THE HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE:
WHY WE NEED A PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF HAPPINESS

Transcript of a Video Presentation by Martin Janello

1. Foundations.

Imagine perfect happiness. Then ask yourself whether you are there yet. Most of us probably will say they have some ways to go. Even if we doubt we can reach happiness to perfection, we likely want more, and if this only means holding on to it. But why would we need a philosophy to help us with that? This is the question I will answer today. The short answer is: Because not all happiness just happens. Much of it can or must be created or helped along. And since we want to be happy, we apply our mind to figure out ways of reaching and preserving such a state. This is our philosophy of happiness. We may find it uncomfortable giving such a weighty name to our thinking. But what else should we call it? Philosophy, derived from the Greek *philosophia*, translates as "love of wisdom" or informally simply "wanting to know." This motivation perfectly describes our attitude toward happiness. We want to know what it takes to be happy and how to go about it. We want to understand proper objectives and pursuits for our happiness so we can make ourselves happy. This enthusiasm may cause us to imagine and speculate. But it also has us examining our encounters with happiness to draw lessons from them. These invariably include the insight that happiness is an involved undertaking because it pertains to every aspect of our existence. And we experience it as a fluid state we cannot achieve once and for all. We know it is unstable and subsides and must be continually produced. We are also aware that coincidence can be our friend or foe in these respects. We hope luck will favor us. But it proves unreliable and ultimately inadequate as sole foundation for our happiness. We gladly apply its windfalls, but remain keenly aware that more is necessary to make and keep us happy. All this has us wishing for deeper insights how we can maintain happiness and improve our ability to generate it. These realizations and occupations with understanding happiness deserve to be called our philosophy.

Some may say: That's all good in theory. Yet if we examine our knowledge of happiness, most of us cannot show coherent coverage. We may have reached clarity on some matters, but others remain to be figured out. Presumably, the best we can do for guidance is refer to teachings by authorities who we believe have achieved comprehensive knowledge. But this is not what philosophy is about. It is not about being a know-it-all. Such a level of proficiency does not exist, especially not when it comes to intricacies of human affairs. Nor is it about accepting declarations by proclaimed know-it-alls. Their claims of certainty are suspect and thus subject to evaluation. This is a prudent approach anyway since we cannot tell any claim to be correct until its confirmation. Believing may feel easier, but cannot replace the assurance and counsel of knowing. The catalyst for knowing is asking, and inquiring into, what we don't know and questioning what we think we know. If we do not know something, acting on its assumption is a wager, a leap of faith. At times, we lack better choices. But basing our life on a betting strategy is inherently risk-laden. Conducting ourselves according to what we know, and finding out what we need to know, seems preferable if we can afford it.

Philosophy helps us with that. It assumes our natural state of not knowing or not knowing enough. It casts no aspersions on this ignorance because it concedes inexperience as our starting point in understanding us and our world. Its "wanting to know" theme reflects an inquisitive attitude trying to find its way. It does not pretend to know since this would stand in the way of acquiring knowledge. To ensure that acquired knowledge is sound, it builds on basics within our experiences and lays open the processes and properties of resulting constructs. And while its goal is finality of knowledge, it anticipates growth and betterment, being open to learn more as long as there is more to learn. To keep this productive attitude, it must remain

humble and remind itself of its lack and uncertainty of knowledge. We may pursue knowledge out of an undefined sense of curiosity. But the purpose of this innate drive is its utility for fulfilling needs and wishes. We love wisdom anticipating it will love us back. In this expectation, our motivation to gain wisdom about happiness informs our attraction to wisdom. After all, we explore the most abstract reaches of knowledge in hopes to derive at some point practical edges for sustaining or promoting what we hold dear. The joint purpose of philosophical and happiness inquiries reveals itself more intimately when we think of us. That is because reviewing our life's circumstances places our happiness directly at issue. This makes philosophy and our search for happiness a seamless match to instigate, fuel, and guide existential examinations. Their advancement by a philosophy of happiness, and of us by resulting insights, is the purpose of my work.

2. The Necessity of an Independent Approach.

Welcome then to the Philosophy of Happiness Channel. My name is Martin Janello. I am the author of the Philosophy of Happiness book, which is my main work. I also wrote a six-part series of books to illustrate the themes of this effort. Print copies of all these books are visible over my shoulder here. The purpose of these books and this channel is to aid you in developing or confirming your philosophy of happiness. Not mine or anybody else's. Yours and yours alone. Why do I emphasize so much you should have your own philosophy of happiness? Why don't I just give you accounts of what famous philosophers have said about happiness? Why don't I advocate some of their views or encourage you to make a selection among them?

I strongly recommend that you establish your own philosophy because celebrity philosophies have had their chance and have failed. Their generalized one-philosophy-fits-all attitude has proven itself incapable of placing or keeping humans and humanity in a state of happiness. Their eccentricities and disagreements belie their claims of objectivity. And too often, their incoherent, vague, fragmentary, presuming, or callow content does not back up their claims of authority. Rather, it gives rise to speculative interpretations and supplementations. Most of these secondary sources attempt to remain within their perceived canon of a philosophy. Yet, due to missing guidance in original texts, they are frequently incongruent. In their circular and often byzantine focus, they regularly become even more enigmatic than the philosophies they strive to serve. We are burdened with consulting a patchwork of such secondary sources to try and make sense of what a philosopher meant. This adds annoying complications instead of reconciling and clarifying. All this renders traditional philosophies of happiness an underwhelming mess. Their strangely positive public relations greatly benefit from the fact that very few people with a practical interest actually study them.

This is not to say that established philosophies of happiness are entirely inept or harmful. As one looks through enough of them, essential shared concepts of happiness become discernible that ring true and useful. But these are abstract declarations. Their application and the details of our happiness are in large part established through individual efforts. This is so even if these efforts benefit from shared enterprises or contribute to them. Insights of this kind are not new to us. We grasp the import of personal attention and customization in the pursuit of our happiness. If we don't invest ourselves, and in ourselves, chances are we won't be happy. This approach is reflected in our choices of objectives and their pursuits. Generic, and in particular repetitive or remote generic activities, are empty to us. To be happy, we need tasks that interest and challenge us, and we need to be able to apply our personal skills and discernment to them.

Still, most of us regularly allow our activities to be guided by recipes and principles devised by others. We only tweak them to fit our circumstances and sensitivities. Maybe this is why we habitually hesitate calling our contributions to our mindset our philosophy. But we may also avoid attaching the label of philosophy to external contributions to our mindset. It seems too big a word for the clues we follow. Hardly any of us consciously review philosophies to then make free and informed determinations about our preferences

among them. We mostly live according to presets by which our world runs. These existential conditions have largely grown over time and stem from multiple sources. They include factual necessities, difficulties, and opportunities in us, our forebears, and the environment. They contain emotional instincts, attitudes, habits, myths, spiritualities, and traditions. And they involve an evolution and application of thought and knowledge. These contributions by various actors constitute histories that find expression in deep-rooted cultures. Due to this composite heritage of our settings, not many practices can be traced to a philosophy in the academic sense. And if they can be so traced, the philosophy often reflects this heritage. This may not be a surprise. Experience tells us that, apart from witticisms and aspirational declarations, schoolbook philosophy carries few answers to our problems. It largely leaves us to fend for ourselves in a reality that limits and directs our choices. The conditions in which we find ourselves exert pressures to comply with their factualities. Without adequate counsel, we tend to let them hold us down and push us around.

Then again, many settings allow us to select among objectives and pursuits and to shape these ourselves. They extend to us methods of change or a variety of venues with diverse sets of conditions. But few of us fully use the liberties we are given or might create. We tend to try and fit into circumstances to make the best of them as they are. This may initially be so because we are busy finding out what these circumstances are and how to best conduct ourselves with regard to them. We may not be familiar enough with the ways of our world to make informed choices. So we derive use from education through others about such ways.

At infancy, this education is rightly preceded and accompanied by supervision of us and our circumstances for our safety and familiarization. Yet, education and supervision frequently do not lead us to independent consideration of our circumstances and conduct. Whether by our own inertia or intended continuation of control by other sources, many of us carry on according to our settings and how they were presented. We have learned to accept these settings and what we were taught about them as normal conditions we rarely question. Our foremost queries are how we can cope or prosper in them. As we select and grow into available spaces and functions under given circumstances, we often continue listening to education and accepting supervision. We follow examples, advice, or instructions instead of tackling issues pursuant to our independent consideration. And in consequence, we fail to establish our own guidance system from such considerations. As we become set in our prescribed ways, we become organizational and operational agents of conditions that shaped us. We impart their formational pressures on future generations. Each generation fights for freedom from such pressures. But these insurrections are often short-lived and end in compliance, having changed little for present or future generations. Conditions change, but are largely set to do so by their inherent mechanics instead of mindful determinations. Apart from temporarily taking exception, ironing out wrinkles, and voicing some discontent, our predecessors and we have been taking what is dished out and gone along. I think this unenlightened deference to conditioning is a major cause for unhappiness and that a self-determined approach toward happiness is both necessary and feasible.

3. Substitute Strategies.

To determine whether my assessment is right, we must discuss an apparent paradox. Most of us probably agree that happiness is our principal or one of our foremost motivations. So how is it then, one might ask, there is so much unhappiness? Why is so much going so wrong? Why must we still contend with disrespect and indifference, abuse and exploitation, coercion and discrimination, harassment and intimidation? Why do we keep being beset by strife, hate, and violence, by denial, dishonesty, and deceit, by disorientation, fear, loneliness, and despair? Several causes come to mind. One of them being that some of us may have become so frustrated in finding or retaining happiness that we have given up on it, even if just in some respects. But our drive toward happiness is too deeply ingrained to be simply renounced. It can only be suppressed or perverted. Our persistent pain makes us look for substitute strategies along these lines.

In this search, we can select from an escalating lineup of substitutes according to our level of frustration. The most common choice is cutting back on our ambitions. We give up on objectives and pursuits we truly desire in favor of related pursuits that are more feasible but convey less happiness. We may accept lesser benefits of such substitutes as partial successes and try to cope with the voids they leave in our happiness. Lesser substitutes may supply many of the rewards we might have earned following our dreams. Still, their approach of retrenching from these dreams is bound to gather frustrations. Although we manage to draw some happiness from them, they keep us from pursuing objectives we more genuinely desire. They take up the space, focus, and resources of true desires. And they carry the blemish of having been adopted to weaken and replace our true desires. Due to these detriments, we cannot help becoming resentful toward lesser substitute strategies. We also resent ourselves for authorizing this shortchanging of our desires and for cementing this situation by our continuing commitment to inferior pursuits or objectives. And, as the restraints of substitute strategies become more established and obvious, we feel increasingly hopeless.

These reactions may be amplified if we enter a second stage of escalation in substitute strategies in which we commit to objectives and pursuits without genuine interest in them. We may do so to survive or edge out an existence. We may also be motivated by the idea that such substitute strategies seem easier on us. But strategies in which we lack conviction do not have to move at lower levels of accomplishment. In fact, prospects of higher levels of procedural, collateral, or ultimate rewards turn them more attractive. We may choose them because they mimic the success and operative anticipation of desirable strategies. We may assume they will make us happy because we see others developing happiness from similar strategies. We may convince ourselves that unappealing pursuits or objectives are proper means if we earn rewards we need or want. We may even tell ourselves this renders undesirable pursuits and objectives desirable. But happiness cannot be confined to isolated results. It occurs in significant part as we work in desirable ways toward desirable objectives. If we love the work we invest, it counts less as an expenditure and more as a part of our reward. Since we recognize substitute strategies as mere imitations of desired strategies, the satisfaction we derive from the success of their procedural aspects remains hollow. And this deficiency confers on results an artificial, less satisfying quality even if they directly fulfill desires. Such rewards might look equivalent in the abstract. Yet our bypassing of desirable pursuits and objectives on the way averts equivalent results in our mind. And this tainted genesis keeps contaminating our happiness as we invest rewards according to true desires. Our irritation from missing out on pursuing results in ways we would have preferred and our boredom, disconnection, and aversion plague the spoils of unappealing strategies.

At a third stage of detrimental escalation in substitute strategies, we may recharacterize repulsive pursuits and objectives as happy occasions. Like in the second stage, we may do so if they seem easier to pursue or in hopes they will give access to procedural, collateral, or ultimate rewards. But here, even more, we cannot change our mind on the desirability of a pursuit or objective and reassign it from the unhappiness to the happiness column. Predictably painful upshots of such self-deception counteract and threaten to obliterate and exceed any satisfaction we might derive. Our satisfaction may already suffer from selecting unhappy pursuits or objectives. We may labor under their anticipation and from keeping up our pretense. This pain is amplified by our implementation experiences. Repulsive pursuits to reach desirable objectives suffer from elevated discontent about the involved offensive trade. And repulsive objectives sentence us to unhappiness by their dissatisfactory ends. Their conclusive pain diminishes events of happiness during the course of their successful pursuit and from collateral rewards they might yield. Beyond that, unhappy pursuits and objectives are frequently linked by the logic of a shared trajectory. To bring about repulsive ends, we likely must incur pain from committing or enduring stages that are unhappy in themselves. And a happy conclusion produced by a sequence of repulsive events is also unusual. Thus, attempts to produce happiness by recasting repulsive pursuits or objectives as happy seem chronically destined to fail.

Reviewing the progression of these three stages of substitute strategies, we can detect a marked increase in their cost and risk of return. In a fourth stage, we may therefore try to redirect the negative fallout from the prior three escalation stages onto others. We may influence or obligate them to engage in substitute strategies and tap their rewards while burdening them with the involved risks and costs. We may also misappropriate rewards from others regardless of their strategy. Or we may proceed to a fifth stage of substitute deterioration where we relish or cause unhappiness in others so we can feel relatively happier or less unhappy. The abuse of others common to these two stages frequently makes them coalesce. And they share justifications for taking advantage of others. Both cause us to fabricate or exaggerate reasons why our victims' unhappiness or our relative happiness are deserved. But either strategy can only give us a semblance of improving our happiness. In actuality, we violate our conscience by failing to assist others, exploiting them, or causing them pain. And our attitudes or actions may lead to retaliation and escalation.

It becomes clear then that none of the discussed substitute strategies can yield an acceptable resolution to unhappiness. All are burdened by built-in production of unhappiness. Granted, some deliver less than others. In some cases, they may even produce more happiness than failed pursuits of true desires. But if we pursue substitutes instead, we will not know whether we would have failed or our failure would have continued. The regret of not knowing, of not having had the mental presence, patience, or courage to find out what we could have achieved had we pursued our ambitions, keeps haunting us. The longer we deny ourselves, the harder it is for later strategies faithful to our desires to overcome this regret. It casts a pall for which substitute strategies cannot compensate, even if they succeed. This is all the more so since the satisfaction they enable is at best a shadow of the happiness we can expect from pursuing or meeting true desires. As proxies, they cannot confer the gratification, peace, and invigoration of genuine fulfillment.

The hunger for happiness they cannot still pushes their endorsers to futile intensifications or distractions. The unresolved unhappiness they leave and the new unhappiness they produce are bound to accumulate and increasingly upset and destabilize them. No rest for the wicked. Why do I say that? Not all substitutes might qualify as evil in an established sense of the word, particularly if we are their sole victims. But the unhappiness we reap from them resembles a punishment we impose on ourselves for violating commands of happiness. This phenomenon is particularly widespread, albeit with typically milder injury, in the forms of reduced ambitions or uninteresting occupations. Far more troubling are the still abundant instances in which people pursue their unhappiness or relish, cause, or deepen the misery of others. Together, these substitute perversions cause much of the conflict and agony within and among individuals and societies.

4. Trials of Happiness.

But I do not think most of us are like this, at least not completely, all the time. I believe most of us are, at least in some respects and for some periods, genuinely trying to follow our happiness. Nobody is all bad or good. We all can most likely find substitute objectives and pursuits in our life. But there are remaining areas of our concerns where we strive to preserve happiness we have reached and build on it. Struggles for happiness toughen us. We do not easily despair and give up even if we find ourselves in problematic situations and have to take detours or put our dreams on hold. We keep ambitions in view and hope alive, if not in all our concerns, then in some, and if not for us, then for others. Yet, if most of us are truly striving toward happiness, humanity overall does not seem to be doing a very good job at it. Why do you think that is? Undeniably, there are natural causes for unhappiness. Some we may have difficulties controlling, and some may lie beyond our control. But this is ever less so as humanity is evolving its capabilities of impressing its will on circumstances. And natural causes that normally occur may affect happiness less due to their being accepted as facts of life. I think most human unhappiness is caused by humans. It is generated in our pursuit of happiness at the cost or under disregard of others and of ourselves. Substitute

strategies carry substantial responsibility in this burden. They are pervasive since their motivations are not limited to taking refuge after struggling in vain to find or pursue a true calling. Many of us elect or accept substitute strategies because of inexperience, apprehension, tradition, greed, craving for recognition, pressure, or manipulation, or any combination of these grounds. We may not be aware of them as substitutes. And once we become apprised of their nature, gauging or admitting it or its extent, as well as extrication from them, may take strenuous effort and courage. They may thus continue to hold sway over us in engagements and courses of rejection long after we discover their incompatibility.

However, it would be too simplistic to ascribe the widespread failure of following our bliss to substitute strategies and their implications alone. We may not have a strategy. We may be stalling or dabbling since we are insecure about our true callings, prospects, or even substitute strategies. We may keep to a holding pattern, filling requirements and time with measures we consider basic or temporary until we see clearer what we want or can achieve. Also, many of us are or grow wary of the dissatisfactory quality of substitute strategies. We may work on extricating ourselves and look for and seek to implement genuine strategies. We may faithfully track our happiness after freeing ourselves or not give in to substitute strategies in the first place. Finally, substitute strategies usually afflict only selected objectives and pursuits and not all our affairs. So we may well intend and attempt to pursue true desires. Still, our choices and efforts might fall short of suitably promoting our happiness, exasperating our optimism as we bravely strive to preserve it.

Our awareness of this may be skewed even as we try to reveal and pursue true desires. We may be caught up wondering whether and how any of the described aberrations and hesitations affect us, either through our conduct or resulting from the conduct of others. Assessing this is necessary and helpful in evaluating the state of our happiness and planning its improvement or stabilization. But before we can advance such an assessment with the requisite focus and resolve, we must step back and take more basic cognizance.

We must become aware that these phenomena are mere symptoms pointing to a pervasive underlying problem: Many of us lack proficiency in understanding our happiness or selecting appropriate means and procedures for securing it. Sooner or later, we are alerted by persistent deficits in our ability to generate happiness. Even if this experience may have grown familiar, most of us are still stunned by it. We feel we have been doing what we can. We have followed our coaching and tuned it according to our insights and abilities. We have tried to admit justifications why we should be happy and why asking for more might be unrealistic and ungracious. And yet, the fact remains that our happiness does not meet our expectations and requirements. This conundrum makes us look for answers. Maybe we have not been paying enough attention to lessons or not followed them well enough. Maybe we have been unlucky with circumstances in which we pursue happiness. Trying to locate and fix such issues has us continue on habitual paths with added tenacity. Correcting tactics while sticking to strategies may bring relief. But it may also instill false hope, leaving us even more lost once we realize such curative efforts do not yield dramatic improvements.

This suspension may open us to alternative strategies. Initially, we may believe we can solve the problems of our happiness with plausible yet unproven plans or tools we deem within our reach. It may take some unsuccessful homegrown attempts to shake our confidence and determination. But eventually, we may conclude we do not know enough about happiness in general or our particular concerns. So we venture beyond ourselves, to find out more about who we are or should be, and what we can or should do to be happy. But where do we look for answers? Our choices for acquiring a better understanding appear to be limited. We soon find that applying a trial-and-error method is inefficient and often painful. Experimenting with totally new ways seems even less predictable than trying our hand in unproven strategies we thought we could control. We wonder how far any such adventures will take us or if they will get us anywhere. We fear they might just use us up and leave us mired in confusion, diminishing choices, and growing distress.

5. Happiness in Traditional Settings.

This unsettled and unsettling situation invites influences. We may actively look for such influences from others who we believe have figured out happiness, including our happiness, better than we can. We may also be passively susceptible to influences from people who try to recruit others for the pursuit of their happiness. We may go along with them because we are sympathetic to their experiences, characteristics, methods, or objectives. Even where that is not the case, we may think we can carve out a fair measure of happiness for us by serving them. Or we may submit to human influences that dominate our environment or us and thus leave us little choice if we want to succeed or even exist. Whatever our motivations might be, a vacuum of self-leadership lends itself to be filled by forces offering or imposing themselves to lead.

The concept of following leaders may feel normal to us. Until modern times and dating back to our animal roots, tribal hierarchy has been the primary principle of human organization. Its essence is a sense of self-preservation, which is extensively braced by socialization. Although recently rationalized, tribal hierarchy still carries powerful instinctive undercurrents. We intuitively grasp ancient conventions by which leaders are determined and all others are expected to follow. So we may on occasion contend for leadership in various social contexts but soon come to terms where we fit into hierarchies, at least for the time being. We regularly seem to accept our societal assignments and may not mind or even long to be led. However, under hierarchic circumstances where notable aspects of our life are controlled by others, attaining and maintaining happiness can be difficult. For such dependent pursuits to work, our dispositions would have to be compatible with those of our leaders, and leaders would have to refrain from abusing our trust. But many influences to which we consent or acquiesce in advancement of our happiness fail in these respects.

This is a systemic problem because leaders climb and hold on to the top by their competitive strength and determination to implement their ideas how things should be run. And these are the qualities for which leaders are followed. They reflect power as well as organizational and tactical supremacy that were once pivotal for a tribe to survive and thrive. This built-in logic of leadership persists regardless of the system in which it is asserted. But it has grown into a momentous threat. This threat arose as humanity became more established and successful and expanded its habitat. Tribes and the terrain they inhabited grew from within. Member volumes and familiarity transcended traditional tribal confines. This caused the formation of partitions and eventually distinct tribes. The threat escalated as the growth and proliferation of tribes confronted them with one another. Encountering humans of a different tribe, territorial boundaries, and incursions violating such boundaries posed novel challenges to tribal instinct. The inherent and additional resulting estrangement perverted it to be directed against fellow humans. This hostility still disgraces our record and threatens our existence. Ironically, the dynamics and results of ensuing conflicts may weaken tribal separation. Conquests, occupations, related migrations or associations may impose amalgamation.

However a society may grow, a resulting lack of personal relations causes leaders' instinctive responsibility toward members to atrophy and vanish. Family becomes subjects or pawns, and heads of family become owners of their domain. Leaders select distinct tribes of family and those who help them rise and hold on to power. Their estrangement from the broader populace they lead may cause them to engage in its direct exploitation or abuse. Or they may avoid interior repercussions by misusing subjects' tribal and hierarchic allegiances for the subjection and exploitation of foreign societies. In such attacks, they may well be able to count on a history of popular animosity and conflict with neighboring or other withstanding societies.

Without doubt, much has been undertaken in terms of social organization to contain and minimize these shortcomings. Still, the outcomes of dependent pursuits often do not justify the invested hope and effort. That this is so may be difficult to evaluate since dependent pursuits frequently do not occur in sufficiently

pure form. Leadership influences are by their nature relational. And they always stem from, coexist, and interact with preceding conditions of human existence that reach into the present. They have developed from the background of their setting on which they seek to impress their stamp. Often, their justification is to offer management of traditional underpinnings in continuation or in adjustment to changing times. Even in breaking with such underpinnings, leadership influences constitute live extensions of accumulated conditions. They relate so closely to preexisting circumstances, which molded leaders and subjects, that separating them may appear difficult and impractical. In further convolution, these factors of preexisting conditions and leadership influences may intermingle with other current influences, independent third-party conduct, and our own devices. In this fashion, they may present as elements of larger, also intricately connected circumstances. Even contrasts may be amalgamated by interactions. Most prominently, social organization efforts to develop traditional settings and contain and minimize leadership incompatibilities and abuses tend to merge with them. The resulting compound of causes and conditions for our pursuits may prevent us from comprehending them and their interactions. This inhibits us from recognizing where or how much to attribute fault or praise among them. And the interconnection of causes and conditions may make addressing one without including or affecting others difficult. Such stickiness of issues further complicates the lack of transparency and resistance of current influences and established circumstances.

These causes make it tough for us to identify avenues for positive change and to elicit cooperation or just indulgence. Ensuing perceptions of futility may debilitate our resolve for fundamental examination. We may believe we could not change much even if we could perceive what is wrong. Some of us may resist these odds and try to define and implement meaningful change. But most of these attempts falter in the face of the disproportionate power and persistence of established systems. Turning inward to create our own little world may help somewhat. However, our participation or mere existence in larger surroundings confines our sphere into a small private bubble that still suffers pressures, dislocations, and intrusions.

Some may therefore extract themselves from civilization altogether or only circle back for necessities. Yet, this is not a choice many of us consider, make, or can make. Nor is it one that comes without hardships of its own. This is particularly so if we have not found the answers to our questions who we are or should be and what we can or should do to be happy. The negative choice of not participating is not likely to give us the positive indications we seek. We might imagine that living in nature will provide answers by returning us to contexts in which we developed as a species. In this nostalgia, we might fail to fully appreciate the exorbitant individual cost at which this development was achieved and how pressures of natural adversity forced humanity to advance. Even with backup benefiting from such progress, securing existential means separated from steady human contact and integration may turn out harder than we can imagine, manage, or bear. We may underestimate our suffering from absence of human interaction and support. And we may be surprised to learn how much natural environments dictate our existence and test our capacities.

Similar conditions apply if we withdraw from a society to join another. The chance of moving to a better-suited society might be worth suffering a range of adversities. However, the risks and hardships of leaving one society to join another are frequently significant. The unfamiliarity of other environments poses many known and unknown uncertainties, even after thorough investigation and immersion. Anticipating such issues may dissuade us from seriously pondering these options and their probabilities. The vast majority of us carry on in our habitual settings and current influences. Resigning to their incomprehensibilities and implications, we tend to limit our improvement efforts to inadequacies we can readily spot and address.

Only disastrous failure of the system may prompt our remedial actions to grow more radical. But we may be even worse prepared for such events. The challenges, fluidities, and time pressures of exigencies and the risk of being swept up in larger radical movements, drastically add to our problems discerning and

addressing a system's workings and causes for catastrophic failings. Our ignorance may leave us no choice but to move to another society, stay put to weather the storm, or work on a revolution and new beginning. As perilous as the initial two alternatives might be, they may be easier to conceive and navigate than the third. How can we come up with a radically better plan for societal organization when we are blind to the mechanisms and faults of the current system? If we had ideas, we would not know how to validate or implement them. Nor could we muster the support or power to sweep aside the current system and build anew. Our only hope to conceive and organize this monumental revolutionary task would be a leader.

Leaders or leadership contenders must put up with the same confounding complexity and impenetrability. They may be able to convince us otherwise if they believe such systems sufficiently yield to them. But if this is not the case, they may lose patience. They may advocate a system's overthrow as the only feasible solution to problems it presents. In this move, they may try to place themselves at the helm of preexisting cumulative individual discontent heated to the point of revolution. Or they may seize opportunities for rising to power or levels of power they seek by fanning and directing popular discontent. And yet, however successful they might be or however radical the resulting changes to a system might be at the time, they are not likely to leave much impact in the long run. The clamor of competition and bragging by leadership may regularly drown out the silent gravity of general circumstances. They aim to exaggerate the changes leadership can effect in positive or negative respects. Leaders might exempt themselves during their reign from some general circumstances. And they might ameliorate or aggravate circumstances in their or other societies. But they, and even organizations supplying successive leaders, hold power only for short periods in historical terms. Their supremacy blends with influences by other leaders and leadership schemes. And their power is rarely absolute. It is regularly forced to maneuver the fortunes and dynamics of competing and supporting movements. By its nature, then, leadership is a temporary and fragile influence on general circumstances. It joins a multitude of other factors, some of which may be more momentous or lasting. Still, our general circumstances seem to be punctuated and over-proportionally defined in our minds by an ever-changing roster of leadership in apparent charge of them. Leadership may be sought and asserted at various levels and in the context of various aspects of general circumstances. At lower levels, it may be attenuated by, or fall in line, with the hierarchies of a leadership scheme. Thus, apart from short periods of anarchy and limited spheres of self-determination, there always seem to exist modalities of leadership interacting with established conditions. These interactions create a diversity of systems. Even so, one can discern that these two factors set general frameworks for the pursuit of happiness in most social settings.

We may question where living in this framework places us with our happiness. Having sought or permitted leadership by others, we cannot claim anymore to be victims of our circumstances. This is so even if our leaders cannot suitably assert themselves to assist our concerns. Agreeing to a system where leadership contests govern governance makes us responsible. We co-sign for such contests, their outcomes, and the resulting leadership. Some of us might be successful under prevailing leadership conditions. The chances of this increase if leaders we pick as compatible with us shape our surroundings. We may also adapt to our environment and its governing forces. We may join such forces to enjoy some governance benefits. Or we could manage to affix ourselves to beneficial influences and avoid harmful influences. But leaders for whom we opt may not possess the support, capacity, or determination to shape our circumstances, at least not satisfactorily or consistently. We might not even be able to follow their ideas on a personal level. We might be forced or deem it prudent to submit to adverse general conditions, or to competing leaders who might pursue strategies contrary to our interests. So our happiness could be subjected to possibly extreme differences depending on the success and comportment of leadership in the system we inhabit. This subjection seems unalterable on an individual basis since the leadership in charge or how it conducts itself is even under the best of circumstances only in small part up to us as a follower or member of society.

Even in favorable scenarios, living under the direct or indirect sway of others is frequently not conducive to happiness. To wield broad enough appeal or other powers to make an impact, leadership influences must generalize and standardize their principles and applications. As a consequence, they ignore or pass over individual concerns. This may also occur because their ideas of happiness contradict the neglected individual concerns. Or they might not intend to address individual concerns in the first place. Whatever their motives might be for their absence of care, they complement it with intrusions. By the logic of their leadership, they prescribe conditions for conduct that are focused on their goals. Existing in and profiting from such conditions may entail concessions and adjustments of our pursuits. We may agree to distorted or substitute strategies or bury some ambitions altogether. Once we take such measures of submission, we are prone to defending them. Voicing discontent may not do us favors. Nor may we be ready to admit that influences to which we have attuned and in which we now hold a stake are deficient. Rather, we may affirm being controlled and left alone as positive preservations of our security or freedom. This may shape our views on systemic opportunities to expand benefits, security, and freedom at the cost of others.

Even as losses are palpable, we may accept and adopt our leaders' attitudes of competing and winning. We may practice them to get ahead, which may be welcomed by leadership schemes to look acceptable. Success in such practices may enable influence on, or promotion to, leadership levels. We may also benefit from them as agents of hierarchic support machineries. Beyond these attachments, we may not find much leadership support for previously unaided or negatively affected concerns. It may only occur if we attain leverage. This may arise informally or by rules of leadership competition granting us powers to influence who leads or how they lead. Yet, unless our concerns are broadly shared, they are unlikely to be met.

Resistance by leadership then joins the perseverance of general circumstances. Once such systems reach stability, pursuits in them tend to meander somewhere between unhappiness and happiness, at various levels of mediocrity, without much or frequent deviation to the plus or minus side of the spectrum. Many of us endeavor to make peace with this tedium. We try to console ourselves with the notion it could be worse. But maybe conditions of our happiness could also be better. Maybe traditional settings into which accumulated circumstances and hierarchic systems place us do not serve our individual concerns. Maybe we have been remiss minding or even realizing them apart from such external frameworks. Maybe we can benefit from better orientation, effectiveness, or efficiency. We already may have a general sense of this, yet lack bearings for evaluating our situation and making plans. To gain them, we must consider what makes us happy, how happy it can make us, where we are on that scale, how we can best advance and remain in desired directions and positions, and how we can best coordinate our activities. Indoctrinations, ruts, and apprehensions can impede answering these questions. Resolving such issues is the focus of my work. It does not address pathological conditions. I entirely entrust these to healthcare professionals. But this leaves a large populace able to gain happiness from developing its insight by philosophical means.

6. The Happiness Principle.

This philosophical mission to assist others in improving their happiness may strike some as over-confident. They might question who I am or think I am to dare voicing such high ambitions. Further, they might find it odd that I would pour so much time and energy into this mission. They might want to know what is in it for me. These are fair questions. People have every right to be suspicious if others discuss their happiness because for millennia they have been duped and taken advantage of in the name of happiness. So let me explain my motivations. When I started writing about happiness, I did not know I was writing a book. I was merely jotting down a few thoughts in hopes of better clarity in my affairs. I began by looking at conditions in myself and my circumstances so I could better decide what to keep or change and what my priorities should be. My review spread to include inquiries and assessments of substitute and stalled strategies as

well as areas where I was unsure what I wanted or how to proceed. This method of taking inventory and applying triage is vital for gaining a tighter handle on one's life. But I soon realized these contemplations were inseparable from concerns of my surroundings because my happiness is only to a very limited degree entirely in my hands. I grew more aware of its intricate, profound correlation with happiness in a number of spheres surrounding me. Most noticeably, my happiness is of course connected to the happiness of my immediate family and friends. And it did not take much to see how it is linked with the happiness of others who directly or indirectly interact with me. Their happiness or unhappiness reflects on how they deal with me or circumstances affecting me. But then I came to perceive how much my happiness depends further on the happiness of larger concerns, beyond such more immediately appreciable personal connections. I became conscious of the inseparable importance of groups, communities, societies, humanity in general, the living environment beyond humanity, and their inanimate settings. Reflecting on myself in this context made me realize I could not be truly happy without knowing happiness to reign in all these realms.

When people hear this, their first reaction might be that I am overthinking the issue. They might contend this all-encompassing scope of care is too heavy a burden on one person's happiness. They might have trepidations that I am putting up an impossible standard for happiness. But the standard I describe simply acknowledges how much we and our surroundings are connected. It admits how much their constitution, cooperation, and denial reflect on our narrow personal objectives and pursuits. And also we naturally care about the happiness of surroundings that might not yet and might never be included in our personal plans. We seem to be infused with an instinct to preserve their potential that is gradually confirmed by rational considerations as we develop. We need to mind our venues to fully promote our happiness in them.

Of course, recognition of this connection and conforming behavior by one person cannot make a decisive difference in universal happiness. But together, humans can make a difference within the reaches of our expanding powers. So I see this connectedness resulting in a great shared responsibility - but one which is more than outmatched by an awesome potential for happiness. That is if humans manage to fathom the expanse of their happiness - and if they cooperate with one another in the pursuit of this expanse.

Such hopes seem out of reach. Perverted instincts of self-preservation, tribal loyalty, and hierarchic order have turned not only leaders against followers. The attenuation of personal ties in consequence of societal growth, conglomeration, and diversification affects all other parts of a society. It pitches followers against leaders, and individuals and groups against one another. This competitive approach joins the perversions of tribal and leadership schemes to an all-out conflict among humans. It mutates our cooperative origins into a world of potential and actual winners and losers, and if only by degrees. Resulting estrangement from the non-human environment worsens the damage. Not caring about and for others, and focusing on taking or securing benefits for us and closely held tribes, makes us lose our humanity. It also causes us to lose appreciation for larger contexts serving humanity. Residual ethics or agreed rules may curb excesses in our derelictions of responsibility. We may in many ways get used to the unforgiving roughness of human coexistence. Still, chronic adversity, contortion, insecurity, fear, and division greatly tax our happiness.

And yet, we can see incidents of a harmonious potential to love and care, and be loved and cared for. This phenomenon may seem a reaction to egotistical devastation and impasse. But its give and take are in our nature and nature itself. It represents our innermost desire. We just have to give it due consideration and its rightful place as leading principle. Installing the happiness principle at the helm repairs perversions of all other instinctive tendencies. Self-centeredness becomes reflection and self-care. Tribalism refocuses as concern for our surroundings. And hierarchic impulses yield to the superiority of merit and cooperation they were to enable in the first place. This promise of grace motivates me. I find it shocking how little we listen to our innate voice of good. It is inexcusable that we are not doing better with this natural guidance

of happiness in our conscience. This is why I refuse to accept a world that is perpetually fouled and torn up by ignorance, malevolence, and pain. And I cannot stand by watching humans lead pointless, painful, and disappointing existences short of their innate potentials. So I do whatever I can to point out that there is a better way, the path ordained by our nature. I want us all to see that we are capable of ascending, step by step, from the hells we allow or make for ourselves, others, and general surroundings. I want us to view the paradise of which we dream as an attainable objective and want us to work on it, step by step.

7. Philosophy of Happiness Book Genesis.

To advance this objective, I decided to transform my notes into a generally accessible written format. That turned out to be much more involved than I first thought, and gave rise to several additional rounds and dimensions of rumination and writing. It rapidly dawned on me that I was writing a comprehensive book about happiness in which I had to take on all that had gone wrong with it up to this point. I had to shed the historical ballast of accumulated error, confusion, intentional duplicity, illusion, and resignation. I had to overcome distortions caused by mind-numbing naivety on one end and pseudo-scientific hairsplitting and pretentiousness on the other. This could only be undertaken if every aspect of happiness was freshly established and examined. Toward this purpose, I had to deconstruct happiness into its components and connections and take separate cognizance of them. And I had to build its constitution from the ground up according to guidance by these elements. The monumental character of this task weighed heavily on me. At first, I had doubts I could write this book. This was followed by doubts whether I should write it, since it took so much of me and my resources. The volume and difficulty of the features I had to consider and describe were intimidating, exhausting, and often painful. But I knew nobody else had written such a book despite many intimations and opportunities. I feared it might never be written unless I took charge of it.

This is how, after close to seven years of determined discipline and concentrated work, the Philosophy of Happiness book came into being. It grew to 1000 pages despite recurrent rigorous editing. In the end, its heft was inescapable. After all, it tries to address the range of the human experience and the many ways in which absence or presence of philosophies of happiness have wreaked havoc. Still, as arduous as the book was to compose, it seemed to write itself. That was because its themes and progressions represent common phenomena of human existence. My accounts of them may be colored by my impressions and personality. Despite all efforts of objectivity, we can only describe how we see the world. And this remains so if we imagine others, their experiences, and their views. We carry subjective filters for all information we perceive and process, especially if it emanates from within ourselves. This implies that we have to be respectful of the likelihood that others carry different filters. Accordingly, my perspective does not claim absolute truth. The very point of my writings is that we each must actualize our own perspectives. The best we can hope for in matters of happiness is that our perspectives reveal commonalities allowing us to cooperate and avoid conflicts. My book points to such potentials and asks readers to consider their utility.

So it is of no import who I am or think I am, or whether readers agree or disagree with me. None of this is about me. It is all about readers willing to figure out for themselves who they are and what will make them happy. The book reflects this commitment. No special expertise is necessary to access or decipher it. Readers, through their life experiences, are already acquainted with the themes I describe. They just may not have given them suitable attention, consideration, or presence and thus may have missed out on their rewards. But substituting my judgment in such matters would be presumptuous and inappropriate. I am not familiar with them or their situations. And even if I were, I could only tell them how I would react. This would only be useful if they were like me and my evaluations and advice were correct. The combined likelihood of this is dim. Thus, I prompt readers to detect and fill their own deficiencies. All my work can, should, and wants to do is opening them to their own independent experiences, reflections, and decisions.

In service to this purpose, the Philosophy of Happiness book has been arranged in two main divisions. Part One, "Collecting Our Self," deals with fundamental conditions under which we must pursue our happiness. It also reviews past and present types of theories and approaches regarding happiness. Part Two, titled "Moving Forward," concentrates on hands-on, practical strategies we may employ to identify and pursue happiness on a personal, social, and universal level. It discusses common types of concerns and strategies. And it examines obstacles and opportunities we may create or encounter on the way to happiness. Finally, it surveys the purposes and implications of pursuing happiness. A more detailed overview of the book can be gleaned from its Table of Contents reproduced in the Book section of the philosophyofhappiness.com website linked below. The site also contains excerpts, introductions, articles, essays, answers to frequently asked questions, references to related books I authored, as well as purchase and communication facilities.

8. The Bane of Instructions.

When I tell people about my book, many are surprised how much it counts on individuals' willingness to explore, think, and feel for themselves to get to the bottom of their happiness. They have doubts whether we should or can develop our own individual philosophy about our life. Some appear to loathe or fear this potential in them or in others. They insist on their abidance by an established guidance system, at times suggesting I and others ought to follow it as well. They have little tolerance for questioning their ideology or discussing possible alternatives. Others are more open and eclectic in their sourcing of guidance. But they still look for substantive instruction on what will make or keep them happy. This faction might feel disappointed that I would write a book about happiness without including such instruction. I sympathize with the viewpoints of both these groups. There was a time when I as well looked to others for instruction on the substance of happiness. But I came to learn about the senselessness and dangers of such a stance.

Taking instructions is more direct and invasive than adapting to environmental conditions and seeking or accepting leadership influences. Both of these factors of external guidance rely on us to respond to them. They may not grant much latitude. But we decide whether and how we react. We form our own thoughts about how they comport with our objectives and pursuits. Accepted instructions carry a different quality of guidance. Seeking them already reflects a mindset whereby we have concluded we will not be able to figure out happiness by ourselves. We have decided to largely discount, mistrust, or disdain asking and telling ourselves who we are and how we want to live. We have resigned to the notion that we need to be told. Instructions also tend to be more concrete in the way of executable orders. Once we accept them, they significantly reduce scopes of flexibility for us. Thus, our considerations are less important for abiding by instructions than by leadership influences or general conditions. This meets expectations of voluntary recipients since openness to instruction reflects their wishes to have discredited considerations replaced.

Some in this situation may relinquish their independence completely and accept submission to directives. Others may wish to preserve a modicum of self-governance in spite of their readiness to follow. Their self-confidence may survive to where they believe they can manage their concerns according to an instruction manual. However, prior difficulties in coping with the convolutions of life may have them prefer a limited, straightforward set of attitudes, steps, and rules. And because they deem their own comprehension and judgment diminished, they prefer instruction on these principles by authorities they can trust.

Either way, it seems the demand for instruction on what will make us happy is massive. And there is never a shortage of applicants eager to fill these openings and tell us what and how to be. But trusting the advice of others with our happiness does not have a good track record, to put it too politely. Over the course of history and into the present, much of that trust has been let down or betrayed. Interminable menageries of self-important dilettantes, charlatans, profiteers, grifters, narcissists, demagogues, zealots, sociopaths,

and delusional charismatics have brought immeasurable destruction and suffering to followers and other victims. And the risk and severity of dead ends and disasters they have caused have been amplified by the popularity of their instructions. The multiplied and often systematic harm from their faults and misdeeds has amassed to dwarf the sum of damaging effects from autonomous misconduct and lapse of judgment.

Instructional malfunction may be partly due to alterations of original teachings or failures to appropriately follow them. Instructional schemes like to blame such nonconformities if their doctrines do not work out as promised. But most breakdowns arise from the persistence of instructions and applications in spite of their incompetence or their abuse by instructors. Incompetence shows itself in the inability of instructions to generate promised results or their inapplicability to the instructed. The detriment of abuse derives from conflicts of interest between instructors and the instructed. Instructing others on matters of happiness is meant to serve the happiness of the instructors, at least in part. If they did not get something out of giving instructions, they would not be so eager to impart them. This focus implies a conflict of interest anytime instructors' interests deviate from those of the instructed. Such deviation reveals itself likely if we consider what would be necessary to avert it. An ideal setting where instructors equally serve clones of themselves whose interests are wholly aligned with theirs is absurd. More realistic arrangements would be of the type where instructors forego taking advantage of their superior position and do not serve their happiness at the cost of the instructed. But history evidences that most instructors are failing to uphold these ethics.

Such rifts may be caused by personality disorders. But they normally spring from the required attributes of instructors. Their attitudes and acts to become and remain effective influencers, to eclipse competitors, and to control designs and implementations all imply inequality. Their directive powers prevent them and followers from separating instructions and personal clout. And faults require even more personal power for instructive schemes to take and keep hold. This provides motivation for easily accessed temptations.

Some followers may be convinced this cannot happen to them. They may cite all kinds of reasons why the guidance they receive is superior and safe. Then again, it is questionable whether they remain competent arbiters in such matters after abdicating their independent consideration to external direction. Besides a diminished capacity for fair determination, willful defense of their desertion may skew their perspective. Following prescribed avenues, they do not know how they fare compared to alternative guidances, to no external guidance at all, or to self-determination. They will never know until they gain independence and do the work to find and understand themselves and their world. And never mind how much they and their instructors tout the benefits of a happiness scheme. No matter whether they try to spread their gospel in selfish recruitment or believe it has beneficial importance for others: The sad reality is too many followers are not receiving the promised happiness from instructional designs. Word would get around if these lived up to their claims. They would lastingly prevail upon their targeted audiences by drawing uncommitted or otherwise committed followers. But, apart from temporary fads and crazes, that just does not occur.

This difficulty of instructional schemes to sway substantial numbers of followers and keep them loyal has not only positive consequences. As much as they want to be accepted, too many rely, and likely must rely, on imposition to gain the traction intended by instructors, advocates, and members. This is particularly so if schemes claim to require the shaping of a setting or widespread participation to become operational or fully effective. It is also probable when instructional schemes compete. To achieve their goals, they may join with leadership schemes to employ their practical prowess. Conversely, leadership schemes may find utilizing instructional schemes irresistible to gain or solidify control. Involvement of instructional schemes becomes necessary if societies cease to accept leadership on the basis of physical power, lineage, or divine appointment, and demand more plausible legitimizations. Such impositions of broader justification give instructional schemes the upper hand with leadership schemes. These must henceforth credibly comply

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with instructional rationales to secure voluntary obedience. This subjugation makes arrangements among the two schemes as prior separates rare. They more commonly occur as aspects of the same development. This is not only due to matching benefits. It also stems from the fact that motivations and characteristics of leaders and instructors are similarly centered on domination. Joining forces intensifies this domination in assertions of control over followers' minds and physical aspects. Beyond enforcement measures, telling tactics of this totalitarian oppression are manipulation and leveraging of situations and events. In defense of its absolute claim to authority, a totalitarian regime segregates friend from foe by compliance. It also asserts authorship of positive conditions and blames negative conditions on opponents. It exaggerates or invents positive developments or situations and suppresses bad news. And it uses, promotes, creates, or pretends pressures from surrounding circumstances to guide and bind the populace to its command.

This illusory stance makes practical assessments and adjustments difficult even if they could be reconciled with instructional dogma. A totalitarian application of instructional schemes is then innately overbearing and inflexible. Not only in consequence of these traits is it also ineffective and inefficient. Even if a scheme serves parts of a society, unaddressed incompatibilities for many others are set to become impossible to ignore as they compound. Their unbearability precipitates the overthrow or abandonment of totalitarian regimes when their inability to create, support, or condone happiness becomes sufficiently apparent.

9. Happiness in a Pluralistic Society.

Resulting movements favor freedom in happiness concerns. To institutionalize the idea, they form societal arrangements that foster coexistence and cooperation among views, as well as power transition according to popular preference. Such advances offer new possibilities and challenges for our happiness strategies. When societies free themselves from totalitarian oppression and give way to a plurality of views on how one should live, instructional and leadership schemes must convince followers to succeed. A prohibition of totalitarian schemes and activities seems prudent to prevent relapses. Beyond that, the plurality and discordances of instructional and leadership schemes lower their chances of taking control over us against our will, usurping our reality, and radically affecting our existence. As long as by themselves or in concert they fail to achieve broad coordination and uniformity, we remain secure. For those who do not subscribe to such schemes, this restraint and this dilution are blessings. And even their followers may benefit by not having themselves and schemes they follow radicalized to where they become purveyors of unhappiness. They spare themselves imposition efforts, resistance, conflict, and repercussions by sparing others from disagreeable orders or casting of conditions. Followers might still find happiness in parochial organizations not plotting to overthrow plurality. But they would keep options to recede into general society or other groups should they become disaffected. These societally guarded restrictions and alternatives limit how overreaching instructional schemes can be on their followers and still succeed. All desirable outcomes.

However, even such liberated contexts bear dangers for our strategies of happiness. These become easily apparent even from a cursory examination of pluralistic societies. They include now more than ever before enabled infighting among groups or individuals for practical advantages. This endless turmoil interweaves with competition among leadership contenders or instructional schemes. Such conflicts and machinations can hold pluralistic societies hostage and cause ineffective government. Their success may also be curbed by remnants of superseded systems or traditional authorities trying to sustain or regain power. But their most formidable problem is the ascendance of dominions enabled by the system's freedoms that use the system without being adequately bound by its conventions. The competition among all these powers may be accompanied by manipulation and other forms of corruption to secure positions or advantages, assert influence, or sway power balances. And the variety of concepts, goals, actors, venues, and interactions at various levels makes the workings of these constituents and the society they form difficult to ascertain.

This insight cycles us back to our earlier discussion of leadership influences and how they are difficult to isolate due to their amalgamation with the settings from which they emerge and "other influences." We can now name instructional approaches and pluralistic arrangements as two principal types of such other influences. In modern societies, these added influences regularly occur amalgamated with environmental conditioning and leadership influences. When we closely analyze the now four external guidance types of environmental conditioning, leadership influences, instructional schemes, and plurality arrangements, we detect multiple correlations among them. Also, they may not exist separately in our experiences. Sorting them out may for these reasons seem artificial. Still, for purposes of grasping their essence, their discrete inspection remains helpful. One may be able to distinguish a more or less defined temporal progression and logic among these stages in our individual development as well as in the development of humankind.

When we review this progression to determine whether conditions improve in its course, we find a range of answers. Each developmental stage seems to carry potentials for good and bad. History evidences that bad aspects of several or all four stages can coincide and interact to produce nightmarish conditions. But generally, the presence and correlation of all four influences has stabilizing effects on human existence and advancement. It may foil deviating schemes from straying too precipitously far from convention and existing order. This enables evolutionary transitions and lowers the risk of runaway upheavals. On the other hand, it may keep established guidance from hardening and give new concepts a chance by requiring rationalizations. Together, this permits deliberate progress. We might then infer that societal progress to the fourth stage offers the best opportunities for happiness strategies on a societal and an individual level.

Then again, not all may be won for us individually by accessing this leeway. After all, systemic structures and processes still dominate in a pluralistic society. All four types of external guidance factors are likely to set boundaries and exert pressure on our being and conduct. Accrued conditions will not continue in their relative invariability of strictures. Progress in technical capabilities and resources facilitates modifications of previously resistant factual conditions. And traditional boundaries beyond are likely to be softened by mandates of freedom and pluralism. So general conditions are on the move. But the institutions upholding these mandates infuse new types of stagnation. The containment and narrowing of leadership influences and instructional schemes to formalized civil contests and voluntary participation may prevent viable or worthwhile prospects for improvement. Who within a set of established, permitted contenders happens to administrate a society may have little impact on how our life is run or how we intend to run it. This is likely since plurality arrangements require governing influences to display compatibility and consistency in addition to restraint. These manners may limit progress as contenders compromise and circulate power in consequence of elections or by other rules. They also cause contending parties and a government they shape to focus on administration of general conditions and stay clear of large areas of individual concern.

And as leadership and instructional schemes soften, assimilate, or subside, other forces newly emerge or become free to shape general and individual conditions. This phenomenon of private power has long roots in guilds, orders, banks, trading companies, and multinational corporations. However, with the injection of rapidly expanding technological potential, private powers have recently risen to engender a fifth stage of social development and related guidance. The mutually accelerating tandem of economic development and technological progress produces potent private forces and determines their relevance and survival.

Arguably, these initially unbound forces should be reeled in as they edge up against pluralistic governance. But the innovation, speed, saturation, and resulting power with which they arise and proliferate imperils pluralistic frameworks and processes. The evolving specter of massive private power poses a confounding contradiction. Pluralistic arrangements improve freedoms and opportunities for pursuing happiness. But this makes room for economic and technological developments that channel and restrict freedoms and

opportunities at scales beyond our and often common control. Their permeating presence and seemingly intrinsic logic threaten to use and overwhelm the complexities of pluralism. The resulting impositions by private forces may appear as inescapable as traditional conditions and leadership schemes used to be.

Blaming external presets for our happiness deficits may be justifiable if they interfere with our ideas about happiness. Since changing these factors is difficult, we may leave it at criticizing them. Yet, to be honest, we must ask: What would be won for understanding and actualizing our happiness if we were not bound by these factors? Not growing our sense of happiness cannot be entirely imputed to societal features that keep us from developing such a sense. At some point, we must take responsibility for ourselves if we want a better life. We carry this responsibility regardless of the societal schemes in which we are situated. The initial three development stages tended to constrain our choices. But even in restrictive and overbearing settings, we can grow our ideas of happiness and find ways to maximize their application. Freedom from involuntary schemes in the pluralistic fourth stage liberates us to seek or formulate ideas about happiness and implement them much to our liking. However, the characteristic crux of this freedom is that it will not tell us who we are or what to do. This uncertainty is intensified by aspects of the fifth stage. Technological and economic expansion elevates liberties revealed in the fourth stage with escalating possibilities.

But without guidance where to turn and how and for what purpose to use such potentials, we can easily get lost. And these potentials may be used against us. We may more easily fall prey to shallow gratification ideas, sales pitches, manipulation, predation, or the dangers of an existence separate and estranged from reality. Even our use of these potentials may have us suffer from their cost. Choosing among them gives us semblances of voluntary decisions. However, to not be excluded or fall behind, and to partake in their benefits, we engage with them largely on their terms. This often allows them to dictate how we engage in our affairs. As much as technological and economic potentials can be tools for expanding our horizons and abilities, they also can set the pace, direction, and limits for both. This importance may motivate us to focus on their general states as barometers of our happiness. And we may seek benefits from cutting-edge advancements. We may celebrate their facilitators as liberators. We may accept them as authorities, as new leaders. We may try to draw guidance from them and grow dependent on potentials they promise, create, realize, or permit. Technological, economic, and resulting advancement may thus become a value in itself. It may captivate us to form part or even the core of our wishes, serving as substitute for what we do with it or other capacities. But no matter how compelling opportunities or pressures of technological and economic progress might be, we can and must relate to them with purpose. Their complexity, scores of possibilities, and our insecurities of dealing with them join similar challenges from living in a pluralistic society. Together, these two stages of reduced guidance may make us long for instruction more than ever.

Our search is supported by our freedom to review concepts among many others to find one by which we want to abide. It is also abetted by the freedom of a wide variety of schemes to solicit us. This matching combination creates an all-time high for the proliferation of instructional schemes. We might be tempted to regard this as an expression of personal freedom, as a marketplace of ideas with the potential of giving us each the advice we want or need. But instructional schemes still carry significant risks and downsides. Even defanged, much of their advice is inapplicable or plain nonsense. In followers and those affected by followers' conduct, their misdirection wastes potential, energy, optimism, time, and other resources. It encumbers victims with missed opportunities and recovering from flawed or damaged efforts. It separates followers from others who do not heed the same advice or degree of application or who suffer its fallout.

At best, alleged authorities on happiness try to resell us commonsense ideas. They may do this to establish a base of legitimacy and trust that readies us to hear and give in to sensationally tempting but improbable claims. Whenever their suggestions have merit, they sound like something grandparents could have and

probably did come up with. I am not disparaging grandparents. They and prior generations have distilled wisdom from experiences that is important to preserve and communicate. But it can only speak to us in generalities. Vast parts of our happiness still call for our personal adaptation, deliberation, and discretion.

And, for similar reasons, we cannot expect complete coverage of our concerns from any external scheme. Even if it were in the nature of such a scheme, it is not in ours. Our lives' particularities are of such variety, complexity, velocity, and often novelty that they demand our continual, skilled attention. So we cannot farm out determinations of our happiness to others or to a general system. Nor should we expect external systems to provide all means our happiness requires. The reasons for lowering our expectations in both respects are based on much more than logistical issues. Only we can competently discern what makes or keeps us happy. And only we can comprehensively make our happiness happen. This is because we are separate and differ from one another and because our happiness and its pursuit are inherent functions of our being. We are distinct bodies, perceptions, thoughts, and emotions. We are afflicted or endowed with varied origins, dispositions, contexts, and paths. We carry specific experiences, capacities, and resources. We feel unique sets of needs and wishes at different times, and favor diverse manners of satisfying them. These assortments pointedly inform our concepts of happiness. We want to express our individuality and find it reflected in the world. We aspire to see our potential unfold, blossom, and bear fruit. Undeniably, a large portion of our happiness can be derived from the many commonalities we share with some or all other humans. But even common objectives and pursuits are filtered through our peculiar perspectives and approaches. And we want to be acknowledged, respected, and loved for our personal contributions and for who we are. In relationships of any kind, we are judged and judge ourselves for personal qualities and their applications. Particularities then matter greatly for the happiness of us and others. So, while we share general settings and fundamentals of human nature, we each inhabit and apply our special versions.

10. Individual Strategies.

You may wonder how I can assist people if everyone's happiness is so unlike the next person's. I do this by striking chords in people's minds that inspire them to think, feel, and act regarding the subjects I raise in their own ways and on their own terms. My function is comparable to that of a travel writer or agent. I portray interesting locations and events to entice readers into personally exploring them. Only, my goal is to assist readers in seeing and absorbing all sides of themselves and their existence, their entire world. I aim further to help them draw practical use from such analysis. So my descriptions are to facilitate the realization of their world in terms of their impressions and expressions of it. Toward this purpose, I map out common facets of the human condition and call on readers to devise and travel individual itineraries among them. Previous and current visits may have already left impressions. In that case, my descriptions may elicit or advance evaluation, reconnection, or intensified involvement. Other descriptions may inspire readers to seek encounters with new facets or aspects of facets they have not yet lived. To prepare actual visits, I invite them to review experiences and aspirations for each existential facet. I ask them to examine their awareness of circumstances important to each facet. I prompt them to inquire what information and other means they might lack to shape each facet to their desires. And I encourage them to mend deficits.

All this mental work may not fully prepare readers for actual travel. Nor is that its purpose. It is meant to identify meaningful destinations and means of travel and stir motivation. But anticipating travels cannot and should not replace actual travel. Personal passage to and attendance at intended locations and events is indispensable for incorporating them into our life. Life must be lived and not just read about or planned. Imagination and hearsay cannot replace partaking. And all the learning we accumulate from preparations or visits cannot replace the thrill of the unexplored and growth from new experiences as we move through life. All we can and should do is prepare for this adventure to draw a maximum of happiness from it.

You probably can detect a tension in my descriptions of these travels. On one hand, we focus on accurate assessments of us and our conditions to secure knowledge in scheduling, preparation, and actual motion. On the other hand, our mind and life venture into the unknown. This dimensionality resembles looking back and forward. Both fractions are parts of a happy life. Our success is gauged by how well we join them since this is the point in time when we experience them. Their tension induces us to evaluate the lessons and means we have accumulated, and make best use of them as we build a future that in many respects cannot, and for the sake of our happiness should not, be planned. We can picture this dimensionality of our existence as a crystal traveling through matter, space, and time. My work focuses on helping readers to perceive and understand this crystal in all its facets and protect and adjust its structure to their desires.

The shape and properties of this crystal depend on who we are and what we make of our self. They may come about organically or call for our conscious adjustment. We may want our crystal to be perfect, with its facets clear and clear-cut, and aligned in reflective harmony like in a gemstone. Yet, our lives are not cut in stone. The live nature of our existence makes finding and defining our self continual processes. This is even more pronounced in striving toward, maintaining, and regaining our harmony. The facets of our existence keep changing throughout our lives as we and our surroundings change. Even if harmony is our goal, life may be too disorderly to align all our facets. Keeping that in mind, we each decide how much we want to advance clarity, definition, and inner harmony, and at what risk and price. We may give certain facets, shapes, or properties priority over others. We may decide we are better served leaving our crystal natural. We may embrace cracks, imperfections, or tints, or intentionally create them. We may prefer to be amorphous or cloudy rather than translucid. We may want to be conduits, mirrors, windows, prisms, reduction lenses, magnifying glasses, or even kaleidoscopes. We may decide not to be a medium of light, generate our own energy, or serve other purposes. And we may elect to change from one type to another, or combine them. We may not be able to erase or modify our constructs, but may add new segments to them. Allegories like these are limited in how far they can be spun to advance our comprehension. Their point is: We are and remain free to choose any components and arrangements reflective of our capacities and resources. Still, we must act deliberately to advance and secure happiness. We need to be able to discern aspects we can change from those we cannot, and those we should correct or adopt from others we should leave alone. My work primes readers for making such judgments so they can chart an adept course through their realities and correct it as their internal and external circumstances warrant or allow.

11. Defense Mechanisms.

Some may think all this describes happiness as a complicated undertaking, and they may doubt they can master it. This is a reasonable reaction. The beginning and changing facets of our existence and our task of keeping them together in a resistant and changing world confront us with all kinds of convolutions. Life is untidy and, at times, thorny. It can be difficult to read and navigate. But as we find and define our self, we can see that being guided by happiness is in our nature and should come easily to us. Its principle is built into our mind and body to provide self-direction in selecting and correcting objectives and pursuits. This compass of happiness can capably guide us through life's complexities, if we let it. What complicates our path is not this simple guiding principle, but resistance to its implementation. Such resistance can be regularly found in us and our environment. We will likely have to work on us and our settings to reach and sustain what we need and want. Yet, overcoming this resistance is exactly what the happiness principle is geared for in conjunction with our mental and physical abilities. An open mind will thus readily accept it.

An often more formidable obstacle is artificial resistance in us, put up by mechanisms that try to keep this principle in check. They manifest as arguments why we ought to not need what we need or not want what we want, or why we cannot or should not follow our happiness. They may undertake this by suggesting a

divide between illegitimate pleasure and true happiness according to their definition, or by implying that personal happiness itself is a false objective. Then again, this dissuading resistance to happiness may not directly particularize into thoughts. It may remain at more elusive emotional levels. Or it may prompt us to generate perceptions and rationalizations to justify its emotional judgment after the fact. Who created this artificial resistance in us? The premier candidates are outside forces. We are so accustomed to being lectured by them on how to live that we consider this normal. External forces may also instill compliance by exposing us to nonverbal inducements to which we adjust. These directed influences are surrounded by a host of unintended or otherwise intended stimuli. Interacting with such experiences, we substantially participate in the creation of reactive mechanisms to them in accordance with our dispositions. And such mechanisms in due course join our dispositions. The particularities of forces and defenses they engender are as varied as our exterior and interior circumstances. Some never work for us. Others may serve our interest in some respects. Either may first oppose the happiness principle as a competitor. Conversance and compatibility will resolve opposition in benevolent forces and yield their adaptation and assistance. But malevolent or misled forces will fight the happiness principle as the diametrical opponent it is to them.

Internal defenses against granting our happiness principle workable opportunities can be tenacious. They include falsely claiming that impositions they support already represent the happiness principle and that no further inquiry or action is possible or required. They may ignite or fan in us fear of the inside or outside world and of not being able to cope or fare well in it without them. And they may make it look like engaging our natural guidance is dangerous, unwieldy, or unfeasible when in reality they pose the obstacles making us miserable. They may try to conceal they are keeping us prisoners by fooling us with ideas of protection. These internal defenses may foil our natural guidance system from emerging and taking command. They may prevent us from gaining freedom. If we cannot neutralize or contain them, we cannot come into our own. A significant portion of our work toward happiness may thus have to be dedicated to identifying and defusing internal defenses. But this alerts these at existential levels. It causes them to even more furiously blame struggles they necessitate on the happiness principle and fight it any way they can. Unfortunately, the odds for such defenses to succeed are slanted in their favor. Many of us are set in our attitudes and ways, even if these make us unhappy and we are aware of it. And even catastrophic failure and undeniable evidence of its causes may not move them to reassess and respond. So, not everybody is able to escape the darkness of their programming guided by the light of their happiness. My sincere hope is that you can.

12. Conclusion.

Future installments of this channel will delve more into details of what I have touched upon in this video. I am also making an audio version of the Philosophy of Happiness book available for listening at no charge on my website. This is in response to requests and to make my work more accessible to people who might recoil from reading a 1000-page book. Digesting its content in one sitting is not possible anyway since it places your entire life on your plate. The process it engenders must be taken in deliberate steps to set and settle in. You might thus view the book much more as a companion than another notch on your reading list. Still, spoken expression of the concepts relevant to a philosophy of happiness should help you confirm your acquaintance with their substance, including the happiness principle. And this familiarity should give you confidence that you can build your own philosophy of happiness by examining these concepts.

Let me close for today with an important note: Since your personal, sovereign philosophy is my objective, I do not want my presentations or writings to be misinterpreted as one-sided lectures. All are submitted for your deliberation and reaction. This is why I look forward to hearing from you in the comment section below or through one of the communication facilities accessible on the website. I hope you enjoyed this exposition of my work. Until you return to see me again, please take care, be well, and spread happiness.