

The Happiness Agenda

A Modern Obsession

Simon Burnett

palgrave
macmillan

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
Introduction	1
Modern myths	2
Pursuing happiness	8
1 The happy adventures of capital	15
The culture of capital: an overview	16
A reflexive complexity	21
The power of subjects and objects	34
(Too) fast subjects	40
The cultural circuits of happiness	43
2 A happy policy	46
An ancient problem, and its modern fix	47
The utility of happiness	58
The utility of Utility	63
Historians repeat each other, history repeats itself	68
The political need for happiness	75
3 Happiness loves company	80
Theoretical origins	81
A modern-day assumption	88
Happy workers?	96
Champions of the new human relations	101
4 Positively happy	106
The Manhattan Project	107
Principles of positivity	110
Historical and conceptual origins	120
A mainstream counter-culture	127
5 Happy days	132
Knowing happiness	133
The happy death of god	135

6	Happiness needs practice	142
7	Happy ever after?	160
	<i>References</i>	166
	<i>Index</i>	179

Introduction

[A] new measure [of] our happiness . . . could give us a general picture of whether life is improving, and that does have a really practical purpose. It will open up a national debate about what really matters; not just in government but amongst people who influence our lives: the media, in business, the people who develop the products we use, and build the towns we live in and shape the culture we enjoy.

(David Cameron, 2010)

Cameron, D. (25/11/2010), on *BBC News Politics*, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11833241>, accessed on 25th November, 2010.

Contemporary Anglo-American society is awash with political, organizational and individual efforts to be happy. It is extant across the realms of: governmental debates and mandates, employment policies and management consultancy advice, news stories, television fiction and documentaries, psychology, self-help courses, and even school classrooms. This widespread cultural momentum towards happiness is a culmination of events that have transpired over the past circa three hundred “Industrialized” years since the Age of Enlightenment. Throughout this period up to the modern day, happiness has come to be defined as: pursuable and attainable, able to be measured scientifically and provided by legislation, spiritual, practicable, located within the individual and attainable in correlation with the surrounding

capitalistic structure. Whereby a focus on one's individual, hedonistic happiness is now morally defensible, and in accordance with what have become commonly accepted societal norms. This leads to the denouement of this book that, following on from the popularized coinage of *Homo economicus* (*The Economist Online*, 2005) and even *Homo siliconvalleycus* (Thrift, 2005h: 151): modern humankind is presently aspiring toward the neologistic genus of *Homo happicus*.

The historical encroachment of this culturally defining subject position has been made manifest and is maintained by the operation and circulation of a complex, multi-levelled, multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary phenomenon, diagnosed here as the eponymous *Happiness Agenda*. The term "agenda" is employed most deliberately, for that which is transpiring is occurring simultaneously within macro-political, meso-organizational and micro-personal realms, inter- and intra-woven in and circulating between all three. Furthermore, it is an umbrella term that refers to a prevailing, generic, societal concern, which includes an array of other related "New Age" notions, such as well-being and positivity, to name but a few other comparable and even integral components; all of which are essentially focused toward the pervasive common aim of making the modern human being happy. This book is then an investigation into the legitimacy of the taken-for-granted, specifically regarding the manifest Anglo-American cultural predilection with happiness; and how, where and why the Happiness Agenda came to be so infused with our political, organizational and personal modernity.

Modern myths

All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away ... All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.

(Marx, [1888] 1985: 83)

In an episode from the fourth season of the HBO network's popular and critically acclaimed television drama *The Sopranos* (2002), Tony Soprano is sitting on a couch in his elderly uncle's house. The old man is sleeping, taking a brief respite from the pressures of his ongoing legal trial and battle with cancer. With Tony, and sharing staunch glasses of vodka, is Svetlana, the Russian nursemaid hired to care

for the ailing, grumpy Uncle Junior, patriarch of their Mafia family. Svetlana's detached prosthetic leg is propped against an empty armchair and has caught Tony's eye. He appears uncharacteristically in awe of this woman, and comments quite candidly on her resilient and resolute character. With a detached and stoic nonchalance Svetlana replies, offering an incisive personal and socio-cultural commentary:

Svetlana: That's the trouble with you Americans. You expect nothing bad to ever happen when the rest of the world expect only bad to happen.

Tony: Well that's a fucking grim outlook.

Svetlana: You have everything, and still you complain. You lie on couches and bitch to your psychiatrists. You got too much time to think about yourselves.

Tony: Sounds like me alright.

This brief insight into the tribulations of a New Jersey mafioso crime syndicate provides a slightly unusual yet arguably apt and identifiable microcosm of Anglo-American notions of being happy. For Tony Soprano is a very troubled man: his then position as "acting Boss" of his secretive fraternal cell of organized criminals causes him notable personal anxiety and distress, increasingly becoming exteriorized in numerous panic attacks and blackouts. Though it is apparently not the sinister, brutal and exploitative nature of his "work" that is the root cause of his problems (for he demonstrates limited remorse and compassion towards victims, rivals and family-members alike—although is, a little strangely, very protective towards animals), but something acting on a deeper level. Tony is all too aware that he has money, power and a seeming free rein; often managing to elude government attempts to gather evidence for indictment against him. And yet, based on his regular therapy sessions, volatile behavior, frequent infidelity, gorging on food, overdoses on Prozac and bouts of depression, any appreciable sense of lasting and prolonged satisfaction seems to be permanently beyond his grasp. It is thus his pervading, fundamental and active desire to *be happy*, as unsuccessful and frustrated as it may be, throughout the six seasons of the show which consumes him, and resonates with and indeed epitomizes our contemporary Zeitgeist.

George A. Miller poignantly contributes to consideration of such issues in his interrogation of what it is that "Americans around the

middle of the twentieth century” tend to want and expect from life (1964: 288). His collected list of typical demands include: “We want people to like us. We do not want to be ugly ... We want money. We want to own things in which we can take pride.” Other “all too familiar” expectations are: “We do not want to be fat. We do not want to smell bad. We want healthy children, and we want to be healthy ourselves.” Of greatest significance though is Miller’s conviction that:

These are proven demands of the market place. Never mind whether it’s good to want such things, or whether we even have a right to want them. The point is that these are the things people in America work for, spend money on, devote their lives to.

(ibid.)

He describes them as being quite specifically modern, American demands, all of which have been rendered “perfectly explicit, conscious and socially acceptable.” As a consequence of the sheer volume of similarly motivated individuals who crave such states of being, Miller identifies relatively few negative consequences or stigma associated with desiring good health, looks and financial security in mainstream mid-twentieth-century culture. He then asks his reader to imagine collecting a similar catalogue of typical desires from other peoples or at other times: “from Neanderthal men or the Tartar hordes.” Astutely concluding that people often have trouble believing their own peculiar, established longings for popularized commodities or comportments of behavior are socially determined and “learned” rather than “universal and inevitable” (ibid.).

The fictional inner wrangling of Tony Soprano over his perpetual struggle for happiness in the scene described above forms an accord then with contemporary audiences as it is a recognizable and common lament, writ large across the structuring of modern Anglo-American society. Developing this in light of Miller’s observations, the manners in which happiness is presently being sought after and provided can, and will, be deemed as having become so socially legitimate, so “explicit and acceptable,” that they can be identified in formally politicized, organized and personalized practices, materializing across the activities of governments, media outlets, companies and homes. However, and of utmost importance, this strive towards *Homo happiness* should not be by mere virtue of its affinity with modern

humanity be confused as being an imperative, ever-present concern; in the same way that, say, consuming food and water are inescapable prerequisites of past and future existence. It has not historically always been considered such an imperative right and indeed presently is not so in many other societies. Rather it is very much “learnt,” culturally and temporally specific, and predicated upon the prevalence of particular ideological developments.

In *Work and the Nature of Man* (1972), Frederick Herzberg provides valuable and interesting insights into the formation of the ideological and thematic foundations of societies. He suggests that every society must inevitably establish *myths* about themselves in order to sustain political, organizational and social institutional structures, which become necessarily elevated to the position of “societal canon” and are “willingly accepted even though patently misleading” (ibid.: 12). One possible expositional example is the concept of Manifest Destiny: a belief held by the new American colonies in the 1700 and 1800s that they were destined to expand unhindered from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific Ocean. More a general notion than a specific policy, it became a political catchphrase in the nineteenth century, then eventually a standardized historical term, used to justify the belief that European descendants acting as government agents had a “God-given” right to appropriate any lands, resources and native peoples (either by slaughter or internment on reservations) as was considered necessary for the establishment of the new, independent American nation (cf. Brown, 1971).

Herzberg argues that societal myths are not maintained necessarily by intellectual reasoning, but rather by the emotional support and sense of stability they can provide. To elucidate with the concept of Manifest Destiny: the Native Americans were cast as a problem to be marshalled or purged, and the colonizers as heroic figures eking out a tough living in an unforgiving landscape. Having come to the New World looking for freedom and to escape social and religious persecution, the more rapacious settlers hence provided themselves with a sense of purpose and social validation for their violent actions. This assumes that human nature is neither static nor universal, but collectively formulated within discrete pockets, reflecting “the social orders people inhabit” (Bakan, 2004: 134). Myths are thus very significant: first, in terms of the ideological support, they offer the frameworks and actions of a society; and, second, for the

reciprocal, emotive attachment adherent individuals have for them. They provide a unified synergy of internal reasoning and meaning, regardless of any external logical inconsistencies they may bear, for the human agent as they navigate the world around them.

Herzberg recognized that dominant societal powers, “whether [they] be religious, political or economic,” are both sustained and destroyed by the relative belief in their associated myth structures (1972: 20). For example, the early Middle Ages saw the papacy emerge victorious in a struggle for ascendancy and influence over European society, wherein it attempted to “unify all life, politically, economically and most important to control the life of the individual and of the family” (ibid.). But, as expanded upon in Chapter 2, by the sixteenth century, the power base of the Catholic Church had begun to erode, as ideologically contrasting movements awakened the belief (or *myth*) that personal achievement rather than pious, spiritual devotion was “necessary to the happiness of mankind” (ibid.: 24). Mythic revolutions and shifts in the constitution and interests of society therefore demonstrably go in unison, intimately affected by the ideas upon which they are built and the willingness—or lack thereof—of societies to continue sustaining them: “New myth systems are born when the old dogmas hurt people too much” (ibid.).

Of all the myths generated by humankind, those which are the “most far-reaching, ubiquitous and serviceable” are primarily concerned with “implicit conceptions of what people are like” (ibid.: 13). Drawing upon a number of sources, but most notably the work of Rowlands (2005), in the modern Anglo-American age, there are four such popularized myths which seem most conspicuous, epidemic and ingrained: *individualism*, *humanism*, *rationalism* and *instrumentalism*. These have all emerged, coincided and created a mythic collage which underpins the reigning, distinctive contemporary fascination with happiness. Their correlation with one another and insinuation into Anglo-American society have significantly contributed to packaging happiness as a seemingly timeless, natural and worthwhile human regard, but while the emotion of and ability to experience it are certainly innate to our species, the legion of bespoke expressions of and this socially produced preoccupation with it are not. Neither are these myths immune from succumbing to new culturally validated ideas, as despite being presently salient, they are inevitably subject to eventual usurpation.

For the purposes of this book, *individualism* is understood to be a creed that establishes the needs and desires of the human agent as central to their own activities. It is fundamentally a moral concept as it questions what sort of life it is best to live, and in the present day it seems to be one dedicated to the introspective, Maslovian principles of self-actualization, self-development and self-fulfilment. The significance of individualism is hence that self-work and self-interest are not only activities that *are* widely engaged in but ones that *should* be (cf. Rowlands, 2005: 2–5). Similarly, *humanism* is an interest in the ethical codes by which humankind consents to exist, and the “objectification of the spirit within culture and society: morality, law, state, religion, art, science and philosophy” (ibid.,: 300). It is often associated with establishing widespread parity, well-being and fairness and prioritizing human needs.

Further, *rationalism* is an epistemological position that holds there are two kinds of knowledge: that which is garnered from direct experience, and “universally valid truths concerning (for example) God, human nature and morality” (Skirbekk and Gilje, 2001: 238); both of which exist apart from individuals’ entry into social relations (Townley, 2002: 556). Finally, *instrumentalism* refers to a prevailing faith in a Weberian instrumental rationality or means–ends reasoning, where the complexities of life, including valuations of subjective states, are considered reducible to units that can be evaluated in terms of a cost/benefit analysis: “in the age of modernity, everything is calculable” (ibid.: 8; cf. Cooley, 1980; Munro, 1996; Shenhav, 2003); and the world can be understood and mastered with the appropriate physical and intellectual tools.

Thus, it is under such ideological, “mythic” conditions that the individual’s right to concentrate on their own happiness in a brazen and judicial way is presently considered to be justified in present Anglo-American society. In declaring that such an occurrence is “modern,” it is then necessary to provide a decisive definition of the particular time period under analysis. Based on the preceding dialogue, rather than affixing restrictive, inexorable bookends to an arbitrary chronological era though, the span referred to as “modernity” is better conceived of in terms of its presiding ideologies—the bodies of doctrines, philosophies or beliefs—and their underlying, commonly shared and socially enacted concerns. Skirbekk and Gilje summate modern society as being: “the expression of an agreement

between egotistical individuals dictated by everyone's common long-range and enlightened self-interest ... that is acknowledged by reason" (2001: 184). "Modern" is then, in this context, a reference to the approximate historical period of the past three hundred years in which Western humankind has demanded to be reasoned, Enlightened and thereby *happy*, though calculative and political means; and during which the accession of the four prominent myths: individualism, humanism, rationalism and instrumentalism, have ascended and engendered the cultural conditions in which a generic fascination with happiness could flourish.

Pursuing happiness

People come up to me and say: "What's wrong?"
Nothing. "Well, it takes more energy to frown than it
does to smile!" Yeah? You know it takes more energy
to point that out than it does to leave me alone?

(Hicks, 1992)

One archetypal exemplar of the presently heralded interpretation of happiness is a landmark document drafted and signed in 1776, by five men, including two future Presidents, declaring and uniting the then thirteen colonies of North America as independent from British rule. In addition to formally distancing the newly born country from its previous "oppressors," it set out and enshrined in law certain liberties as sacrosanct, and to be afforded to all its citizens:

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

This sentence, taken from the Declaration of Independence ratified in 1776 has come to epitomize the phantasm of the *American Dream*: the idea that through hard work and determination the opportunities of the "New World" were and are available to all. Of course the reference to "all Men" is explicitly gendered, not to mention the lack of liberty granted to those forced to endure chattel slavery, which prevailed in the southern United States for another hundred or so years. However,

it is significant that the third identified right, the deliberate and active “pursuit of happiness,” was being actively infused into the collective mythos of the newly allied states. While it may not then have been necessarily extended to *all* citizens in practice, its substantiation into the emerging “modern” American ideological psyche reveals a number of assumed theoretical and philosophical preconditions, congruent with the identified prominent underlying *myths* of modernity. Chiefly, that happiness is: a concept or a state to which humankind can aspire; that it is something to be pursued and is both object-like, and elusive, requiring capture; and those seeking it must take self-responsible, proactive and decisive steps towards securing it.

This particular definitional construction of happiness has certainly not always been so prevalent. In earlier epochs it has been associated with the notions of chance, fortune, silliness, wealth, blitheness and even being wise. Duncan enounces though that in the past three or so centuries: “happiness has acquired a private, subjective meaning, largely to do with good feelings” (2007: 87). What becomes paramount then is to establish why such a change in the widely accepted definition and elevation in the societal importance of happiness has occurred, and thus how the subject position of *Homo happicus* came to be such a fundamental aspiration for so many Anglo-American politicians, organizations and individuals.

Richard Dawkins, Oxford University’s Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science, addresses how one might attempt to discuss the prolific, diffuse and even byzantine manner in which such movements emerge and gain momentum, and replace previously dominant hegemonies:

We need to explain why the changing moral Zeitgeist is so widely synchronized across large numbers of people; and we need to explain its relatively consistent direction. It spreads itself from mind to mind through conversations in bars and at dinner parties, through books and book reviews, through newspapers and broadcasting, and nowadays through the Internet. Changes in the moral climate are signalled in editorials, on radio talk shows, in political speeches, in the patter of stand-up comedians and the scripts of soap operas, in the votes of parliaments making laws and the decisions of judges interpreting them.

(2006: 270)

It will therefore be postulated herein that three principal epiphenomenal events described as *shocks*, founded upon the ideological myths that sustain modern society, have occurred in the past three hundred years since the Age of Enlightenment. These have been triggers which expedited the contemporary combined political, organizational and personal enchantment with happiness. These shocks are, respectively: (1) the nineteenth-century Utilitarian rendering of happiness from a philosophical to a macro-political concept; (2) its subsequent twentieth-century operationalization into meso-organizational activity and Human Relations thinking; and (3) the twenty-first-century emergence of “positivity” theories in renowned micro-individual social psychologies.

The word “shock” is not then an inference in any way of a sense of immediacy. It rather designates the advancement of intellectual and cultural evolutions, not an unexpected event transpiring at great speed. That which is shocking is the eventual results, their compatibilities and the ideological transformations of anxieties from one historical epoch to another, not the expediency of their ascent. The shocks are three events which have greatly influenced the cultural circulation and acceptance of happiness as a modern concern. They are not deemed to be the sole generators, but rather those that seem most identifiable across the three macro-, meso- and micro-realms of society. Significantly, each is validated by and acts to influence the other two, providing a tripartite, society-encompassing system of internal consistency and logic. That dramatically influences the present understanding of happiness regarding what are morally viable definitions and actions for governments, companies and citizens.

From the onset, however, there are a host of complications in attempting to write about concepts, movements and phenomena in society that trade with and in such emotive and subjective notions. First, happiness, well-being, positivity (and other similar terms), could each arguably warrant numerous books in their own right and, while certainly connected, can be analyzed from a number of perspectives and as separate and discrete entities. Further, there is no one single, identifiable group of academics or practitioners publishing, investigating and promoting these subjects—in fact quite the opposite, as disciplines as diverse as sociology, biology, psychology, economics, politics and religious studies are all increasingly focusing on them—and no

clearly labelled shelf in a library which a motivated researcher could simply spend their days diligently ploughing through.

Finally, and adding most notably to the complexity of this potential quagmire, to attempt to provide a “critical” assessment or redress of such a paradigm is to also potentially open oneself quite vulnerably to various antonymic labels: negative, pessimist, defeatist, cynic; all could seem quite apt of an argument, and its author, that stutters and fidgets somewhat at the often perfunctory talk, thought and practice towards fervently engineering, enabling and empowering happy and positive people. The tautological desire and naturalized right to want and be happy is so pervasive at the entwining politico-philosophical, organizational and personal levels of modern life that to refuse, resist or even question an active, “positive interest in people’s happiness” is often considered to be wrong, aberrant or bizarre behavior (cf. Duncan, 2007: 86). This is because the “pursuit of happiness” is such a constituent part of the accepted common-sense mythos and cultural backdrop of today, that virtually any criticism is thereby cast automatically as an opposing and denigrating countervailing to the mainstream.

The aim of this book is then not to produce some innovative formula for how happiness can be benchmarked or cultivated, but neither to merely “snipe from the sidelines” (cf. Parker, 2002) at other efforts to do so. There is certainly great benefit to be found by facilitating workspaces and populations that are conducive to promoting happier lives for those who use and form part of them. The discussion here endeavors rather to expose the underlying similarities in approach of certain influential paradigms of thought that have aligned to produce a characteristic conception of how people should best “be,” and why these have been so actively and widely embraced. Instead of following the trend of so many “how-to” publications offering prescriptive techniques to find, measure and increase happiness, that provided here is then an original explanation as to *why* such offers and efforts are presently so seductive.

The (social) science of happiness

Any act of social research is inherently purposive, as the collation, examination and ascription of meaning to data necessarily involve an attempt to engineer change: “Change in the researcher, change in the researched, change in the user of the research” (Clough and

Nutbrown, 2002: 12). In addition to the necessity of effecting a change, Clough and Nutbrown demand that any “research is ... a moral act” and as such: “the researcher holds responsibility for ensuring that resulting change is ... for the social good” (ibid.: 4). The primary “change” aspired to here is thus to highlight how a major accepted narrative of the modern day, the sustained imperative to make oneself and others happy, as bemoaned by Bill Hicks (1992), is an ideological and social conspiracy-of-coordination between certain powerful ideas, institutions and actors. What is so all-pervading in Anglo-American social reality is effectively concealed by the very fabric of its constitution, but which will hopefully now be rendered amenable to discussion, enabling an understanding of why we are so wrapped up in our cultural preoccupations, rather than just accepting and re-producing them. This is in order to “identify the cracks in this new [secular] religion” (Parker, 2002: 9), as happiness has, in certain ways, become as though a faith: with political, corporate and social institutions acting as churches, certain advocates and gurus as ministers, and, vitally, one’s self the god.

The current obsession with happiness will thus be revealed ultimately as being akin to a *Potemkin Village*: that which appears sound, habitable and defensible but is rather a produced façade. It must be reiterated that this is not a calculated defilement of the notion of happiness, the right to be happy, or attempts to build and measure systems to promote it, as the word “façade,” and indeed “conspiracy,” are here used to refer to the social production of interest in happiness in the present epoch—thereby making it something very *real* in terms of its effects. It is not being stated that happiness or attempts to be happy are in any way fake but, again, rather that this interest in happiness is temporally and culturally “learned” (recall Miller, 1964: 289) and will eventually shift. The term “Potemkin Village” is often used in dissenting from a residing majority opinion when it is felt that which is commonly held or espoused is not indubitably an accurate depiction of an event or circumstance. As a simile, then, it helps emphasize why and how we are so preoccupied with happiness, rather than simply maintaining that it is both natural to be so and that we, timelessly, always have, will and should be.

Based on the above predicates, the circulation of happiness evident today is: widespread, meta-structural, ideological and practical; and is hence described anon as a *mass-discursive, cultural phenomenon*. It

is a disciplinary mechanism that operates through people, technologies and ideas, forming a fragmented but coordinated preoccupation that permeates and circulates throughout, to some degree, virtually all levels of Anglo-American society. It provides an appealing subject position, designated here as *Homo happicus*, to aspire toward, by justifying and enabling the pursuit of one's own happiness across political, organizational and personal spectrums of society, supported by the salience of individualist, humanist, rationalist and instrumentalist myths. It is, however, vital to state that this "Happiness Agenda" is not an all-controlling system minutely dictating human action. As revealed in the following chapters, it is rather a framework of disparate but foundationally connected activity, which essentially relies upon human appropriation and interpretation for its continued existence.

To examine this phenomenon in detail, the next four chapters of this book establish a theoretical model for *the cultural circuits of happiness*; determining initially in Chapter 1 the intellectual architecture to be embraced throughout. In this chapter, Professor Nigel Thrift's myriad discussions of the spread and translations of "new capitalism" (Thrift, 2005a) across the globe are explicated, utilized and restructured into a format that enables the conceptualization and interrogation of the prolific spread of happiness. They are augmented with a number of additional, congruous theories, providing an intellectual pathway with which to explore a contingent and rhizomatic historical network of events, myths, theories, objects and practices, that were not ineluctable but rather transpired as a result of the congruencies between different dominant groups and ideas, each with a vested interest in happiness.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 then each respectively consider the three macro-, meso- and micro-realm ideological shocks that have generated and propelled the modern obsession with happiness. To repeat, these are: (1) the utilitarian rendering of happiness from a philosophical to a political concept; (2) its operationalization in human relations thinking and organizational activity; and (3) its "positive" emergence and embrace in renowned individual centric social-psychological disciplines. Chapter 5 summarizes the preceding analyses of this agenda, and highlights the "spiritual" facet of its modern embrace. Chapter 6 then investigates the manner in which it is necessarily "appropriated," and finally Chapter 7 offers some projections of its possible future.

This work hence contributes to a wide array of managerial, philosophical and sociological literature, as the subject matter is itself

composed, and so the relative depths and purposes of the interrogations herein differ and the overall approach cannot be said to be exclusively aimed at any one discipline. This is justifiable, however, as:

Causation in history is a tricky problem, never simple ... Material, social and intellectual factors continually interact on each other. It is not clear that they do so within the matrix of a single system, so that one can speak of the unity of an historical epoch. Any historical period contains within itself many processes and themes, not necessarily all knit together in a seamless web; there are always loose ends.

(Stromberg, 1981: 12)

The cultural impetus to be happy is thereby presented as is indicative of its nature: complex, unconventional and varying in focus and direction. Having above referenced the Anglo-American right to strive for happiness as apotheosized in the Declaration of Independence, this book offers a novel interpretation, investigation and effort to understand the strivings of the Happiness Agenda, and the history, structure and champions of a modern obsession.