

THOUGHTS ON HAPPINESS

Do We Have a Right to Happiness?

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Is happiness a human right? How could it ever be? How could we, who live in a society so focused on scoffing at the flippancy of emotion, feel so entitled to experience such an abstract entity. The right to happiness would impossibly fit into the other barriers and restrictions we've built around ourselves as we happily subscribe to our deceivingly religious morals. Happiness, whatever that is, is grossly overrated, and the need for it is grossly overweighted and overbearing. This simple emotion, one of the several we feel, is just another concept that we rely too heavily on and place too much blame on. As humans, all we do is continue our never-ending hunt for the next thing to blame all our sorrows and misfortunes on, whether that takes the form of entitlement to an emotion or plain religion, the only criteria is that it's not our fault.

A human right is one that can be measured by a set of criteria and something that one can have or not have. You simply cannot measure something as indefinite as any emotion to that standard. How would any contention based on a lack of happiness even unfold on a legislative standard? There must be a distinction made between "ethical" treatment and happiness because, for whatever reason, we have gotten to a place where one might think that the former leads to the latter. In reality, this idea is incredibly naive as anyone who has lived a human life knows well. We continue to lean so heavily on something we know doesn't fulfill its stated purpose. Humans want to be fulfilled and needed. That's it. Our core desires do not include an emotion that we are led to believe fully in, like a spiritual message, completely twisted and falsified by the media and society. Happiness is a cult of reason and ethos that keeps humans pining for more and more until they're so lost in their desire, they lose sight of their original plight or their goal in this chronic search.

This artificiality of happiness is only heightened by its ability to be replaced with any other emotion. Yes, we've chosen happiness and now many weigh their entire lives on personal criteria regarding whether they "have" it or not, perpetually disappointed when the answer is often the later. However and whenever this decision was made, probably with the help of the philosophes of the enlightenment, its result in the choice of happiness was arbitrary. I ar-

gue that the pressure of happiness could have easily been replaced with a societal pressure to be relaxed or at peace. Obviously, it's not because of our history, but it could hypothetically be what our entire human race strives for determined by ancient men hypothesizing, yes, hypothesizing about our very nature.

At the root of my argument is the point that happiness cannot be measured. There is nothing to determine the absence or presence of an emotion. Biologically, we all experience emotions differently, and, by current human nature, we automatically revert to self-pity, blaming our misfortunes and behavior on said absence. But further than these tenants, what is happiness? Yes, there is a definition: "the state of feeling or showing pleasure or contentment". The ambiguity of that definition is frightful enough to make anyone deter from the belief that happiness is a human right. But beyond that, the concept of happiness has been so distorted by personal agendas, popular media, and the representation of happiness by others that a single definition, or any definition, cannot stand true. Happiness is evasive, idealistic, and worse, it's just a word. A word that probably symbolizes something completely skewed from whatever the core of happiness is, not that it matters. I think of Sartre and the plight of representation, of symbolism. Happiness stands for so, so much, varying across billions of thinking minds, and, therefore, has depleted to nothing. Nothing but an idea of an unreachable, unknown enigma. The absence of everything, "nothing", cannot be a human right.

As I reach the end of my train of thought, I finally consider what defines a human right. I know, for sure, happiness is not one, but what is? I call on the idea of relativism and of modern morals. A human right, the right to live, for example, is an idea only defined by our contemporary moral and ethical guidelines we willingly subscribe to, unknowingly molded by religious values. Why do we feel so deserving of human rights, let alone a decadent, gluttonous right to emotion?

Conclusively, No, happiness is not, and could never be a human right. The complexities of introspective and self-centered human behavior would never allow for emotion, such as happiness, to have a definite, concrete role in our society.