Happiness, Limitations Religiosity

Samuel Akpan BASSEY[1], Leonard NWOYE[2], Timothy Adie OKPE[3]

[1] Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River, 540242, Nigeria
[2] Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River, 540242, Nigeria
[3] Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River, 540242, Nigeria
Email: samuelbassey15@yahoo.com

Abstract

Philosophers from different epochs; from Socrates to Buddha, all were more than willing to advise others on how to live a happy life. The desires that people do not necessarily require to become happy or maintain the state of happiness for considerable period are myriad. The reason of this can be seen in Aristotle's view that the goal of human action and thought is to be happy. Humans engage in a range of activities that make them feel happy and try to shun those that neither bring happiness nor make them feel appreciated. The thrust of this paper is to see if there are limitations to happiness? And what connection does religion has with the concept happiness.

Keywords: Happiness, desires.

Introduction

"Happiness depends on ourselves." other than everybody else, this is the under tune of Aristotle concept on happiness, Aristotle enshrines happiness as an imperative cause of human life and a goal in itself (Nussbaum 2009). As an end result he devotes greater space to the topic of happiness than any thinker previous to modern era of philosophy. Aristotle was convinced that truly happy lifestyles required the achievement of an extensive variety of situations, inclusive of physical as well as mental well-being. In this way he introduced the idea of a technical know-how of happiness in the classical experience, in phrases of a brand new area of understanding. Socrates on the other hand alleges that *reason* was a path to living 'the good life' (Ward 2017). He also told his supporters to look inward to discover true happiness. Socrates was so persuaded about the rule of introspection that he notably declared, "the unexamined life is not worth living." As far as our wishes were concerned, Socrates is of the opinion that mere mortals had the aptitude to attain "a divine-like state of inner tranquility." He was among the first group of philosophers to claim that happiness is not given divinely but humanly feasible if we try to make an effort towards achieving it. This was against the odds of ancient Greek belief that happiness was tremendously rare and held in reserve only for those the gods deemed privileged. "Religion is the opium of the people" is one of the most repeatedly paraphrased prepositions of German philosopher

Karl Marx (Yılmaz 2018). For him the abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. Karl Marx did realize that there is a connection between religion and happiness. Through the postulations of these philosophers we can ask; Are there limitations for happiness and furthermore, what is the connection between religion and happiness.

Limitations of Desires to Be Happy

Humans engage in a range of activities that make them feel happy and try to shun those that neither bring happiness nor make them feel appreciated. The desires that people do not necessarily require to become happy or maintain the state of happiness for the considerable period are myriad. A strong pursuit of achieving such desires would eventually do the person more harm than good in the end (Furness & Gilligan 2010). The proponents of Hedonism led by Epicurus acknowledged the significance of pleasure beyond the stereotypical notion. In their view, the most pleasant lifestyle is one in which a person abstains from the unnecessary pleasures but strive to accomplish an inner tranquility. The theory of hedonism would encourage the need for people and a society, in general, to be content with simple things that may sometimes draw so much attention though fundamental toward achieving some of the important goals of life. It is the high time people reviewed their desires, dreams, and ambitions in order to make their desires and lifestyles more feasible in the wake of various social, economic, and cultural changes in the narrow prospect and the world at large (Furness & Gilligan 2010).

Philosophical conversations with friends on achieving physical pleasures would be critical even as societies continue to experience enormous challenges while trying to keep the desires of people more practicable and doable in the wake of technological advancements. Individuals should mainly engage in those activities and desires that tend to underpin the physical pleasures such as food, drink, and sex (Nussbaum 2009). The focus is fast shifting to looking at ways of minimizing the unnecessary as well as redundant desires and paying attention to the essential factors that would help achieve decent living in addition to addressing the various challenges that affect people's happiness in society. Two significant beliefs make lives of most people worthless and full of pain. The self-imposed beliefs include fear of facing punishment of the gods for bad actions and the strange fear revolving around death. Many people find the first belief scary to the extent that it hampers the ability to exploit and experiment all pleasures of the world as well as individual desires even as modern societies emphasize democracy and egalitarianism. The two beliefs derive their basis on mere fiction hence are completely unnecessary (Nussbaum 2009).

Even as people from different parts of the world put more effort toward the realization of their desires and those of their countries, it is imperative to reiterate the importance of putting more focus on the collective desires that seek to change the entire society. Hence, individuals must compromise their selfish desires for the sake of cohesiveness and equality in terms of universal desires and fundamental goals of the society apart from individual interests (Nussbaum 2009). Although societies must appreciate the existence of gods, they do not directly concern themselves with the desires or activities that people engage in for the sake of social, cultural, or economic gains. The fear of death is groundless just like the fear of facing heavy penalties from the gods due to people's

undesirable actions totally uncalled for by all standards. Apprehensions and panic emanating from human perception of death or bad actions would definitely result in unhappiness. Living in fear is never a desirable trait or attribute because it compromises the capacity to explore and experiment all pleasures of life (Nussbaum 2009). The desire to eliminate bodily pain or a state of inner tranquility is one of the necessary desires whose ultimate outcome is happiness. The individual, in essence, should build a mindset in which there is no pain to attain a neutral state of mind or peace of mind. The society should also turn away from the external conditions because they play a limited role in making one happy. Factors such as income, good looks, marriage, and winning a lottery have a smaller impact as far as the lasting happiness of an individual or society is concerned.

In the wake of globalization, communities, states, and countries are awash with an array of technological advancements whose outcome is bliss and ecstasy. As new and more advanced inventions and innovations found their way into the market, the previously once considered world most desirable inventions become less attractive hence elicit less happiness or contentment. Other unnecessary desires, which would result in little or no happiness, include desiring a bigger car or a more luxurious meal. Apparently, purchasing a bigger car has a bearing on the individual's state of mind or perception about others. It might even cause happiness in the short term. However, financial constraints would draw out happiness as the individual fails to gunner sufficient amount to purchase. Unhappiness might feature prominently in a scenario whereby the person is unable to raise enough cash to service a bank loan even after successfully purchasing his or her dream car. Happiness is a public affair as a group of like-minded people easily come together to help each other in pursuit of happiness (Reeve 2006).

Eliminating Such Desires and Making Ourselves Happier

Individuals can easily eliminate some of these desires. However, it might take much longer for the same individual to get rid of other desires. The bottom line would remain that both of these desires do not help achieve his or her primary, which is to be happy. Even as contemporary societies grapple with various economic, social, and political challenges, any attempts to overlook at aspects that trigger happiness or sadness among individuals or groups. Societies have come up with mechanisms that would help achieve both short-term and long-term goals even though may not reflect on the level of happiness among subjects (Reeve 2006). Many people work round the clock to accomplish the best nuptials, always recording a win in the lottery, or earning huge sums of money in formal employment or other business ventures. These ventures would only translate to short-term or temporary happiness. In the end, situations such as divorce, separation, retrenchment or sackings at the workplace, or poor health might just make the individual lead a dejected and stressful existence (Reeve 2006). Although society has an equal share of blame for the state of unhappiness among the people, individual desires are mainly responsible for the various challenges that lead to devastation, desperation, and hopelessness. A person's desire to purchase a bigger car, a luxurious meal, or palatial home despite experiencing a strained budget is just far-fetched dreams. It is high time individuals, as well as groups, reexamined the expediency or feasibility of their ambitions. Otherwise, certain desires or aspirations may only contribute to a more complex and disturbed mind owing to the kind of economic,

social, and psychological torture one would go through. Failure to realize such dreams will only amount to devastation and unhappiness (Reeve 2006).

How Religiosity Influence Increased Happiness

Religion plays a significant role to ensure that people go about their endeavors and ventures in accordance with the religious teachings. Different religious groups across the globe take into consideration the ethical and moral standards as compulsory requirements before taking part in certain activities linked to the religious group. In highly religious countries, appointments to various public positions largely depend on religiosity and adherence to doctrines associated with the religion (James 2008). In effect, people with a sound religious background stand a better chance to secure a place in organizations that belong to or run according to the doctrine of given religion. Although every organization has set its standards to ensure no elements of discrimination based on gender or religion dominate appointments, those fully in compliance with the doctrines would absolutely favor the die-hards or stanch believers. Increased religiosity, in essence, will increase happiness. Religion has the capacity to provide a strong feeling of security. A strong belief in a higher power who keeps a look at everything that happens in the world can provide considerable comfort. It will not only simplify people's life but also diminish feelings of overwhelming and incomprehensible complexities (James 2008).

The region also plays a critical role in finding a solution to growing concern about lack of order and uncertainty. It may also reduce the fear of dying. Although death is an inevitable phenomenon, religiosity would tend to minimize the fear of dying from some of the terminal diseases such as cancer, sickle-cell anemia, and HIV/AIDS among other illnesses. Religion proposes a divine healing that supersedes the ability or power of modern medication or even the traditional herbal medicines. The belief about the devil being responsible for the various illnesses and misfortunes affecting lives of humans has influenced people's choice to seek divine intervention instead of visiting healthcare facilities (Reeve 2006). The power of the Supreme Being over every phenomenon that affects the life of human positively or negatively is beneficial to happiness. Religion informs believers that God is in charge of the life of everyone's life and that their life would continue in some form after death. Religion has the ability to give people hope especially the hopeless. Despite the harsh situations and challenges that people face, religion plays a fundamental role in giving them hope and optimism from which they draw strength. Religion is also an agent for socialization. It is no doubt meeting with other believers for religious events is more than just practicing the faith (Reeve 2006).

People use the opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones, sing together and above all socialize. Interactions can be a powerful source of happiness to individuals. Religion provides more than just individual hedonism to guide behavior. In essence, religion provides guidelines for faithful to follow and in the end, live an orderly and moral life (Furness & Gilligan 2010). Even though people appear to be happier within the spheres of religion, many researchers show that people in the relatively nonreligious nation are the happiest lot. Scandinavian societies are relatively nonreligious though are the happiest. Studies also indicate that societies, which have achieved substantial social and economic development, have weak faith in religion and its ability to provide a solution to problems that affect society. In essence, people run to churches, mosques, and temples whenever they

experience tough challenges that they are clearly unable to solve. When conditions are relatively good and calm, people tend to lower or minimize their commitment to a certain religion or religious group. Hence, the happiness that scholars and religious leaders associate to total religiosity would remain viable so long as they find a credible or satisfactory solution to various problems affecting them. In some cases, the person would completely cut his or her link with religion for the rest of his life (Furness & Gilligan 2010).

Despite the fundamental role that religiosity play to induce happiness, other factors such as cultural, economic, and political challenges have emerged to be some of the obstacles to realizing religiosity. Poverty, political upheavals, and cultural dilemma are some of the fundamental issues that complicate further the belief about the capacity of religion or religiosity of an individual to induce happiness (Furness & Gilligan 2010). Such challenges present modern and ancient societies as hypocritical and only recognize religion when facing enormous challenges. Apparently, societies seem to have exhausted possible solution in vain. These include dangerous illnesses, economic downturn/harsh economic times, political turmoil, and cultural issues. If societies re-examined and re-evaluated their connections with religion, the outcomes would be the pivotal role that religion plays in the lives of people worldwide. In essence, different societies would realize that religion is the primary source of their happiness whether in times of economic slump or period of growth and development. Having a purpose and meaning of life is critical, as it is a form of devotion to people and larger goals (Furness & Gilligan 2010).

Implications for Adopting a Religious Belief

Since religion influences increased happiness, it is upon religious leaders and organizations to provide guidance about the essential procedures toward adoption of any religious belief. People tend to react positively or negatively toward a phenomenon depending on their experiences with the same phenomenon or related phenomenon (Fitzgerald Obbink & Holland 2003). The adoption of a religious belief would, however, elicit different reactions owing to the variety of social, religious, and cultural categories in the society. A few believers who only throng churches, mosques, or temples when facing overwhelming challenges for which they seek divine solution might not agree with plans to adopt certain religious beliefs either because they no longer show up in religious meetings or because they find such belief discriminatory or opinionated. Before adoption, it is necessary for all stakeholders and worshippers alike brought on board because successful adoption would compliance by all members (Eid & Larsen 2008).

People's stakes and economic power may also influence adoption or implementation. A considerable number of societies might also focus only on those beliefs that directly benefit them and derail those that appear to go against their will (Eid & Larsen 2008). However, if happiness is the primary determinant of people's attitude, perception, and readiness to adopt given religious belief, then societies are on the verge of accepting only the beliefs that meet the threshold for happiness. Even with an eminent implementation based on happiness or contentment, many countries still find many religious beliefs and practices as a mere sham. The economically privileged would prefer attending the religious meeting only when they are in dire need of divine services. A few

others also perceive religion as simply a bridge to gaining access to political positions (Eid & Larsen 2008).

Conclusion

Happiness is not just good; it feels good. Happy people are more helpful, productive and creative, have better marriages and boast stronger immune systems. The region is important to find happiness because it plays a critical role in finding a solution to growing concern about lack of order and uncertainty. It also helps to reduce the fear of dying. Although death is an inevitable phenomenon, religiosity would tend to minimize the fear of dying from some of the terminal diseases. Religion also proposes a divine healing that supersedes the ability or power of modern medication or even the traditional herbal medicines. Lastly, as people from different parts of the world put more effort toward the realization of their desires and those of their countries, it is imperative to reiterate the importance of putting more focus on the collective desires that seek to change the entire society.

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