics to be the noblest occupation because it was concerned with the common happiness. This was also the idea of the European enlightened revolutions of the 18th century. The American Declaration of Independence (1776) proclaims that the purpose of government is to "secure the safety and happiness" of citizens. Stoic and religious philosophy names it as reaching the state of nirvana, ataraxia, the glory of heaven, etc.

## 2. Technologies, Truth, and Happiness

With the emergence of digital technologies, virtual reality (non-real life) arises. It is the augmented reality that is not only virtual reality, because digital technology allows a mixture of the two realities: the real and the virtual. With the help of technology, information about the real world becomes virtual. This artificial information can be stored and retrieved; it is like a layer of information on top of the real-world view. We can say that technologies have enabled the "augmented society" (AS), the "networked society".

The augmented society has produced a social, cultural and creative revolution, and with it a true anthropological and social revolution; ICT (information and communication technologies), LKT (learning and knowledge technologies), PET (empowerment and participation technologies), IPT (Research and Publication Technologies) that allow the creation and sharing of information and knowledge, and

UWT (Understanding and Wisdom Technologies) have progressively appeared; the latter is the technology thought as *sophia* (Σοφία), as wisdom or supreme knowledge. That is the mission of higher education. "School is knowledge; at university one learns wisdom" (Inscription at Assumption University in Bangkok, Thailand).

How far is the latest conception of technology (TES), when it is used abusively to exhibit itself on vacation in photographs taken on beautiful Carib-bean beaches, dancing and eating drinking, etc., and as an expression of the happiness produced by the good life. To that extent the beautiful classical concepts of happiness and wisdom have been materialized and pragmatized. If you look up the word *sophia* on the Internet, you will find a description of a robot that solves household problems and makes life less laborious.

When talking about the university, one gets the impression that the ultimate goal is the acquisition of knowledge. This is one of the objectives, but it is not the only one nor the most relevant; there is something more important than that; one attends school and university to learn how to live better and develop a happy biography, being useful citizens to the society in which one lives. This is achieved through the acquisition of wisdom; it is more an apprenticeship of the student than a lesson from the teacher and is the result of the observation of the facts of nature, of society, of life itself, of reflection, internalization and personal conclusions. Wisdom does not come from outside, it is not bookish erudition, but springs from within. And we can observe that much culture is not equivalent to much wisdom, for there are illiterates who possess much wisdom of life and learned men who possess none.

Life is a set of personal choices. The quality of our choices is what defines the quality of our life. The most difficult thing in life is to know which bridges to build and which to destroy, because in life there are decisions that are not easy to make since wisdom has few certainties and many doubts and questions. Ignorance, on the contrary, has too many certainties and too few questions.

Wilhelm von Humboldt -founder of the University of Berlin - said: "The aim of existence is the distillation of as many experiences as possible in life, in order to acquire wisdom". And [6] he states that "wisdom is more than science; it is knowing how to live and having reasons for living [...] Science is organized knowledge; wisdom is organized and meaningful life". Not all knowledge is wisdom. Wisdom is more in the heart than in the head; wisdom is the knowledge of the truth of being and of life; wisdom governs being, shows the value of things, teaches how to behave and demands action according to conscience. On the other hand, knowledge and science are in the head because knowledge is the truth of things; knowledge governs knowledge, tells how things are and how they work, what I can do with them (technique) etc. and always requires reasoning and understanding.

The synergetic use of knowledge-wisdom is a source of life for those who possess it, because it guides the path to follow and gives meaning to existence. Sooner or later all

humans, of all times and cultures, ask themselves: What is the meaning of life? The answer requires meditation and reflection; it requires wisdom. "Wisdom is attained in the university of life (...); it is not a product of school, but the result of lifelong effort" (Einstein). Dreze and Debelles (quoted by [7]), speaking to university professors, told them: "Men are men before they become lawyers, doctors, merchants or industrialists. If you, teachers, make of them capable and sensible men, they will transform themselves into capable and sensible lawyers, doctors, merchants and industrialists". Hence, every teacher must be, first of all, a teacher of humanity; only in this way will he form good people. Everything else comes later.

The teacher's mission is to provoke students to reflect, to search for meaning, because wisdom is, above all, the result of the inner growth of the person. Ecclesiastes recommends: "The intelligent man reflects on the words of the wise and with an attentive ear desires wisdom".

The final process that summarizes all the previous discourse can be summa-rized in this sequence:

Information >>> knowledge >>> wisdom >>> virtue >>> knowing how to live.

### 3. Education and Happiness

As we have indicated, Socrates affirms that virtue is "an inner quality of the human being" that can be taught through *paideia* (education). One must be virtuous in order to be in accord with one's conscience [2]. Consequently, Socrates said, "the art of good living" is that of "behaving well" from the ethical point of view. This means that the essence of the human being is to think, to reflect and, consequently, to behave virtuously and, in this way, to deploy all the potentialities of the human being to the maximum.

However, in the globalized and postmodern world, forms of existence are promoted that seek "not to touch the essentials of life", but to move on the surface of what is vital. It seems as if, at all levels, we live, more and more, a life devoid of substance. Beer is consumed without alcohol, meat without protein, coffee without caffeine, skimmed milk, and, eventually, virtual sex, without real sex....

Contemporary Slovenian sociologist, psychoanalyst and philosopher, [8] says:

It seems as if at all levels we live, more and more, a life devoid of substance. Beer is consumed, alcohol is consumed, meat without protein, coffee without caffeine, and, eventually, virtual sex without sex... [...] Love is experienced as a great misfortune, a monstrous parasite, a permanent state of emergency that ruins small pleasures... [...] We are trapped in an unhealthy competition, in an absurd network of comparisons with others. We do not pay enough attention to what makes us feel good because we are obsessed with measuring whether we have more or less goods and pleasure than the rest [...] The point is not to find personal gratifications but to measure whether that gratification is superior or inferior to that of others. What produces happiness is surpassing others, rather than

experiencing a feeling of personal fulfillment.

The Chinese have a rare curse: "May you live in interesting times". For the Chinese, the interest of the times is directly proportional to the problems they pose. The blessing would be to live in a dull age, where everyone could devote himself without interruption and without startle to his intimate and family life, which is the one that gives satisfaction. But for them the possibility of facing this tide of events is what gives life its true interest. The word crisis in Japanese is composed of the characters: one means "danger" and the other "opportunity". The Japanese always try to find ways to make a profit in difficult situations; perhaps the best example is how they bounced back after World War II.

The Berlin-based Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han has written a book [9]. For this author, each epoch has its emblematic diseases. The bacterial epoch ended with the invention of antibiotics, the viral epoch with the immunological technique. Well, at the beginning of the 21st century, the pandemic is neither bacterial nor viral, it is neuronal. Depression, stress - negative stress as opposed to eustress or positive stress - attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), border-line personality disorder (BPD) or occupational burnout syndrome (OBS), etc. define the panorama of the beginning of the century. These diseases are not infections, but pathological states that in turn follow a dialectic, not that of negativity, but that of positivity, i.e., they are produced by excess activity. The author also makes an interesting analysis of how man today destroys himself in the relentless pursuit of success and power, in a narcissistic race in which he only contemplates himself as if he were the center of the world. A dizzying race that, for this philosopher, leads nowhere. At least, nowhere we want to go, because everything leads us somewhere; sometimes to places we did not want to have reached.

Yes! We are in the society of tiredness and a tired person is a grumpy person, who relates badly with himself, with his family environment, who cannot enjoy friendship and who does not value the simplest and most beautiful thing that life gives him, because he simply cannot see it even though it is right in front of his nose. And all, to get what he had always longed for and thought that by achieving it, at last, he would be able to rest and be happy. It is no coincidence that neoliberalism has equated professional success with personal fulfillment, which only leads to self-enslavement to things and circumstances, even though one believes to be free. What is an adolescent or a young person looking for today? To have personal and professional success and with it happiness. How do they plan to achieve it? With money, good looks, fun, etc. Does the reader believe that there are many young people who have thought, at some point, that having professional success is an excellent way to better serve the society in which they live?

The Chinese curse comes to say: may you be dragged by the spiral of events that you have to live and not have a second of peace. Or, in other words, may you forget about yourself and have such an empty life that, by doing what is urgent, you never get to do what is important. It follows that

a happy life would then be a quiet, peaceful and familiar life in which no one is constantly running around to satisfy I don't know how many needs that we think we have and that always lead to the next step of desires, such as wealth, power, passion or social position. However, Chinese wisdom seems to have it all figured out because the second of the curses says, precisely, that "may all your wishes come true", or what amounts to the same thing: be careful what you wish for, lest your wishes come true.

Happiness is not the enemy of attitudes such as patience, renunciation, and effort. The secret is that effort and renunciation should not be considered as a source of unhappiness but as a possibility to reach a better situation in life. Procrastination can be, and is, a source of happiness?

The key to success in life can be summed up in three concepts: effort, talent and humility. Students can be told: What guarantees stable academic success is the planning of personal work, or put more simply, a well-planned and well-performed study schedule. This is the way to accumulate effort efficiently. It is about working with a study schedule and its results are incomparably better than those of any alternative (this is what is called self-regulated effort).

Here are some examples: Pablo Sarasate (1844-1908) said: "I have practiced 14 hours a day for 37 years playing the violin and now they call me a genius". The basketball player Larry Bird made a basket in the last second of a final and his team won the game and the championship with that basket. A reporter asked him, "How does it feel to be so lucky?" Larry's response was, "Oddly enough, the more hours I practice these kinds of baskets, the luckier I get." And Pablo Picasso said, "When inspiration comes, may it find you working." Success comes with 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.

Effort is only justified and understandable when we go in search of better horizons. Otherwise, we are in the myth of Sisyphus. But we must recognize that it is not easy to become happy; that is why Diogenes (the cynic), went in search of the happy man with a candle in broad daylight. Postmodern man is so lost in the jungle of life that Ernesto Sábato has written: "We are all so disoriented that we have come to confuse happiness with shopping in department stores". To achieve happiness, we have moved from an ethic of effort to an ethic of fun and superficiality.

"The millionaires [8] drive the Titanic towards the iceberg, and instead of trying to change course, they hoard resources in anticipation of the shipwreck. It is the look of the rich individualists who think they can buy a ship; the problem is that this ship is made of gold and sinks at sea. For better or for worse, we are all in the same boat [...] To avoid the impact, it is necessary to slow down and change course before the flight to the lifeboats begins". Humanity has been administering itself insistent doses of consumption for decades. A few are enjoying themselves, but most are watching the party from the sidelines. All will pay the bill when the party is over. Hollywood movies taught us that no matter what happens, at the last second of the scene, someone - the hero - will appear to avert the impending disaster. The bad guys in the movie attack planet Earth causing global

temperature rise, melting of the polar ice caps, desertification, and extinction of species. Faced with so much disaster, do you think technology will be the solution?

The Dalai Lama (which in Tibetan language means *Master of great wisdom*), Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1989, was in Lima in May 2006. Both in Lima and Cuzco he gave talks and said some interesting ideas. I transcribe some of them: "Suffering is a circumstance that had to be faced, but if our mind is happy, nothing external can alter it". The illustrious visitor also spoke to businessmen: "Businessmen should work for social welfare, which is also theirs, because they have more resources to provide education and health", he said. He made one thing clear: "We must not forget the value and importance of compassion, forgiveness and self-discipline".

A businessman from Lima requested a private interview with the Dalai Lama; the interview lasted a few minutes; when he left it, his friends asked him. What did the Dalai Lama say to you in the interview? The businessman replied: "I came to the room, greeted him, he looked me straight in the eye and after a while he told me: "You have the right to be happy. He was silent for another long time and he dismissed me very politely." The phrase had been so shocking that at that moment he discovered that reality.

Learning should contribute to making people happier. A school has quality when the student learns in it, at the right time and feels happy learning. The cognitive and affective aspects must be specified in the programs so that the teacher knows how both concepts will be worked on throughout the course. "Today there are too many bright and motivated children who become unhappy adults", because they have not had a harmonious development of the cognitive and the emotional.

There are now schools that have focused on student well-being as the key to education. It has been confirmed that by developing techniques to face life and personal challenges, it not only generates that the students obtain a good development in the social and personal areas, but also in the academic ones. At *Wellington College in London*, the subject of *Happiness* has been taught since 2006 in all grades -one hour per week. At this institution it has been understood that the key to education is the well-being of students. They define well-being and happiness as "a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop his or her potential, perform productive and creative work, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to his or her community by acquiring a sense of ownership and purpose for society".

The subject of *Happiness* is taught by specialist teachers who deal with essential topics that directly influence the well-being of their students, under the conviction that "the development of emotions is equally or more important than intellectual development". The teachers work weekly with the students on specific skills that allow them to develop better, such as: methods to sleep well, how to eliminate tensions, how to cope with disappointments, losses or failures, how to rest the mind, how to deal with anxiety and

stress, etc. And some of the main topics they deal with in their dynamic classes are the following:

- 1) Discussions on emotions so that minors learn to identify them and understand well what they feel according to different situations. In this way, children will be able to control and regulate their emotions and thus reduce school violence, encourage responsibility and enable children to face uncertainties with understanding.
- 2) Set positive life goals to promote good teaching that reinforces children's self-esteem and development. Instead of telling them that the goal is to get good grades, win the athletic competition, get diplomas, etc.; it is good to encourage them based on how useful this learning will be for life.
- 3) To teach children to cope with stress so that in this way they can achieve simple things such as respecting turns, working conscientiously and without haste, and also achieve team-work and healthy competition, acquire tolerance to frustration and develop patience and effort.
- 4) Promote and enhance empathy, that is, teach them to put themselves in the other's place as one of the keys to develop sociability and a good school environment. Children also acquire a commitment to be better people and to help those who need it most, instilling in them from an early age the possibility that they can change the world for the better, a responsibility that boosts their self-esteem, making them believe in positive goals.

On the other hand, the school also integrates the parents and families of the students, giving seminars and talks on happiness, so that the whole environment of the children is aligned in the same purpose of happiness and well-being, because they firmly believe that happiness is within everyone's reach and that developing it requires effort and depends on each one. Aspiring to be "the best version of themselves" and to "have a happy biography" is legitimate, but it does not have to be an obsession.

The success achieved has translated not only in the well-being of students and teachers but also in academics and Wellington College has become the school that has improved its academic results the most in the United Kingdom over the last few years.

Currently, there are indexes worldwide that determine economic development (GDP), happiness (FBI), etc. The Gross National Happiness Index (GNH) or Gross Domestic Happiness (GDP) is an indicator proposed by Jigme Singye Wangchuck in 1972, King of Bhutan, in response to criticism of poverty in his country. Deep in the Himalayan mountain range, on the border between China and India, lies the one million km<sup>2</sup> Kingdom of Bhutan. Its Prime Minister of Bhutan, (in 2013), Tshering Tobgay, has made it his mission, in governing the country, to achieve the greatest happiness for its people while setting a global standard for environmental preservation over economic growth. For this country, Gross Domestic Happiness (GDP) is more important than Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The economist Richard Layard has proposed replacing an economic parameter as questioned as GDP with the

happiness index (FIB). The UN instituted, in 2012, March 20 as the International Day of Happiness. David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, after announcing in 2007 the biggest economic cuts in the history of his country, decided that it was time to adopt happiness as an index; the British should not only think about putting money in their pockets, but about what makes them happier. Even Venezuela has a vice-ministry for "the happiness of the people".

The pillars of development that make a high FIB possible are:

- 1) Sustainable and egalitarian socioeconomic development;
- 2) Preservation and promotion of cultural values;
- 3) Preservation of the environment;
- 4) Honest government.

The FBI is contrasted with the GDP because it has an economic character. The FBI index has the following indicators: public health (physical and psychological), job stability and leisure time use, environmental diversity, full enjoyment of human rights (education, culture, etc.), and community vitality. The happiness index aims to measure the quality of life in objective terms to determine the well-being of citizens and the progress of the country.

As part of the celebration of the International Day of Happiness (March 20, 2019), Activa Research, in partnership with WIN (Worldwide Independent Network of Market Research, 2019), released a study conducted in 40 countries on the levels of happiness that exist in various countries on planet Earth. Between October 2018 and January 2019, 30,890 people from 40 countries were interviewed. The study claims that 52% of respondents say they are happy, down from 57% observed in 2016. The Philippines is the country with the highest level of happiness declared by its inhabitants (78%), while Palestine registers the lowest level in the world ranking of this indicator (24%).

The variables considered in the study were: economic success, family and health, among others. They also included the level of education as a relevant indicator. In this sense, it is worth asking how much does education influence happiness? The study indicates that education plays a critical role in the state of happiness. Those people who did not have access to education or did not complete their basic education show very low levels of happiness. In Chile, for example, the figures indicate that those with no education or only basic education report 42% happiness, while those with postgraduate education report 79%, and this percentage decreases as the level of education decreases. Those with complete higher education report 61% happiness, those with complete secondary education 60% and those with complete or incomplete basic education 42%.

And in terms of age, according to the study for Chile, people between 40 and 49 years of age declared themselves happier (69%). Next comes the group between 30 and 39 years old (62%), 18 to 29 years old (54%) and 50 years old and over (52%). The low level of happiness among young Chileans is striking. If we analyze this age segment worldwide, although historically it was the happiest group, we observe a drop in the indicator in this last measurement.

What is happening in the world with the happiness of the youngest...! On the other hand, we find that adults between 30 and 49 declare themselves happier and this diagnosis is observed in the rest of the countries in the study. Perhaps today's young people follow the May 68 slogan: "Let's be realistic... Let's ask for the impossible". Perhaps this saying will come true: At twenty years of age the will reigns, at thirty years of age, the spirit, and from forty years of age, judgment and reason.

There are authors [10] who have raised the relevance of the education factor to personal happiness. The expert from the University of Pennsylvania conducted a meta-analysis of more than 30 studies conducted in 90 countries between 1946 and 1970 on happiness and found that economic growth does not lead to greater happiness. The cited author found that education improved economic income, but just as a person's income increased over time, his or her happiness did not. However, if happiness began early in a person's life, for those who acquired more education, happiness persisted in their life. Under these conditions, people with more education were happier than those with less.

#### 4. Happycracy or Happiness as an Imperative of Life

An Israeli sociologist and a Spanish psychologist [11] have recently written a book entitled *Happycracy*. How science and the happiness industry control our lives (2019). The authors warn the public that we are facing a new form of manipulation of people, using what is dearest to them and what they seek most: happiness. The book is a denunciation against the manipulation of the happiness industry, which is based on a biased interpretation of scientific legitimacy in positive psychology. "This is not a book against happiness, but against the reductionist vision of the "good life", which the so-called science of happiness presents and which is increasingly widespread," say the authors.

"The neologism *happycracy* comes from happiness, being happy, an English verb meaning to be lucky. And yet, today happiness is not conceived as something that has to do with luck, good fortune or circumstances. The suffix *cracia* comes from Greek, meaning power and authority. It is used to show how happiness is integrated into the fabric of power and is used as the main criterion for making decisions about people's lives under simple arguments of authority. In this case it is the scientific authority of positive psychology that is used as one of the great allies of this current idea of happiness" explains [11].

As we have seen, happiness has always been present in people's minds; humans, although they do not know what it is to be happy, have always sought happiness in various ways. The problem is that we do not know "what it is to be happy" or "how to be happy"; in fact no positive psychologist, no happiness scientist, has ever defined what the final state of happiness consists of, and yet we have it as a goal in life and we do not always find the path that leads to it. The road to

happiness is more like a hiking trail through a mountain than a highway. To travel the route, you have to look at a signpost, walk a certain part of the way until you reach the next signpost, and so on until you reach the end of the journey, which sometimes becomes uncertain and dangerous. On the contrary, on the highway everything is signposted in advance; you know the remaining kilometers, the speed you can take and consequently the time it takes to reach your destination. Happiness is not the same, and yet today it has become omnipresent, the fundamental driving force of our lives, indeed, it has become an imperative of life. If you do not manage to be happy - or at least appear to be happy - it seems that you have omitted something or done something wrong in your life.

The worldwide expansion, during the last decades, of positive psychology is the reason for the search, at any cost, for happiness. Happiness is conceived as something that each person creates or destroys, through personal responsibility and autonomy. This happiness is individualistic: whoever wants to be happy is happy, regardless of the personal, social, family, economic and cultural circumstances that surround him/her. Everything depends on the attitude of the individual in front of the circumstances of life. It is the religion of the self, of "believe in yourself", "believe in your possibilities", "focus and manage your inner life"... Man is considered as an island that has nothing to do with other islands or continents. Everyone can design a happy biography as they wish, as long as they see life with a positive approach. *Happycracy* is the disease of wanting to be happy at all costs. *Improve your happiness in two months*"; this is the fantastic promise of *Happify* a technology app based on "science" that "improves emotional health". The world may be crumbling around you but with a positive approach every subject can turn the tables on the situation; it all depends on yourself, as told by your guru or coach [12].

The authors [11] point out that a happiness is proposed which is a lifestyle that aims at the construction of an individualistic citizen, who thinks that he owes nothing to anyone, but that everything he has he deserves. His successes and failures, his health, his satisfaction, do not depend on social issues but on himself and on the correct management of his emotions, thoughts and attitudes.

In reality, they have not really discovered anything new; everything is based on positive psychology [23] which, according to its definition, is "the scientific study of what makes life worth living". At the beginning, and until the middle of the 20th century, psychology was influenced by the ideas of Freud who concentrated on the study of the pathologies of human beings to the detriment of their positive aspects. At the beginning of the 21st century, Martin Seligman together with his colleague Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, were concerned with the study of human psychology from a more positive perspective; thus, positive psychology emerged, which focuses on the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the optimal functioning of individuals, groups and institutions and that allow them to achieve happiness and prosperity. The

questions posed by positive psychology are: What makes a life fulfilling? What is the way to achieve it?

According to [13] there are three ways to achieve a full life: a) cultivating positive emotions in life, i.e., having as many happy moments in life as possible. This is a purely hedonistic proposal. These moments can be achieved through savoring - savoring the present moment by delighting the senses in the most genuine way possible - or through *mindfulness*, which is achieving full attention to thoughts, emotions and actions. b) Effective personal commitment to one's work and the ability to experience the *flow* state, which is the state of concentration such that it seems that time has stopped. c) The search for a meaningful life (*meaningful live*); it is the full personal development to help others; this possibility is given through the family, work, school, community service, etc. It is putting personal capacities at the service of others to give meaning to life. Lately [14] has included a fourth way: d) establishing positive ties as a way to happiness, since they facilitate psycho-logical well-being (social life).

Positive psychology has been claiming for twenty years to have discovered the keys and formula for happiness, as if it were an equation. They affirm that happiness is due, in almost 90%, to personal factors and the circumstances or social factors (social level, educational level, income, sex, culture, etc.) matter little or not at all. Circumstances do not make us happy, it is we who make ourselves happy or unhappy, because everything is psychological. These psychological approaches do not take into account that workers, who live in constant stress, are not stressed because they do not manage their emotions well, but because their work situation is precarious, insecure and very competitive; they are not unhappy because they do not manage their environment properly, but because their environment is the cause of their unhappiness.

The utopian formula for happiness in [13] states the following:

$$H (\text{Happiness}) = R (\text{Fair Rank}) + W (\text{Will}) + C (\text{Circumstances}).$$

50% is due to genetic predisposition, 40% to personal attitude towards life and 10% to education/income.

Only 10% of happiness can be explained by exogenous factors? Why do the rich want to accumulate their wealth? To be unhappy? It seems that this does not correspond to reality. In this regard, the authors explain that:

Happiness has been revealed as a very powerful form of social control because it contains the idea that achieving it is for our own good and that it is good for us. The idea of happiness has somehow come to hijack all those meanings that have to do with good, with successes and is a way of making people responsible for their own successes, seeking to stay healthy, be productive, and so on. It offers a solution to problems that are structural, but it does it in an individual way, so that, with this approach, what it does is to hide or blur the true cause of social problems.

It is like the control posed by Aldous Huxley in his novel



Brave New World. In this novel the protagonists voluntarily submit to some control because people do it because they believe that the control is for their own good. This is called "perfect manipulation. We already know how the novel ends: with the image of John's corpse slowly spinning in the air suspended from a beam.

According to Forbes magazine, 40% of the 500 largest U.S. companies use coaching with their employees on a regular basis. Likewise, the authors [11] point out that:

in companies they force you to take courses in resilience, coaching and mindfulness to learn that you are the one who has to find the way to be better at work, because productivity depends on it. And in education it is said that the goal is to make students happy. We would have to see what kind of citizen we want to build, whether a critical citizen focused on knowledge of the world or a purely emotional student focused on self-knowledge.

I do not believe that employers are directly interested in the happiness of their workers; rather, I think it is a sibylline way of producing more and better by having happy workers at work. There are companies that hire their staff according to their happiness levels; they prefer optimistic people who do not complain; more and more these criteria are taking precedence over the employee's technical knowledge. Indeed, if the science of happiness had not existed, the business world would have invented it...!

Positive social psychology admits that circumstances influence the happiness of citizens, but since changing the context is very expensive, they prefer to change the psychology of the citizen so that he is happy in all circumstances.

In this sense, they conclude that:

to declare today that you are not happy is shameful, as if we have wasted our time or have done something wrong and we could do something and we do not do it, we are negative people [...] This concept of happiness has North American roots and does not contain the keys to the good life. The only good news is that in this notion of happiness there are more important values: the good life is fair, caring, integrity, com-mitted to truth. It is not being preoccupied with ourselves all the time.

On the other hand, it must be said that this concept of happiness is not scientific, since it does not come from the human biological sciences, but is ideological in origin. It comes from the social sciences, which invariably start from cultural and moral hypotheses that are not always scientifically proven. Seligman is an American psychologist and writer known for his contributions to *positive psychology and learned helplessness*, followed by his colleagues Diener and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Jamieson, Peterson and Vaillant, are the great allies in legitimizing the discourse of the ideology of happycracy.

An *ideology* is a set of erratic thoughts that seek certain interests and "the end justifies the means". They can be economic, power, race, social, etc. interests. The ideology of *happiness* assumes a proposal about what human nature is and what it should be and how it should behave, but they are

proposals or ideas not scientifically proven, but they have a projection and a clear political and economic project on people and society.

Positive psychology has valuable elements, but it has been used in a biased way to justify the hypotheses of *happycracy*, and economic neoliberalism has turned it into an individualistic ideology, conceiving the human being as autonomous and self-sufficient, which tends to focus all the weight and explanation of social dynamics on the individual. There are no social problems; what exist are individual problems.

The human being has the right to happiness, but now the right is becoming a duty. Rather than asking and wishing people to be happy, now they are required to be happy; happiness has become a duty. Happiness, they say [11] has become "an obsession", "a poisoned gift", at the service of the current economic system. In recent years, self-help, *coaching and mindfulness*, under the pretext of the duty to be happy --with a well-funded propaganda by companies and foundations-- have been placed on the academic, political and economic agendas of many countries. The industry of positive therapies, *coaching services or mindfulness*, promise "effective and science-based solutions for better emotional health and well-being in the 21st century". They are a science and an industry that sells a notion of happiness, "at the service of the values imposed by the neoliberal cultural revolution"; now we know there are no structural social problems but individual psychological deficiencies.

In this line, wealth and poverty, success and failure, health and illness, are the result of our own actions, not of the context in which we live, which is the one created for us by the neoliberal economy. We are obliged to be happy and, if we are not, we should feel guilty for not overcoming difficulties. You can be happy if you want to be, because if you suffer it is also because you want to, "you are suspected of wanting to stay bad, of not putting the necessary means to stop being bad, to stop being anxious or to stop feeling helpless," says Cabanas. It is a reductionist and self-serving vision of healthy living that preaches the science of happiness.

Happiness has become a central point even in neoliberal economic forums, such as the Davos Economic Forum, which has invited to it the Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard, considered "the happiest person in the world" accredited by the University of Wisconsin by measuring his brain activity. It must be said clearly: *the current notion of happiness is at the service of the values of the neoliberal economic revolution*. That happiness is omnipresent today is unquestionable. Let's see in the bookstores of department stores what types of books appear in the first place in the eyes of customers; all are self-help books. On Amazon a few years ago there were 300 titles with the word happiness, now there are 2,000. The British sociologist [15] published a book entitled *The Happiness Industry* in which he warns about the dark side of the phenomenon of happiness on demand. "The techniques to measure our state of mind, the algorithms used to analyze

emotions are put at the service of economic and political interests," says Davies. Our emotional state has become just another commodity, marketed in different ways and presented in different wrappings: personal development coaches, *mindfulness* trainers, self-help books, etc.

The happiness industry is very lucrative, it is widespread, and it is covered by the scientific argument of positive psychology. Selling something with the endorsement of scientific legitimacy makes it a valuable and desirable product. That is why, nowadays, happiness is a product that is bought through therapies, services, guides, advice, *coaching*, *mindfulness*, etc. It is a product that is cheap to produce and generates enormous profits. According to the International Coaching Federation, in the U.S. alone, the *coaching* market, reached \$955 million in 2015, up from \$705 million in 2011 and its estimate is \$1.3 billion by 2022. The self-help market is expanding, and it is a pie to which the academic world is aiming. There is another parallel business that is no less substantial: the training of *coaches*.

Happiness has also become a pure and simple *merchandising*, printing mugs, doormats and a variety of home-made objects. In Lima there is a radio station called *Radio Happiness*, which wants to send its listeners the subliminal message that whoever listens to it will be happy. Two Spaniards have created an *online* store "of happy products to make people happy" that in 2017 had 150 employees on its payroll and a turnover of 28 million euros.

This happiness market is so well designed that it creates permanent dissatisfaction. This happiness has a dynamic and insatiable component because it is based on the idea that you can always improve, that something is always missing, that there is always one more diet to follow, one more therapy to try, that you are always in process, in continuous search... Happiness thus understood is a goal in constant movement, it makes us run after it obsessively. And it has to do with an inward look; it makes us be very self-absorbed, very controlled by ourselves and in constant vigilance. This increases anxiety and depression, because we are proposed to be high performance athletes of our emotions; it is the "emotional vigorexia". We run the risk of generating, instead of satisfied and complete beings, emotional hypochondriacs, because in the discourse of happiness what it imposes is not only the idea that we should not be bad, but that even if we are well, we can and should always be better off.

But the fact that you never end up being happy makes the system work very well as an economic product in the neoliberal economy. One day you go to a *mindfulness* course and when you finish it you try something else and something else and something else. You never reach the goal because you are always on the way. It is like utopia, but what is utopia for if you are never going to reach it? Well, that is what it is for, to be always on the way and in continuous search.

In this situation it is not enough not to be bad or to be well, you have to be as good as possible, and therefore, not only the one who is bad needs an expert, but also the one who is well, to be able to get the best performance, -his best self- to

learn new techniques of self-management and get new tips to know himself better, to be more productive and to be more successful in life.

## 5. Conclusion

Achieving happiness and developing a happy biography is a noble aspiration of humans. We know the goal, but we do not know the way. Moreover, today's society offers us so many ways to reach the goal that we do not know which one to choose.

The author of the novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* [16] narrates this fact: Alice finds herself at a crossroads and does not know which direction to take, so Alice asks the cat:

1. Will you please tell me which way I should take to get out of here?
2. That depends a lot on where you want to go," answers the cat.
3. I don't care where I go, Alice replied.
4. Then it matters little which way you go, replied the cat.

That is the problem: we do not know the goal and, consequently, we do not know the path that leads to it, because for a ship without a course, all winds are favorable, as Seneca said.

The key question is: Do I know the path and the quality of the path that leads to the goal of happiness? Is it not that *happycracy* has become a *cacocracy*? Is *happycracy* not stealing our happiness?

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