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SPECIAL ISSUE INTRODUCTION

Values of happiness

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How people conceive of happiness reveals much about who they are and the values they hold dear. The modern conception of happiness as private good feeling is the result of a long sequence of changes in dominant conceptions of the ends of life and of humanity's place in the cosmos. This invites reflection on how the very vagueness of happiness can account for its powerful claim to render diverse values commensurable. In arguing for the importance of a critical, ethnographic approach to happiness— one concerned less with gauging how happy people are than with how happiness figures as an idea, mood, or motive in everyday life—we highlight its relationship to values, as well as questions of scope, virtue, and responsibility. Whether real or elusive, the pursuit of happiness structures time in specific ways and is largely other-oriented, insofar as one's own happiness would seem best left in the hands of others.

Keywords: happiness, values, moral judgment, wellbeing, moral moods, purpose in life, temporality

"Tell me how you define happiness, and I'll tell you who you are!" So concludes one survey of the concept's treatment by Western philosophy over the past two millennia (S. Bok 2010: 54), testifying not only to the diversity of ways in which happiness has been understood—even just within our own intellectual heritage—but also, and more importantly, to its role as what we might term a diagnostic of forms of life. How people conceive of, evaluate, and pursue (or not) happiness can reveal much about how they live and the values they hold dear. An ethnographic inquiry into happiness, we argue, offers a unique window onto the ways in which people diversely situated in time and space grapple with fundamental questions about how to live, the ends of life, and what it means to be human.

The idea of happiness—however defined in its specifics—makes a claim about what is most desirable and worthwhile in a person's life. It purports to be

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an all-inclusive assessment of a person's condition, either at a specific moment in time or in relation to a life in its entirety; it expresses a hope that the various aims, enjoyments, and desires that characterize a life—though they may often conflict with each other—may ultimately be harmonized, or somehow rendered coherent (White 2006). For most people in the West today, happiness is about feeling good; it denotes a preponderance of positive over negative affect, and a general sense of contentment or satisfaction with life. It is inherently subjective, consisting of people's evaluations of their own life, both affective and cognitive (Diener 1984; Argyle, Martin, and Crossland 1989). This is, of course, but one of many ways in which the term has been understood—and, like all others, says much about the social, economic, and political conditions in which it emerged.

Insofar as the study of happiness necessarily draws together considerations of meaning, values, and affect, it could be seen to lie at the very heart of the anthropological endeavor. Indeed, while the term itself has only very recently returned to fashion in academic circles, there is a real sense in which the underlying questions in which it deals have long been subjected to the ethnographic gaze: about the diverse ends that people pursue and how they seek fulfillment; about the structure of motivation and action; about the relationship between the sensuous and the moral. Since Durkheim, anthropologists have recognized that people are generally happiest in those moments when they feel most connected to others—hence, perhaps, the overwhelming interest in the ebb and flow of kinship, not to mention the power of those liminal moments in which social barriers melt away to produce an integrated, often joyful sense of *communitas* (see also Freeman, Walker, Robbins, this collection). Anthropologists have also long been acutely aware of the diversity of ends for which people strive, many of which may stand in a complex relationship to happiness (reproducing the lineage, say, or attaining the status of ancestorhood); not to mention their passion for engaging in a bewildering variety of projects and practices, from the Nuer's enthusiasm for oxen to the fervor of the kula ring (cf. Lambek 2008: 143). As Marshall Sahlins (2006) pointed out, moreover, there is more than one possible "road to affluence," because there exists more than one way of narrowing the gap between human wants and the means to satisfy them. And on the whole, desiring little would seem more conducive to living well than producing much in order to meet escalating material desires.

Given its unique ability to unravel what matters most to people and why, the relative silence of anthropology in the face of the recent "happiness turn" (Ahmed 2010) in the social sciences is all the more striking. As the most cursory glance reveals, the topic of happiness has achieved an extraordinary prominence over the course of the past decade, not only in academic research, but also in popular and public discourse. Bhutan's now-famous "Gross National Happiness" index has been widely heralded as an alternative to gross national product and other conventional measures of prosperity and growth for arriving at policy decisions and measuring progress; the idea has captured the attention of governments around the world,[1] and indeed the United

1. In Britain, for example, Prime Minister David Cameron has identified happiness as a "key challenge" for politicians everywhere, and he announced in November 2010 that it would be a major governmental objective to be regularly measured in the national statistics (BBC 2006).

Nations General Assembly has now passed a resolution that happiness should have a greater role in development policy, encouraging member states "to pursue the elaboration of additional measures that better capture the importance of the pursuit of happiness and well-being" (United Nations News Service 2011).

Placing happiness at the center of public policy is not, of course, a new idea; after all, the pursuit of happiness is famously enshrined in the French Constitution and the US Declaration of Independence. Bentham's utilitarian "science of happiness" was intended to be a means by which governments could measure the expected pleasures and pains resulting from policy proposals and select those that would produce the greatest net happiness. His ideas, though influential, were not adopted at the time in part because of the obvious difficulties of directly measuring something as intangible as happiness. In recent decades, however, psychologists and economists have made increasingly sophisticated attempts to overcome this problem, producing ever more refined sets of instruments and techniques, with ever more influence on governmental policy.

At the very heart of their methodology lies the deceptively simple procedure of asking people more or less directly, in the context of a survey or questionnaire, how happy they are; or how satisfied they feel overall with the lives they lead.[2] Such a procedure is useful because it produces results that are easily quantifiable, and which lend themselves to systematic comparison. Nevertheless, the potential limitations of such a method should immediately also be apparent, perhaps especially to an anthropologist. We may well ask: Just how reliable are such responses, and what exactly do they reveal? As Sara Ahmed has pointed out, the model of subjectivity on which this research relies is a quite specific and somewhat peculiar one, "where one knows how one feels, and where the distinction between good and bad feeling is secure, forming the basis of subjective as well as social well-being" (2010: 6). What do people really understand by happiness anyway? Why should we assume respondents are all talking about the same thing? What if happiness means vastly different things from one place to the next, perhaps to the extent that the meanings contradict one other?

There are still broader concerns: Even if we could identify precisely what is meant by the term, is happiness really the best or most desirable goal? It has been suggested by some that happiness as such is illusory, or at best a side-effect; indeed, that pursuing happiness directly can only lead to further unhappiness, especially

2. The "happiness turn" has probably made the greatest impact in the fields of economics and psychology, with increasing numbers of economists proposing happiness indices and self-reported wellbeing as alternatives to measurements such as income or gross national product; and with growing interest among psychologists in "mental health" rather than illness, including the development of positive psychology. Both groups tend to measure "subjective wellbeing," which is often used synonymously with happiness or as a broader measure which encompasses it. Involving both cognitive judgments and affective reactions, measurements of subjective wellbeing typically try to capture both the momentary pleasurable sensation and an evaluation of one's life as a whole (for an overview of measures see S. Bok 2010: 33–34). Typical survey questions might include the following: "Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?" "How much purpose does your life have?" "How satisfied with are you with your life these days, on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'?"

when it becomes a kind of duty (e.g., Bruckner 2011). In any case, what about other desirable goals for policy—or grassroots struggles for that matter—such as freedom, equality, or social justice? Why is maximizing happiness a better aim than, say, alleviating poverty or enhancing "capabilities" (e.g., Sen 2008)?[3] In a trenchant critique of the "happiness industry," William Davies (2015) decries the fact that a particular concept of happiness as something objective, measurable, and capable of being administered is rapidly gaining currency among the global elite, as well as increasing numbers of policy makers and managers, and mobilized in ways that potentially expand forms of surveillance and social control. He suggests that the current concern with happiness grows out of a particular scientific utopia originating in the Enlightenment, but gaining real traction in the late nineteenth century, in which "core questions of morality and politics will be solvable with an adequate science of human feelings" (ibid.: Loc114). A promise, that is, that a science of subjective feeling will prove the ultimate tool for working out how to act, both morally and politically. It must be emphasized, though, that the aim of making public policy "scientific"—and thus divorced from any specific moral or ideological foundation—is not without practical consequences, and—as we argue below—is certainly not apolitical.

The rapid spike of interest in happiness over the past decade or so would also seem to have much to do with the nature of twenty-first-century capitalism. Western economies increasingly depend on psychological and emotional engagement with work and commerce, but find this ever more difficult to sustain in a context of rising inequality and alienation. At the same time, increasingly sophisticated consumer technologies for monitoring and quantifying people's moods and feelings are enlarging the opportunities for surveillance and "expert administration" of their lives, and beginning to generate the promise of a new, "post-neoliberal era," in which the market is no longer the primary tool for this capture of mass sentiment (Davies 2015: Loc172). The techniques of positive psychology are thus mobilized in order to bring emotions and wellbeing within broader calculations of economic efficiency.

Whether for these or other concerns, anthropologists have had little to contribute to these prominent debates. There is a certain suspicion of happiness as an essentially bourgeois preoccupation, increasingly associated with a neoliberal agenda, and potentially at odds with emancipatory politics. To this we might also add that the discipline has often gravitated toward more "negative" forms of human experience, such as suffering, pain, or poverty (Thin 2008; Robbins 2013a). As a result, to the extent that "cultural" factors, including issues of translation and comparison, are taken seriously in the wider cross-disciplinary literature, discussions tend to be dominated by cultural psychologists and economists, who often have a more quantitative orientation, and may prefer to direct efforts toward refining

3. Robert Nozick (1990: 117) writes: "We want experiences, fitting ones, of profound connection with others, of deep understanding of natural phenomena, of love, of being profoundly moved by music or tragedy, or doing something new and innovative, experiences very different from the bounce and rosiness of the happy moments".

the questionnaires used to gauge levels of happiness in a population.[4] We firmly believe that disengagement from one of the most important and high-profile recent developments in cross-disciplinary research and public debate would be a grave error. While beyond the scope of this introduction, many of the findings of happiness studies—from both cultural psychology and economics—are of significant interest and relevance for anthropology, as Neil Thin (2012) has shown at length in his excellent overview. It is important to note that the methods and techniques of happiness research have already been subjected to extensive critical scrutiny, with many of the most thoroughgoing and elaborate criticisms coming from within the field itself.[5] Moreover, some practitioners have explicitly tried to encourage more input from anthropologists, acknowledging the need for—and possible advantages of—more nuanced ethnographic approaches (e.g., Diener and Suh 2000; Suh and Oishi 2004: 221). While our approach does not preclude critique, nor does it take critique to be the paramount goal; our intention is to open up rather than foreclose debate with happiness studies, engaging the field on our terms, but in a constructive and inclusive manner.

The approach we pursue in this collection is thus ethnographic, first and foremost. Owing to the sheer volume of work on the topic, we felt it especially important to develop an approach from the ground up, as it were, led by ethnography rather than the findings and assumptions of other disciplines, for it is precisely in this way that anthropology might have something genuinely original and interesting to contribute to cross-disciplinary discussions and debates. It is significant that none of the contributors to this volume employed the strategy of asking people directly about happiness as a central part of their research. This may be, in the end, what most distinguishes our approach from that adopted by the happiness studies community. Needless to say, while this avoids some of the problems faced by studies reliant on self-reporting, it raises other problems of its own. One is that we are simply unable to contribute to the vast enterprise of gauging comparative levels of happiness around the world, or indeed quantifying in any way "how happy" people are. The problem of how we can know or infer (let alone describe) the internal psychological states of others has gained renewed attention in recent years, especially in light of recognition that in some cultural contexts, the concealment of one's "true" thoughts or emotions may be deemed desirable or inevitable (see, e.g., Robbins and Rumsey 2008; Keane 2015: 125). Our focus here, then, is not on gauging or comparing levels of happiness, but on how happiness figures as an idea, mood, or motive in people's day-to-day lives: how they actually go about making their lives happier—or not—whether consciously or otherwise, in ways conditioned by dominant social values as well as an array of aims and aspirations that are potentially conflicting.

4. For discussions of intercultural differences in the constitutive elements of happiness, beyond the apparently differing "levels" of happiness reported, see, for example, Mishra (1994); Camfield et al. (2009); Kan, Karasawa, and Kitayama (2009); Bull et al. (2010); Lu (2010); Oishi et al. (2013).

5. For an overview of some of these problems, see D. Bok (2010: 30–37). The validity of measures is discussed at some length by Dolan and Peasgood (2010).

While happiness is not necessarily an easy topic for anthropology, given its notoriously elusive quality, we hope to show why it is nevertheless an important and promising one. In what follows, we direct attention to a number of themes we consider particularly relevant to an ethnographic approach, including considerations of scope, virtue, and responsibility in gauging how happiness is conceptualized and how it comes to figure in people's actions and judgments; the link between happiness and values; the nature of happiness as a moral mood; and, finally, issues of temporal orientation, including senses of happiness as a receding horizon, a pursuit or promise more virtual than actual, ever so slightly out of one's grasp.

Questions of happiness

Despite the general dearth of dedicated ethnographic treatments, the past few years have witnessed the emergence of a handful of engagements with happiness and the related topic of wellbeing from an anthropological perspective (e.g., Corsín Jiménez 2008a; Berthon et al. 2009; Mathews and Izquierdo 2009a; Miles-Watson 2010; Jackson 2011, 2013; Johnston 2012; Thin 2012; Fischer 2015).[6] These works suggest—contrary to the assumptions of some social scientific researchers—that there is no single or unified "pursuit of happiness"; or as Gordon Mathews and Carolina Izquierdo put it, "Happiness is not one thing; it means different things in different places, different societies, and different cultural contexts" (2009b: 1). This conclusion finds increasing support from the work of cultural psychologists, although systematic cross-cultural comparison to date has been overwhelmingly structured around the contrast between so-called "individualistic" and "collectivistic" cultures, with one of the more oft-repeated findings being that happiness in the latter context (paradigmatically East Asia) is more a matter of collective welfare, social harmony, or fulfilling one's duties than it is of individual achievement, sensory pleasures, or positive evaluations of the self (see, e.g., Lu 2010; Selin and Davey 2012). The emerging anthropological literature also draws attention to three important observations that resonate strongly with the present collection: that happiness in general is best understood as intersubjective and relational (Thin 2012); that even pleasure, as a universal human experience, is informed by cultural expectations (Clark 2009: 207); and that wellbeing throws into relief the difficulty of considering both social realities and human virtues simultaneously (Corsín Jiménez 2008b: 180). In other words, studying happiness requires attention to the social and cultural as well as moral and political dimensions of human experience.

To this end, we find it especially useful to consider happiness in relation to values, or what *matters* to people, in three interrelated senses. Firstly, happiness is not only imagined very differently across cultural contexts—and indeed within specific contexts by differently situated actors—but is also itself quite differently valued,

6. Several of these authors explicitly prefer the term "wellbeing" to "happiness," largely on the grounds that the former includes objective elements or measurements such as quality of life, and as such lends itself more easily to cross-cultural comparison. Happiness is more "experience-near," being intrinsically linked to a person's own evaluation of his or her life.

that is, evaluated as more or less important according to circumstances.[7] In other words, happiness may not be an unquestionable good in every social context, let alone the ultimate good. Secondly, happiness is itself intrinsically evaluative. To say that one is happy is to make a positive evaluation or overall assessment of one's condition; typically in a way that purports to take into consideration the whole multiplicity of aims a person may have. Thirdly, happiness cannot therefore be separated from the spectrum of cultural values in relation to which it becomes meaningful, and which necessarily inform the process of evaluation. As the contributions to this collection show, a range of values may be seen to promote happiness, in the conventional sense of good feeling: from peaceable sociality and the absence of worry to financial success or the security of one's family. Whether these values actually do promote happiness is another question; and such values can also be potentially contradictory, as we discuss further below.

While it can be useful and important to consider what happiness "is," including how it is imagined or (in some cases, perhaps) achieved, we are equally concerned in this collection with how happiness "works," or what it "does": how it enters into people's lives, leading them to choose one path over another—and what it reveals about those people in the process. We draw on the strengths of ethnography to explore how notions of happiness may give rise to or delimit possibilities for action, entering as motives into personal projects, alongside the range of other goals, aspirations, or values that may together comprise specific conceptions of a life well lived, or worth pursuing. As such, we hope to reveal something of people's attempts to create good in their lives (Robbins 2013a: 457): how people strive to make not only their own life happier, but also the lives of those around them, often within challenging or even downright hostile circumstances.

Happiness in transit: Scope, virtue, responsibility

The currently dominant conception in the West considers both happiness and its pursuit to be largely private matters. That is, happiness is best understood as an interior state of an individual actor, or what one prominent spokesperson of the "new science of happiness" suggests can be glossed as "feeling good—enjoying life and wanting the feeling to be maintained" (Layard 2005: 12). This state might best be achieved by those same individuals, acting in their best interests, cultivating relationships with others, and so on. Yet this has not always been the dominant understanding, and may in fact be a relatively recent development. In the ancient world,

7. Thus Catherine Lutz (1988: 167) observes that on the Micronesian island of Ifaluk, in stark contrast to those American approaches to child rearing and emotion which elevate happiness to an important position, the Ifaluk view happiness/excitement as something that must be carefully monitored and sometimes halted in children. In other, more extreme cases, individual happiness can be envisaged in direct opposition to broader ideals of the good life, as in the case of the Jain renouncers described by James Laidlaw (2005). Jainism, he argues, "devalues worldly well-being to the extent of institutionalising, and recommending for the spiritually advanced as a telos of religious life, the practice of fasting to death" (ibid.:158).

happiness was understood with reference to a far broader conception of human flourishing, or *eudaimonia*, implying a relatively objective evaluation of a whole life, with particular reference to the practice of virtue: a happy life, simply put, was a life of virtue. Those who promote the modern conception point out that the two contrastive definitions are not necessarily in conflict; after all, as Richard Layard (ibid.) reminds us, doing good makes you feel good. Nevertheless, the relationship between *eudaimonia* and *hedonia* continues to structure many recent debates in the field (see also Engelke, Walker, this collection).

The transition from the ancient conception of human flourishing to the modern understanding of happiness as an inner psychological state, a feeling or mood, might in some ways be understood as a gradual process of interiorization that recalls venerated anthropological discussions of concepts of personhood (e.g., Mauss [1938] 1985). There seems to be an analogy of sorts to the kinds of transformations often thought to have taken place whereby some idea of a distributed, relational, or "dividual" person, construed as constituted by her relations with others (e.g., Bird-David 1999), is progressively replaced by a more "modern" conception of an autonomous, self-contained "individual," who is now seen to exist prior to relations rather than constituted by them. As Charles Taylor (1989) has made clear, insofar as the self is constituted in and through the taking of moral stances, such notions of personhood are intimately connected to ideas of the good.

Looking back more broadly at how happiness has figured through the history of Western civilization, it is evident that a succession of monumental changes have taken place. As Darrin McMahon (2006) demonstrates in a magisterial study, the idea of happiness as an aim suitable for (and potentially available to) everyone—that is, something potentially within the grasp of each individual and attainable largely through his or her own actions—is indeed a highly culturally specific idea that only came into being as late as the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. In the tragedies of the ancient Greeks, happiness could only be achieved through some miraculous, divine intervention or blessing; it was deemed to be beyond human agency, a matter of luck or fortune, fragile and highly contingent upon external conditions (Nussbaum 2001). After Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, happiness came to be seen as a final end (Annas 1993: 12, 39); and with the latter two thinkers in particular, the responsibility for happiness began to shift to human beings themselves—in this case, as something to be attained through virtuous behavior, and thus partially within one's control. It was thus only under the stable conditions of small, democratic city-states, during the "Golden Age" of Periclean Athens, that happiness came to be envisaged as a realizable human goal. During the precarious conditions following the demise of the city-state, a widespread sense of insecurity coincided with the popularity of the ideas of Zeno and Epicurus (S. Bok 2010: 48). Despite their differences, both these schools emphasized personal control and agency, and envisaged happiness as independent of external goods: whether through virtuous living aligned with the natural order of the world, in the case of Zeno's stoicism; or through reaching a state of tranquility, recognizing that many of our desires are idle or misplaced while taking pleasure in life's simple enjoyments (McMahon 2006: 47–64). For the ancients since Socrates, in other words, happiness was not in conflict with virtue (Annas 1993: 449) and could be expected as a reward for virtuous living: a possibility, even if a rare or exclusive one.

For Christian thinkers such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, true happiness was not possible in life but only in heaven (S. Bok 2010: 71), even though virtue remained central: "Happiness remained a telos, an end, and virtue the principal means to guide the way. But whereas the ancients had conceived of virtue as almost entirely of human striving, won only by the efforts of a happy few, Christians understood virtue as a divine gift, obtainable, in theory, by all" (McMahon 2006: 137). A much later formulation, a modern one, drew from these ideas the promise of universal deliverance attainable for all, as well as the notion of human responsibility for one's own happiness. In the eighteenth century, these ideas came together to form a particular vision of happiness as something all people deserved (ibid.: 230). At the same time, its connection to virtue weakened. This gave rise to a more receptive attitude toward good feeling and pleasure, with significant long-term consequences. Some thinkers of the time, including those utilitarians interested in "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," attempted to resist the dissociation of happiness and virtue. John Stuart Mill, for example, whose work is often considered to be more subtle than Bentham's calculus, includes virtue among the pleasures, along with music and health (Nussbaum 2010: 85). Nevertheless, the connection between the two did not arise naturally from their system of thought, but rested instead on "the moral capital of the past" (McMahon 2006:230). The incongruity to which this gave rise was addressed explicitly by Kant, who saw happiness—already understood by that time as pleasure or good feeling—as opposed to both reason and morality (Annas 1993: 449). In Kant's words, "Making someone happy is quite different from making him good" (1996: 90).

Once the ties of happiness to virtue were no longer seen as binding, many thinkers (Tocqueville, for instance) considered the pursuit of individual happiness—through focusing on private pleasure and wealth, for example—as being in tension with the wider social good, and perhaps ultimately damaging for the actual realization of happiness (McMahon 2006: 341). We thus arrive at the modern conception of happiness, and with it the particular range of concerns most debated by happiness scholars today, particularly those with an interest in applying happiness research to public policy.

If we now consider this (necessarily schematic) historical overview in light of the existing comparative literature on happiness across cultures, as well as the contributions to this collection, some key themes emerge which are of particular interest in formulating an anthropological approach to happiness. In particular, we suggest that happiness can be considered as a triangulation of scope, virtue, and responsibility: three axes, as it were, along which the concept varies in significant ways, and in relation to which it may be apprehended and interrogated.

Firstly, then, the *scope* of happiness is always constrained or delimited in some way, such that we may usefully ask *who* can hope or even expect to be happy, and to what extent, and why. It is noteworthy that the ancient Greek conception of happiness as dependent on good luck and fortune, or favorable external circumstances, is also found in many other parts of the world (see, e.g., Lu 2001; da Col and Humphreys 2010); and that the English term "happy" is apparently used far more loosely—and is thus potentially more accessible as a condition—than its equivalents in other languages, including Polish, Russian, German, and French (Wierzbicka 2004; see also Oishi et al. 2013). Among the Amazonian Urarina,

anyone can achieve the ideal state of tranquility, though it is rarely lasting (Walker, this collection). Most migrants from Sylhet in Bangladesh consider happiness attainable, even if their expectations are not fulfilled all that often (see Gardner, this collection); though happiness seems destined always to elude the young militiamen from Guinea-Bisseau (Vigh, this collection). What is more, the scope of happiness can also vary in terms of pertaining primarily to an individual or a group. It is clearly the former on Yap—hence its ambivalence (Throop, this collection)—while among people of the Gamo Highlands in Ethiopia, happiness is inconceivable in isolation and arguably pertains to the group as a whole (Freeman, this collection).

Secondly, happiness always stands in a particular relationship to *virtue*: for instance, as the goal of virtuous action, or as its precondition; or as severed from virtue altogether. This relationship lies at the heart of at least two crucial questions: What kind of life will bring happiness? And, how is happiness morally evaluated? One has the impression that the life of the retired Swiss farmer Willi discussed by Lambek (this collection) was a happy one largely because it was characterized by virtuous activity. Similarly, for British humanists, virtue—or being "good without God"—is central to how they understand the promise of (secular) happiness (Engelke, this collection). On the other hand, virtue scarcely enters into the calculations of the young Guinea-Bissau militiamen in pursuit of hedonic pleasure (Vigh, this collection); while happiness is in tension with virtue on the island of Yap insofar as it impedes attunement to the suffering of others (Throop, this collection).

Thirdly, happiness implicates specific forms of *responsibility*. It raises the question of who is responsible for the happiness of whom, and in what ways they may be held accountable. The notion that individuals are responsible for their own happiness is without doubt one of the most politically significant features of the modern conception, and goes some way toward accounting for its embrace by the purveyors of neoliberalism. For the British humanists described by Engelke in this collection, assuming full responsibility for one's own happiness in the here and now is crucial for living well, and for creating purpose in life. In other contexts, emphasis may be placed on the duty to care for the happiness of others. It is widely maintained that East Asian conceptions of happiness in particular are deeply social and relational and may have little to do with individual achievement (Kitayama and Markus 2000; Kan, Karasawa and Kitayama 2009). Like the collectivism/individualism dichotomy itself, this may be an oversimplification, especially in a contemporary context of rapid individualization and changing social values. As Stafford shows (this collection), some Chinese today are struggling with the issue of whose happiness they should strive for: whether their own, that of their aging parents, or their children. Moreover, they must deal with the fact that while Chinese parents are still expected to take some responsibility for the marriage choices of their children, they may be no less successful at forecasting the future happiness of their children than they are at forecasting their own.

The issue of responsibility is also in many ways at the core of Hannah Arendt's analysis of that crucial moment of transition in which the right to the pursuit of happiness was inscribed in the framing of the American Constitution. Arendt ([1963] 1999) argues that the original concern of the founders was squarely with "public happiness," an eminently political conception associated above all with participation in public affairs, or an individual's laying claim to public power—in recognition

of the fact that people could not be altogether "happy" if their happiness was located and enjoyed only in private life. This soon gave way, however, to the later concern with "private happiness," associated with the rights of subjects to be protected by the government. Arendt laments what she describes as "the conversion of the citizen of the revolutions into the private individual of nineteenth-century society . . . this disappearance of the 'taste for political freedom' as the withdrawal of the individual into an 'inward domain of consciousness' where it finds the only appropriate region of human liberty" (ibid.: 140). Yet whereas Arendt saw the currently dominant "private" conception of happiness as depoliticized, we would argue that it is in fact eminently political, albeit indicative of a different kind of politics.

The commensurability of values

Happiness researchers working in or influenced by the utilitarian tradition take happiness to be the greatest good and ultimate end of life. From the perspective of the utilitarian ideal of greatest happiness for the greatest number, the concept itself is relatively unproblematic, being closely associated with pleasurable feeling, and constituting the one "ultimate goal that enables us to judge other goals by how they contribute to it" (Layard 2005: 113). In other words, happiness offers a single, ultimate good that can be measured and under which all other goods may effectively be subsumed. Yet as we have just seen in considering the history of the idea of happiness in Western civilization alone—and as the articles in this collection show in a comparative, contemporary context—the notion of happiness as the ultimate end or highest value has hardly been undisputed.[8] Indeed, some scholars—Amartya Sen among them—have raised important questions about how we should judge the goodness of human lives, and in particular whether other key concerns, such as freedom, can really be seen as subsidiary to utility (or happiness), as relevant only insofar as they determine or enhance it.[9]

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8. Bentham identified happiness with pleasure, considered to be homogeneous and differing only in duration and quantity, whereas Mill (whose ideas are somewhat closer to those of Aristotle) considered pleasures as differing not only in quantity and duration, but also in kind or quality, thus distinguishing between "higher" and "lower" pleasures. According to Nussbaum (2010: 85), it is this latter approach that forms the basis of the most modern discussions of pleasure among philosophers. Layard (2005) rejects as faulty the distinction between qualitatively different pleasures, or what he refers to as the happiness of experiences, arguing that certain kinds of pleasures have a more long-term effect on our happiness, while others only increase our happiness short-term. He rejects as paternalistic any qualitative differentiation of pleasures that results in enumeration of goods: "We ought never to say: this is good for you, even though it will never make you or others feel better. On the contrary, if we want to measure the quality of life it must be based on how people feel" (ibid.: 113). This is a powerful and persuasive argument, and its apparent simplicity makes it an appealing tool for public policy.

9. Sen (2009) questions the claim that happiness is the supreme good and ultimate goal because it alone is self-evidently good, arguing that how people feel should not necessarily be the ultimate yardstick, given people's well-documented abilities to adapt to

The argument for value pluralism—that there may be many different values held dear to people and that they are not necessarily commensurable, as they make different demands on us and thus cannot be reduced to a common medium of pleasure or utility—has been made forcefully by Isaiah Berlin, among others. This critique can be situated within a broader philosophical debate around value, one that has recently begun to attract greater anthropological attention. A central question concerns the relationship between the multiple values held in high regard, whether across social groups or within them: whereas monists argue that values can be seen as working harmoniously together—either because they can be subsumed under a higher value or because the important values support each other—pluralists tend to see them as fundamentally at odds, as some values may preclude pursuing others seen as of equal worth (Robbins 2013b: 100). It should come as no surprise that many anthropologists, deeply concerned with cultural specificity, find their position to be closer to value pluralism, and may feel discomfort at suggestions of any one value being a universal metavalue or ultimate end. Nevertheless, as suggested by recent anthropological discussions around the topic (e.g., Graeber 2001, 2013; Lambek 2008; Otto and Willerslev 2013; Robbins 2013b), the debate itself remains unresolved, and neither side can easily be dismissed.[10]

Value pluralism rests on an assumption that certain values are simply irreconcilable. Berlin was concerned that if the highest values of different people are at odds, then conflict may be inevitable; his suggestion recalls a more general statement by Weber that "the various value spheres [or values] of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other" (1946: 147, cited in Robbins 2013b: 100). The articles in this collection, however, point to a different conclusion: while it may be difficult to endorse the possibility of any universal metavalue that allows for reconciliation of all lower values, the position that irreconcilability implies conflict is an oversimplification. We propose that values may well be incommensurable, and yet not stand in any direct conflict. In the everyday world of practical ethics, people routinely make judgments involving incommensurable values in a straightforward, formal, or schematic manner.

Instructive here is Michael Lambek's (2008) work on virtue and value, which argues that while economic values rest on an assumption of commensurability, ethical values are incommensurable and subject to judgment rather than choice. Nevertheless, historically speaking,

> it is the nature of society, culture, or mind to posit or require some absolute standard of value or a meta-value that could provide a sound and universal measure of things. . . . There is a dialectic in human history between establishing absolute values against which everything else is

hardship, and that they may have good reason to subject their own positive feelings to critical scrutiny. He nevertheless acknowledges that the achievement of other things that people may value may influence their sense of happiness, because people take pleasure in success in achieving their objectives; and that happiness can thus have indicative merit insofar as it reveals whether people are succeeding or failing to get what they value and have reason to value.

10. For example, Ronald Dworkin (2011) has recently made a forceful case for the unity of value.

> relative and to be measured, hence rendered commensurable to one another, and discovering things that render those absolutes relative in turn. (Lambek 2008: 147)

In most societies there is a pressure to establish some overarching value as the ultimate one, even though, historically, these values do not remain uncontested. Two important lessons can be drawn from these observations. Firstly, the incommensurability of values need not imply total conflict, or the impossibility of communication or translation between them; it presents instead a "partial barrier" that can be navigated daily through judgment. In bringing the focus back to everyday moral practice and decision making, this point is echoed by several contributions to this collection (Freeman, Stafford, Vigh, among others). Secondly, economic values are by definition commensurable, and market logic calls for commensurability across different spheres of social life. This insight is important, because it goes to the very heart of the question of why happiness has received such extraordinary attention across the social sciences over the past decade or so. We suggest that as monetary value became increasingly problematic as the basis for this market commensurability, happiness has proved appealing to many because it appears to offer, in the form of an ultimate end, precisely such commensurability. In other words, it is because of its potential for translating across apparently diverse ends that happiness as a metavalue has proved so powerful and alluring, while at the same time remaining thoroughly embedded in—even further entrenching—a market logic.

Opposing the utilitarian conception of happiness as the highest end, a forceful argument for the multiplicity of values has recently been made by Robert and Edward Skidelsky (2012). These authors list seven basic goods (health, security, dignity, personality, friendship, harmony with nature, and leisure)—notably excluding happiness, at least in the modern sense of a pleasant state of mind, which they argue is not a good in itself, as everything depends on what one is happy about. In this way, they effectively seek to renew the link between happiness and virtue. They emphatically defend their substantive account of the good life against the charge that it is potentially paternalistic, or even dangerous, by directly challenging the liberal assumption of "neutrality": the assumption that policy makers should refrain from making positive statements about the way people should live, or creating policies with positive content, on the grounds that doing so leads to authoritarianism. It is the legacy of John Rawls, in particular, that only those principles necessary for people of different tastes and ideals to live together harmoniously should be embodied and promoted by a liberal state. The Skidelskys argue that this neutrality is largely fictional: "A 'neutral' state simply hands power to the guardians of capital to manipulate public taste in their own interests" (ibid.: 12). The refusal to state values clearly, in other words, fosters policies that are far from neutral in consequence.

Rather than the value pluralism represented by the Skidelskys, it is value monism that has been most closely associated with the danger of slipping into authoritarianism (Robbins 2013b: 102). Outside this particular debate, happiness discourse in economics and policy making may have acquired such power and prominence precisely because of the way it manages to evade both of these issues. It promises a unified value—the translatability and uniformity so very useful for policy making and measurement—while avoiding substantive claims about the nature or content of

happiness, which is often defined simply in subjective terms. Whereas it could well be argued that the major flaw of this discourse is its conceptual emptiness, it must be remembered that this is precisely what makes it so versatile, flexible, and, ultimately, more powerful. Metavalues in general, as anthropology has taught us, are most effective when they are not clearly defined. As Lambek observes in relation to religious values: "Rappaport argued that . . . [they] do their work best when they are stripped of informational content and specificity. Ultimate sacred postulates like 'God is one' may be deeply meaningful to their adherents but they are effective and enduring because they are referentially empty and unfalsifiable" (Lambek 2008: 144). We propose that "happiness," as it currently figures in the rising discourse of happiness studies, acquires its power precisely from its elusive definition.

Happiness as a moral mood

Are moral considerations external to happiness? Is there a conflict, in other words, between what it is morally right to do, and what is conducive to one's happiness? Or does happiness necessarily include, even depend on, being virtuous or morally upright? Insofar as happiness is considered to be a mood, feeling, or emotion, it has been relatively isolated from considerations of morality in recent work. Some of the reasons for this were touched upon above: the decoupling of happiness and virtue led to a view of the former as standing in tension with the wider social good. For some thinkers—most notably Kant—there is necessarily a conflict, in deciding what to do, between one's own happiness and the demands of morality. Within psychology, while researchers have been eager to emphasize the importance for individual happiness of rich social relationships, happiness (unlike, say, gratitude) is not considered to be prosocial; instead it is thought to occur primarily when (good) things happen to the self.[11] It can also occur when good things happen to another, although such reactions seem to require a prior social relationship, as when one is happy for a friend's success.

Nevertheless, according to some philosophers at least (Max Scheler for instance), happiness can be an affective motive of moral action. Ethnographically, there seems to be a close relationship between happiness and the interests of others. Among the Pintupi of Australia, for example, to be happy is to be shown affection and concern, and to show it to others. Because people represent their happiness as deriving from relations with "relations," there is in fact a very close connection between what it means to be among "kin," to be related, and to be "happy" (Myers 1979). Several of the contributions to this collection would similarly suggest that people are indeed often happiest precisely when they are attuned to others (see also Thin 2012). Successfully managing one's moral obligations may in fact be crucial for happiness: as among the Kuranko of Sierra Leone, for whom wellbeing is described as "dependent on an adjustment or balance between our sense of what we owe others and what we owe ourselves" (Jackson 2011: 195). After all, as Jarrett

11. Some studies focusing on the effects of happiness on decision making even indicate that positive moods correlate with less generous or empathetic behaviors, or a higher degree of selfishness (Tan and Forgas 2010).

Zigon and Jason Throop put it, "a good deal of moral experience is about the care of relations," or what they term "being-together-with" (2014: 9).

The extent to which pleasure and virtue conflict, or reinforce each other, is a largely empirical question—still unresolved—that anthropology is perhaps uniquely well situated to answer. In any case, the contributions to this collection converge in suggesting that "real" happiness is not only highly relational—subsisting in the affective dimension of social relationships—but *other-oriented*. The direct pursuit of one's own individual happiness very often fails (e.g., Vigh, Stafford, this collection); on the other hand, in those cases where some form of happiness is actually achieved, it is often a result of actions carried out either *for* or *by others* (e.g., Engelke, Freeman, Walker, this collection). The pursuit of happiness, we might conclude, is best left in the hands of those who care for us.

Temporalities

A final, though no less important, dimension of happiness concerns its temporality, or orientation in relation to the perception and social organization of time. Happiness clearly allows for multiple temporal vantage points: someone's overall condition could be evaluated at a particular moment in time, over a stretch of his or her life, or over that life as a whole (the perspectives taken by, respectively, Kavedžija, Vigh, and Lambek in this collection, for example). Happiness can also contain within it both long-term and short-term components (Walker, Robbins, this collection)—while the sources of happiness may themselves change dramatically over time, even over the space of just a few years (Freeman, this collection). A further key issue may be, as Lambek (this collection) puts it, "the way the temporal and the ethical dimensions intertwine."

Happiness is sometimes seen as pertaining to the distant past, imbuing memories of past times or events; or as located in the future, something for which one hopes or strives. Alternatively, it may be construed as immanent and immediate: as the British humanists profess, "the time to be happy is now" (Engelke, this collection). Wherever it is temporally located, happiness seems closely linked to a sense of "right orientation," a feeling that one is headed in the right direction. Of course, this allows for the distinct possibility that when people get what they want, they may cease to be happy (Bruckner 2011). Happiness can function as a powerful source of motivation, one that shapes the way people's lives are oriented toward certain horizons and not others. This may be true even when the pursuit of happiness itself becomes a kind of moral duty, as it arguably has in the modern West. To the extent that happiness is future-oriented, and to the extent that people's actions may be seen as motivated by this goal of future happiness, it is particularly interesting to consider the emerging body of work by psychologists demonstrating that humans are exceedingly poor at predicting what will make them happy, or, more precisely, how happy some given event or thing will actually make them in the future (Gilbert 2007; see also Stafford, this collection). Moreover, according to a number of studies conducted across widely different social contexts, people are surprisingly resilient in the sense that their self-proclaimed happiness levels remain relatively stable throughout their lives (D. Bok 2010). Even life-changing events, both positive and

negative, affect their subjective wellbeing only temporarily, and it soon restabilizes at its "default" level. How, then, should we account for the wide range of actions ostensibly motivated by the pursuit of happiness, but which rarely if ever result in its achievement? The rational choice theory favored by economists (not far removed from utilitarianism) can only discount these efforts as misguided, based on the faulty reasoning to which humans are regrettably prone (Kahneman and Thaler 2006: 221). Our position, by contrast, is that studying these motivations in a broader sense involves placing the values of happiness alongside other those values seen as comprising or leading to it, as well as those seen as equally if not more important. It is in this way that we can understand the risky, reckless, and often futile pursuits of happiness of the young militiamen described by Vigh (this collection), for example; or the migration stories of young people from Bangladesh, as described by Gardner (this collection), whose expectations are not infrequently frustrated in their pursuit of a better life.

One question that arises, both philosophically and practically, is whether there is anything "real" about happiness. If it always "illusive" (Vigh, this collection), or imagined, endlessly deferred, and elusive when pursued outright (Gardner, this collection), where is it located? Happiness, we might suggest, provides a sense of orientation; like a horizon it delimits a space of action and understanding, even as it recedes from view. Situational and contingent, it brings some things into focus while occluding others, and adds a sense of depth to the mundane and everyday. As Hans-Georg Gadamer observed, speaking of historical consciousness: "To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better" ([1975] 2006: 304).

The elusive or virtual quality of happiness would not make it any less real in its consequences, or capacity to orient people's actions. In many contexts, happiness may be seen as a worthwhile aim; in others it may be seen as lowly, selfish, or in competition with other values. Some of these evaluations will inevitably affect the way people direct their actions and imagine their futures. In contexts where happiness is valued highly, as in the West, the objects and aims with which it is associated will themselves typically be evaluated highly. This is what Ahmed (2010) calls the "promise of happiness": if you do "this," happiness will ensue. Conversely, "this" must therefore be good; and "you," as the kind of being who is guided by it, must therefore be good too. We can thus read Ahmed's observation as suggesting a crucial link between the temporality (and futurity) of happiness and its valuation. Depending on the values of happiness, as they stand in relation to other values, the social world takes its form: people's actions, plans, and motivations are offered to them along with their moral consequences.

Conclusion

One of the central challenges of anthropology is to recognize the potential diversity of human ends and to understand and interpret how people strive collectively to reach a balance between the different ends they value. These need not be commensurable, and may require a continuous exercise of moral judgment (Kavedžija, this collection); they may not all point to happiness. And yet, happiness seems strikingly

well suited as a starting point for inquiring into what gives lives a sense of purpose or direction, or how people search for the best way to live—even in dire and hostile circumstances. For happiness is often something to be achieved—or not—by living a life of one kind or another. In contemplating the diversity of images revealed through ethnographic inquiry, we have suggested that happiness might usefully be considered in terms of questions of scope, virtue, and responsibility. Happiness may not always be seen as available to everyone, nor need it even be considered the property of a single individual; on the contrary, it may be construed as part of the uninterrupted flow of social life, an inherently relational quality not reducible to an individual person. Moreover, happiness always stands in a particular relationship to ideas of virtue, and at a greater or lesser distance from it; just as it always implicates specific forms of responsibility: who, ultimately, is responsible for the happiness of whom, and in what ways they may be held accountable.

Happiness always involves an evaluation of sorts: of one's condition at a moment in time, or of a life as a whole, or of several interpenetrating lives. As such, it is intrinsically linked to questions of value, both in terms of the cultural values that inform and enable the process of arriving at a positive assessment; and in terms of how happiness is itself evaluated in relation to that multiplicity of aims, desires, or experiences that may comprise one's conception of a full, good, or meaningful life. On the island of Yap, for example, happiness is less socially valued than suffering, which elicits empathic concern (Throop, this collection), while in the Ethiopian Gamo Highlands, by contrast, suffering is seen as unnecessary misery, whereas happiness consists of smooth and peaceful social relations—formerly achieved through the constant joking and interaction which ensured "present moment consciousness" and discouraged isolation, though increasingly through Pentecostal religious gatherings (Freeman, this collection). A different sense of changing values in China, and competing visions of family life, call into question the relative importance of individual and family happiness, as well as different possible evaluations of progress and material prosperity (Stafford, this collection). Among Japanese elderly, happiness can only be understood in relation to values of sociality, self-development, and responsibility to others (Kavedžija, this collection), while for British humanists, happiness involves a shared commitment to the Enlightenment values of secular reason (Engelke, this collection). Happiness is bound up in the values of connectivity for Bengali migrants (Gardner, this collection), and in flexible, self-directed work, freedom from trouble, and the cultivation of a "style of life" for the Peruvian Urarina (Walker, this collection). For the retired Swiss dairy farmer Willi, it is his adhesion to the values of hard work and political engagement that underpins his achievement of a happy life (Lambek, this collection). For young militiamen in Guinnea-Bissau, happiness is closely related to social worth and status, or "becoming somebody," along with the values of stability and solidarity (Vigh, this collection).

An ethnographically grounded inquiry into happiness directs attention to what actually matters to people, or what gives life a sense of meaning and purpose, and it does so in a number of useful ways. To be clear, the answer to such a question of what matters most need not always be happiness, at least not in the sense of a pursuit of sustained good feeling. Our suggestion is rather that asking after happiness and its valences can offer a powerful way of understanding how diversely situated

people grapple with fundamental questions of how to live, questions of value, motivation, and purpose; how they negotiate and reconcile their obligations to others with their sense of duty to themselves; and how they imagine their future, including how it feeds into their present and becomes their past. If value brings universes into being (Graeber 2013), the values of happiness go some way toward constituting the worlds of lived moral, political, and emotional experience, and an examination of those values may reveal to us their outlines and contours. We hope readers will find in the essays that follow a sense of worlds both familiar and unfamiliar.

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Valeurs et bonheur

Résumé : La manière dont les gens conçoivent le bonheur en dit long sur ce qu'ils sont et sur leurs valeurs. La conception actuelle du bonheur comme un sentiment de bien-être individuel est le résultat d'une séquence de changements dans les conceptions dominantes des buts d'une vie et de la place de l'humanité dans le cosmos. Cela donne a réfléchir: il semble en effet que le caractère vague du bonheur explique sa capacité a rendre différentes valeurs commensurables. En défendant l'importance d'une approche critique et ethnographique du bonheur - qui s'éloigne d'une approche centré sur la mesure du bonheur et cherche plutôt à analyser où le bonheur figure en tant qu'idée, humeur ou motivation dans la vie quotidienne - nous plaçons au premier plan sa relation aux valeurs, à des questions d'échelle, de vertu, et de responsabilité. Qu'elle soit concrète ou difficile a saisir, la poursuite du bonheur structure le temps de manière spécifique et ouverte vers autrui, dans la mesure où notre propre bonheur est parfois dans de meilleurs mains lorsque qu'il n'est pas dans les nôtres.

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