

A Definition of Happiness

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In discussing ontogenesis, i.e. the development of each individual to death, as a quick summary of phylogenesis, i.e. the development of the species, León (1988) distinguishes between the first, second, and third degree capacities of life: "... the natural phylogenesis of first-degree ideation (the vegetative) to the first plus second degree, (vegetative plus animal), and then to a first-, plus second-, plus third-degree (intelligence), can be explanatory for the same stages in ontogeny (cell, cells in matrix, mature adult)" ([1], page 120, Elaboration 14). In a personal conversation in which I asked him about the precise meaning of these degrees of freedom, he told me that plants have the property of moving themselves (auto-motion). This in contrast to non-living objects where there is only movement due to external causes (allo-motion). The idea of autonomous movement was already suggested by Darwin in his book *The Power of Movement in Plants* [2]. Animals would then differ from plants in that they move themselves from place to place (auto-locomotion). In plants, there is only allo-locomotion. Finally, man would be fundamentally different from the animal in that in man there is imaginary movement from place to place and from time to time, again from itself (auto-imagination = the ability to think). In some higher animal species there would only be allo-imagination. Further research is needed to determine when exactly the third degree originated and how that could have happened. But be that as it may, once reason (the capacity of the third degree) broke through, a whole new situation arose. Animals depend on their environment, on their habitat for their survival. Man could conceive new worlds by means of his imagination and also the means to realize them (making fire, developing tools, making clothes, etc.). This allowed him to detach himself from his environment (habitat) and in principle settle anywhere on the planet. As a result, humans appeared in much greater numbers throughout history, in greater numbers than comparable animal species such as the hominin ape-like. The mammal species living in the wild come in thousands. Nowadays humans exist in billions (six zeros added). With these numbers, the habitats of the other animals are endangered, and with the discovery of the use of fossil fuels and the associated CO₂ emissions, the very survival of humans is at risk. This threat was also the reason for the author of *The World Solution for World Problems* to write that book. But the main reason for psychologists and psychiatrists to mention the book here is what the author says about happiness. His definition is as follows: "Happiness¹ is synonymous with the absence of superstition" ([1], page 23). From the idea that man is a third degree being, it can be said that man is an idea-driven being, as opposed to the animal which is an instinct-driven being. Therefore, a definition of happiness only makes sense if it is given in terms of an idea. The idea here is the idea of superstition. The third degree capacity makes it possible to form an image of reality. That image can correspond to reality (the idea is correct, is true), but it also cannot be correct (the idea is incorrect, is false). In this context, the concept of 'superstition' must be considered very general. Superstition is any idea that does not correspond to reality. Just as medicine aims to ensure 'health', so psychology as a practice has the task of ensuring 'happiness'. For that it is necessary to know what happiness actually means. Since happiness is determined by the absence of wrong ideas, the only way the psychologist can allow the client to achieve happiness is to make him aware of

¹The author has dedicated a separate book on this topic (happiness). The title of the book is: *Tao Stoics: Late Twentieth Century Lessons in Wisdom or Topics for Discussion*. The book is available as an eBook in the library of the Radboud University Nijmegen.

those wrong ideas. But this is not only about the content of those ideas, but also about how they work. So, it must also concern the working of the mind, i.e. ideation. An important factor in this is that the client is often unaware of the idea (or ideas) that make him unhappy. One factor that the psychologist will often have to use to change the client's mindset is suggestion. The therapist says one thing, but conveys to the client on a deeper level a completely different message, a message that the client might not be aware of, but that may completely change his way of thinking. More research is needed into the processes of ideation and suggestion.

Bibliography

1. León L. "The world-solution for world-problems: the problem, its cause, its solution". Personal Edition, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. ISBN 90-9002592-8¹ (1988).
2. Darwin CR. "The power of movement in plants". London: John Murray (1880).

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¹The book is available at the Library of Congress and at the Dutch National Library. The book is also available as an eBook at the Library of the Radboud University Nijmegen.