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### From Comparison to Indices:

A disabling perspective on the history of happiness

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## Abstract

Who should be considered the most unhappy, the blind or the deaf? The intensive debate over this issue in the early 19th century is the outset of our study of how during the last two hundred years disability and happiness have become inextricably connected. On the basis of our historical analysis we have identified characteristics that also can be found in current happiness interpretations, namely the persistent role played by activation, professional intervention, and alignment with normative behaviors. In order to highlight this intimate connection between past and present we subsequently focus on the contemporary preoccupation with the happiness of people with disabilities, exemplified by research on the so-called "disability paradox" and the development of happiness indices within the behavioral sciences. Our thesis is that applying perspectives from disability studies to happiness research uncovers processes of exclusion and other modalities of power previously overlooked. In our examples, we recognize a desire to lay bare the inside of disabled people's minds and impose on them un/happy subjectivities. We furthermore argue that the way we think of, and treat, both disability and happiness, i. e. by systematization and professionalization, belongs to a rationalization process which risks colonizing the emotional realm of disabled people. Thus we suggest a research program that 'dis/ables' happiness studies and, aided by historical analysis, reconsiders the emotional dimension of disability.

**Keywords:** *disability studies; deaf education; blind education; disability history; happiness*

## From Comparison to Indices:

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### I. Critical Happiness Studies

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine as to what is the main danger. (Michel Foucault)

In 1939, a Belgian magazine on blind education featured a story about three blind musicians who, while travelling on a train, joked and laughed out loudly along the way. One of the passengers in the same carriage was taken aback by this scene and exclaimed that the three blind persons were an extraordinary sight. According to the passenger, it was incredible that such unfortunate and miserable people were able to laugh and to apparently experience moments of happiness as, “there is nothing in this world more unhappy than a blind person” (Blindenvriend, 1939, p. 8). Stories such as this are commonplace in the history of disability. For the last two centuries and up until today, persons with disabilities are frequently associated with feelings of sadness, as incapable of becoming happy, and as therefore being in need of professional guidance. Despite its ubiquitous presence within the history of disability, very few studies have directly concentrated on as to how happiness influences the way we deal with, and represent, people with disabilities.

Over the past three decades happiness has become a buzzword in academia and politics as well as in our daily lives. The vast market for self-help literature, coaching, and courses aimed at happiness, and the frequent appearance of the word in advertising suggests that “happiness” is highly desirable. The increase of happiness has been introduced as a political goal at the very highest of levels. Within the flourishing academic field *Happiness Studies* insights from disciplines such as positive psychology, applied economics and sociology are combined in order to determine measurable criteria of individual happiness and make suggestions for increasing happiness overall (McMahon, 2006, pp. 463-480; Ahmed, 2007/2008).

Accompanying the current strong trend towards studying, emphasizing, and achieving happiness are some critical voices that cast doubt on the desirability, validity and feasibility of such pursuits. Darrin McMahon, in his monumental history of happiness, argues for the contingent nature of happiness by outlining the different interpretations that the Western world has ascribed to such a state since Antiquity (McMahon 2006). Sara Ahmed distinguishes two competing views on happiness: the classicist and the utilitarian. Against the notion of happiness as a quantifiable good that can be achieved by the individual by following a self-help regimen, or for entire populations by political measures, the classicists consider happiness to be the result of the hard work of a chosen few and place

the mind above the body as a source of ‘proper’ happiness. As Ahmed points out, the classicist notion comes suspiciously close to classism and recalls power structures within society (Ahmed 2007/2008). This also goes, however, for the utilitarian happiness scientists: Ahmed quotes a summary of the available research, where the happy person is embodied as a well-to-do, conservative inhabitant of a politically stable and prosperous country, a member of the majority with a harmonious marriage and social life, healthy, active, and with a sense of control (ibid. p. 9). The similarity of this imaginary person to Erving Goffman’s personification of normalcy is striking:

For example, in an important sense, there is only one complete unblushing male in America; a young, married, white, urban, northern heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height, and a recent record in sports. (Goffman, 1963, pp. 128)

Regardless of the approach one chooses, the body appears as a crucial entity in the construction of happiness: to the classicist as a contrast to a true, disembodied happiness, and to the utilitarian as a source of un/happiness and the very core where a particular happiness is experienced. According to Ahmed, certain objects carry a culturally inscribed promise of happiness. It is not that they themselves merely happen to be delightful or give us pleasure; instead, it is the anticipation of happiness that directs desire towards those objects (Ahmed, 2010, pp. 21-50).

Almost simultaneously to the new preoccupation with happiness, activists and scholars have grown aware of another aspect of the body, namely as a stage upon which battles over power and knowledge are wrought. Indeed, the past three decades have witnessed disability become a theoretical tool on par with gender, class, and race, and an ever-growing number of publications show how placing the embodiment of difference at the center of enquiry uncovers other stories and offers new perspectives on the normate (Kudlick, 2003; Baynton, 2001; Burch, 2005).

By no means have these two topics – happiness and disability – remained separate. Scholars within what Ahmed calls ‘the science of happiness’ frequently make use of disability and related concepts such as health in the categorization and quantification of happiness-determining factors.<sup>1</sup> Some of these scholars focus specifically on the topic, investigating the so-called “disability paradox”, i. e. the fact that disability does not affect happiness to the extent that non-disabled persons expect that it would (e. g. Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999; Fellinghauer et. al., 2012; Moller, 2011). In the behavioral sciences, researchers in want of verbally self-reported un/happiness seek to establish methods to detect the un/happiness of people with certain disabilities for the purpose of optimizing treatment, so that happiness can be achieved (Lancioni et Al., 2005).

In critical research on disability, the attention paid to happiness is less explicit. Indeed, it is for the most part defensive, aiming to counter the assumption that ‘impairments condition unhappiness’. This notion has, as demonstrated by Paul Longmore (2003), far-reaching and serious consequences: Under some legislations, unhappiness coupled with impairment is a condition under which assisted suicide is granted, and, one might add, the idea that disability is necessarily a barrier to happiness provides a motive for selective reproductive technologies. Our intention is to show that in the complex context of disability, happiness cannot be considered an apolitical good but rather an important element that aids the visualization of disability in Western history. In particular, our study is concerned with the way ‘happiness’ and ‘disability’ were interrelated in modern Western history. We will argue that

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<sup>1</sup> An indicator of this is that a full-text search in the *Journal of Happiness Studies* for “disability” yields 72 articles (August 2013) <http://link.springer.com/journal/10902> .

approximately since the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century happiness functioned as a tool for designing and motivating interventions in the lives of disabled people, and that this power strategy has very much remained in force.

The aim of this study therefore is to visualize the role played by happiness in the establishment and transformation of care structures and practices for persons with disabilities; or in other words, to trigger awareness and interest in the manifold intersections of disability history/studies and happiness studies. While fully acknowledging the chronological, geographical, linguistic and disciplinary gaps of the investigation, we will present on two case studies in order to test our theoretical and methodical suggestions for studying the manifold connections between happiness and disability. Our starting point will be the question raised within the carriage on that Belgian train, namely, whether the blind or the deaf should be considered “the most unhappy”.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of these sources we intend to demonstrate as to how a critical perspective on dis/ability can shed a different light on the history of happiness, focusing here on our theoretical standpoints rather than the empirics of source material.<sup>3</sup>

After having sketched out the way this question was dealt with in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we turn to two academic discourses on happiness and disability that arose in the 1990’s. We will first present a reading of the literature on the ‘disability paradox’ and focus on the ways scientists of happiness have tried to resolve it. Secondly, the emergence of so-called ‘happiness indices’ within the behavioral sciences will be brought into analysis. These happiness indices, as we will see, are considered tools for objectively determining the un/happiness of individuals with certain disabilities, and subsequently ensuring that happiness is maintained.<sup>4</sup> In analyzing these examples, we will demonstrate how an application of a critical disability studies approach towards the field of happiness (studies) is not only possible; but that it also enables disability scholars to deepen their awareness of societal processes that have determined the way disability is treated in Western societies.

## II. The Happinization of Activity

Happiness nowadays comes to us as a self-evident, ahistorical and acultural good. Who doesn’t want to be happy? What, after all, should be the purpose of society, of life, of ‘it all’, if not happiness? Given the ubiquitous nature of happiness in today’s societies, it is tempting to project this characteristic onto previous epochs. While analyzing 19<sup>th</sup> century texts comparing the deaf and the blind, we have deliberately distanced ourselves from this

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<sup>2</sup> In studying the 19<sup>th</sup> century discussion on of this question, a systematic literature review has yielded almost 50 texts in four languages, published in Europe and the United States between 1802 and 1893, with a considerable concentration in the years 1825-1855. The identification of sources took place in thematic bibliographies (Guyot & Guyot, 1842, *Organ der Taubstummenanstalten; Blätter für Taubstummenbildung*) and archives (Charles-Louis Carton Archives in Bruges, *Bibliothek für Hör- und Sprachgeschädigtenforschung* in Leipzig and *Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung* in Berlin), topic directories of selected journals (*American Annals of the Deaf*, *The Silent Worker*, *IBDK*, *Taubstummenfreund*, and *Taubstummencourier*) and full-text search engines (Google books, *Kungliga Vetenskapsakademiens Handlingar*, *Project Runeberg*, *JStor*). In addition, we surveyed works on deafness and blindness, and the writings by teachers of the deaf and the blind for discussions on the matter.

<sup>3</sup> A second manuscript, where we analyze the discussion on the comparative happiness of the blind and the deaf in depth is under preparation.

<sup>4</sup> The texts we analyze in both cases were identified by searching for studies on disability and happiness in contemporary academic journals, using the directories *pubmed*, *Jstor*, *Google Scholar*, and a full-text search in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*.

view. Rather than treating the question and pursuit of happiness as universal, we contend that the appearance of happiness as a discursive object at a particular time and in a certain context, symbolizes an important trait of Western societies.

The comparison between the happiness of the blind and the deaf resulted from major epistemological changes of the Enlightenment. Triggered by philosophical discussions about the role of the senses in the construction of knowledge and human understanding towards the end of the seventeenth century, the eighteenth century saw an abundance of works that dealt with how hearing, sight, taste, smell and feeling contributed to the emergence of intelligence (Weygand, 2003). At the same time, and driven by the same epistemological shift, the concept of happiness experienced a significant transformation. Happiness, too, became a matter of the here-and-now and of sensory experience, rather than a promise of salvation in the afterlife (McMahon, 2006, pp. 175-233). People with sensory disabilities consequently became crucial study objects (Rée, 1999; Gessinger, 1994; Morgan, 1977): if knowledge and happiness came through the senses, the condition of people with an atypical sensory disposition promised to reveal the principles according to which particular processes took place.

In the texts examined, the reader is usually introduced to two imaginary men, one deaf and the other blind, and is asked to picture those men in various situations: in places that range from, for instance, a deserted island (Hartman, 1817; Keseman, 1824) to just across the table (Kinniburgh, 1840). By describing these situations the case was made for one man being happier than the other. This way of proceeding enabled the author to do several things: clearly, the comparison between people deprived of either hearing or sight made it possible to argue for one of the senses to be ruled more crucial in the achievement of happiness. Samuel Gridley Howe, for instance, stated in a lecture delivered to the American Institute on Instruction in 1836 that:

A person who should be reduced to the alternative of losing his sight or his hearing, ought unhesitatingly to say, let me be blind rather than deaf; shut up the windows of the body, through which I see only beautiful and curious arrangements of matter, but leave open that wider avenue, through which comes the voice of affection and the action of mind. (Howe, 1837, p. 7)

Such an adjectival comparison qualifies certain senses conducive to happiness, over others. Since the deaf were, according to most, better able to move around freely, the blind allegedly had an easier access to conversation, the answer to the happiness question would reveal whether independence or sociability was most valuable in achieving that very state of being (Philo, 1802; Scherr, 1827; Kinniburgh, 1840). Thus, the personage of the blind and the deaf lent itself to an argument that, in the end, was about the able-bodied. This was a crucial aspect in making the comparison of the happiness of the deaf and the blind so popular –journals within which such texts appeared included the *Scottish Christian Herald*; *The New England Magazine*; *The Monthly Magazine*; the *British Register*, as well as *Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*: these boasting a privileged, bourgeois readership – supposedly with access to all of the enjoyments the blind and the deaf could supposedly partly, if at all, experience – , could use the thought experiment to ponder on the true meaning of life and the road to happiness.

Continuing to consider the role, sense and identity of happiness in the 19<sup>th</sup> century comparisons of the blind and the deaf, our study revealed a further function besides that of the light-weight philosophical reverie for the educated bourgeoisie. In most texts, and with increasing insistence over the years, writers emphasized the beneficial effects of education. Several of the authors were themselves teachers of the deaf or the blind (e. g. Guillé, 1817; Dufau, 1837; Pablasek, 1867; Berthier 1837; Kruse, 1853). The descriptions of the unhappy state of either group served as a backdrop to supportive appeals for their receiving education. Although Howe, for instance, was convinced of blindness in itself being preferable to deafness, he on the other hand considered the happiness of the

blind to a greater extent reliant on education. Therefore, he closed his lecture with a strong appeal for supporting schools for the blind – one of which he himself was the founder and director:

If there is any one class in our community, whose claim upon society is clear and indisputable, it is the blind. If any one class has been peculiarly and long neglected, it is the blind. We recognise the right of all the young to a participation in the blessings of education. We have long provided the means for all: for white and black, — for the poorest as well as the richest; — even for the deaf and dumb; while the blind, — with capacity equal to any, — with wants greater, far greater than any, — have been entirely neglected until within a few years! Compare the situation and wants of a blind person, with those of a deaf mute. The one can move about in the world, he can go into a carpenter's shop, or a shoemaker's shop, learn a trade and become independent, and comparatively happy. But the blind man, — he is helpless. If unassisted and unenlightened by a peculiar provision for his education, he must pass his days in ignorance and idleness, and often end them in an almshouse. And yet, while institutions of the education of the deaf have long been established, and are rapidly increasing, those for the blind are but just commencing. Thank God, however, the work has commenced; and in a community like ours, it cannot but go on. Already have two of our institutions placed themselves on a footing with, — nay, I may safely say, in some respects, have excelled, — the best and oldest in Europe; — and there is nothing more ardently to be desired, than to see them multiplied and perfected. (Howe, 1837, pp. 25f)

Alongside the imaginary deaf and blind figures, we also witness the entrance of an expert: the educator, with the power to undo nearly all of the harm caused by sensory deprivation and ensure happiness (Orpen, 1836; Scherr, 1826; Kinniburgh, 1840; Wines, 1888). In order to highlight this, another layer of comparison is added in the texts observed from the genre: not only are the blind and the deaf compared while being placed in different situations, but one also distinguishes between the uneducated and the educated in each category – to a striking extent:

All know how the blind generally are; how helpless, how inactive, how utterly unable they are to create resources for passing their time usefully and pleasantly; they sit moping in the chimney-corner, an object of pity, and a heavy charge on their friends. But in these institutions they are all busy, active, industrious, and happy; you look into the workshops, and you see them all eagerly following their different occupations [...] and when the hour of work is over, they scamper away to their play-ground, and run about, and play, and laugh, and shout, with all the merriment of seeing boys. (Education of the Blind, 1833, p. 182)

As proposed, the 'unhappy' life is the supposed 'natural' state of the sensorially deprived: untouched by expertise, they are passive, and passivity equals uselessness, industrial inutility and consequently, sadness. In the above mentioned quote, education makes the blind go from the passive to the active state, from unhappiness to happiness, where they are useful and cheerful, normal and masculine, *just like seeing boys*. This extraordinary power of education to control nature and undo its evils was reflected also by Robert Kinniburgh, a famous teacher of the deaf, as follows:

Thus we see that the deaf and dumb, in their natural and unimproved state, are in the lowest condition in which human beings can be placed, and that although the art of man cannot remove those privations under which they labour, and which have proceeded from the hand of God, yet it can and does alleviate them, and take away their most lamentable consequences. We see, too, that generally their ignorance does not arise from any natural inferiority of mind, but is owing entirely to their being precluded, by their situation, from the advantages of instruction. Give them education, and in a great measure you do away their defect, and put them on a level with other rational creatures – you make them useful and respectable members of society – you place them in the station of intellectual, moral, and social beings (Kinniburgh, 1840, p. 386).

Evident, is the need for intervention and the power of encouraging, facilitating and harnessing skills. For the educationalist, a devastating fate (or nature) can be tamed, its effects compensated for and the disabled body, ‘en-abled’, and thus happenized.

It is interesting to note that this turn to happiness by educators of the blind and deaf occurred at a time when the power of teachers to ‘en-able’ their pupils was in serious doubt. The first educational initiatives for the blind and the deaf date back to the end of the eighteenth century when people such as Valentin Haüy and the Abbé de l’Épée founded educational institutes in Paris (Bézaguy-Deluy, 1990; Weygand, 2003). Although from completely different backgrounds,<sup>5</sup> their mutual aim was to restore to society individuals who were generally considered useless and commonly perceived to be incapable of any religious feeling. In the first handbook on blind education, for example, Valentin Haüy mentions giving back the arms to the blind of society, making them fully-skilled and active citizens (Haüy, 1786). Given that the epoch saw many<sup>6</sup> disabled relegated to a life of begging ongoing economic-industrial processes had little room reserved for such citizens, and education was seen as one possible medium for progressive integration and empowerment. Together with Haüy and Epée, the first educators of the blind explained the relevance of their educational efforts by likening such initiatives to the fight against poverty and as a corrective measure to the chaos in society (Schuber, 1986; Dreves, 1998).

Yet such philanthropy clashed heavily with the ideals which churned the mechanisms of industry, state and society and it soon became clear that the education of the deaf and the blind would not be able to meet all of the great expectations: the transformation of the uneducated deaf and blind men into useful and productive citizens, the transformation of the disabled beggar into an en-abled citizen of the state, was hard to uphold (Verstraete, 2009). The systems of blind and deaf education grew during the 19<sup>th</sup> century from small-scale schools in a few places, typically founded and run by one man who developed his own method, into state-run institutions where attendance was obligatory and with classes following a standardized curriculum. On the one hand, this meant that education was finally made available to greater numbers of deaf and blind children, doubtlessly equipping many with skills that let them make a more independent living and participate in society to a greater extent. On the other, it increased the professional, public control over their lives. Deaf and blind children were made public charges, who were thoroughly examined, in most cases removed from their original community and brought up in residential schools, and whose behavior needed to be modified by specialized professionals (Söderfeldt 2013, pp. 29-91). In this rationalization process, happiness came to play a significant part.

When 19<sup>th</sup> century writers emphasized the effect of education by referring to the un/happiness of the deaf and the blind, imposed on them a particular subjectivity. Suddenly, both themselves and their surroundings were prompted to think of deafness and blindness in terms of un/happiness. Furthermore, their happiness, once it became an object of scrutiny, also became a public concern that called for the management by experts (cf. Buton, 1999). Given the fact that this ‘happiness turn’ coincides with the spread and consolidation of institutionalized education and its failure to meet with the promise to produce productive citizens, one finds its relevance for those who sought to legitimize their efforts. In emphasizing happiness instead of functionality, educators were able to draw from then-recent developments in pedagogy. Since the end of the eighteenth century, especially through the work of Jean-

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<sup>5</sup> Épée (1712-1789), a priest, came from a wealthy background, whereas the scholar and translator Haüy (1745-1822) came from the working class.

<sup>6</sup> How common it was for disabled people in early-modern Europe not to be able to support themselves, and how many were beggars, is not possible to determine (cf. Horn & Frohne, 2013; Stiker, 2013).



Jacques Rousseau, happiness became a major target in educational programs (Salkever, 1978). Happiness actually was considered the penultimate goal in Rousseau's educational novel *Emile* where he writes:

My young friend, when I took you, a new-born infant, in my arms, and called God himself to witness to the vow I dared to make that I would devote my life to the happiness of your life, did I know myself what I was undertaking? No; I only knew that in making you happy, I was sure of my own happiness (Rousseau, 2001, p. 486).

To produce productive citizens remained important, but likewise the creation of happy citizens was also a priority. Facing considerable obstacles in transforming the "miserable creatures" into *productive* citizens, emphasizing the possibility of transforming unhappy individuals into *happy* citizens was a much more powerful and realistic argument in favor of establishing and extending the educational network for deaf and blind education.

### III. The Objectification of Happiness

Happy individuals, the 19<sup>th</sup> century debate on the blind and the deaf seem to suggest, are those that behave in line with reigning societal norms; those that have become active and left their states of independence. Across the various judgments of who is the happiest and why, the argument is consistently carried through the dichotomy of passivity and activity, this qualifying social and economic use value. Although usually deemed the happiest of all disabled, the central predicament for the blind in terms of achieving happiness was considered their alleged passivity of, in and towards the world. As put in a text by an anonymous author first published in *The Monthly Magazine or British Register* in 1802, which was to reappear in at least two other publications in the 1830s and -40s (Mann, 1836, pp. 255-263; Anonymous, 1840), the blind are more or less helpless by unto themselves, and that their time spent alone is one of idleness and misery:

The idea of being led from place to place is melancholy, and I believe has principal weight among the reasons which induce us to prefer the situation of the deaf [...]. The company of others now remains almost his only resource: here we shall find him cheerful and animated, but it is only here, for the time he spends alone hangs dull and heavy on his hands. (Philo, 1802, pp. 101f)

Speaking in favor of the deaf, philanthropist F. H. Wines was quoted in the *American Annals of the Deaf* emphasizing that educated deaf persons are better in control of their lives than the blind, and that they are more outgoing:

Their [the deaf] pleasures are more within their command; they are not so dependent for them upon the kindness of others, as are the blind. [...] But, above all, they are not liable to the melancholy habit of introspection, to which the blind are peculiarly prone. The thoughts of the blind turn inward, while those of the deaf turn outward, which we think is a much happier psychological condition. (Wines, 1888, p. 227)

Yet such reasoning appears to hold sway over a century later: "happiness [as Ahmed writes] becomes a form of activity through being contrasted with negative emotions; to be happy would be to be active in the determination of your fate, while to be unhappy would be to suffer your fate." (Ahmed, 2010, p. 209)

In the 'science of happiness', disabled people problematize the established, traditional equations of happiness and its governed production. In spite of the normative face of happiness, researchers have revealed that people with disabilities do not respond the way they are expected to when asked to evaluate their well-being (e. g.

Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999; Riis et Al., 2005). Both from a medical model and a social model perspective, there is reason to believe that disabled people would be less than satisfied with their lives. The medical view equates disability with suffering, the antithesis of happiness. From the point of view of the social model, disability would not in itself cause unhappiness, but the stigmatization, the marginalization, the inaccessibility and discrimination faced by people with disabilities would make a strong case to expect that those who suffer such treatment would be unhappy by default. The fact that several studies have shown that significant numbers of people with disabilities feel satisfied with their lives thus appears puzzling, and the phenomenon has been named the “disability paradox” (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999; Riis et Al., 2005; Ubel et Al., 2005b; Moller 2011). Attempts to resolve this problem draw heavily on the social model, stressing the significance of external factors such as finances, social networks, and accessibility, and thus make a strong and important case for inclusion of, rather than imposing medical normalization on, people with disabilities (Albrecht and Devlieger 1999; Fellinghauer et. al. 2012; Ubel et. Al. 2005a).

The most obvious criticism of the disability paradox is as to how it disguises the face of the non-disabled identity. Of course, the paradox only becomes paradoxical given the assumption that disability equals unhappiness (Koch, 2000). What interests us here, however, is the way in which the paradox is resolved, as it reveals something crucial about happiness. Instead of letting accounts of disabled happiness disrupt the normate face of happiness, researchers detect aspects of disabled lives that let them fit the model of the well-adjusted, productive, active, abled, happy person. Their happiness appears out of place because it is not aligned with the right object, in this case, the able body, and the solution is to restore the proper alignment.

As with the active, productive, and cheerful blind boys described in the *New England Magazine*, the disabled subject in contemporary happiness studies achieves his happy condition by being able, active, and *like the non-disabled*. Studies that investigate the disability paradox repeatedly find its core in *happy* disabled people ‘actually’ being ‘able’ to do various things, and thus not deviating from the norm as much as expected (Ubel et Al., 2005b; Fellinghauer et. Al., 2012; Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999; Bruno et Al., 2013). Or, similarly, other studies place emphasis on a “can-do attitude”, i. e. an approach centered on ableness rather than ableness in itself (Viemerö & Krause, 1998; Bowling et Al., 2007; Persson & Rydén, 2006). This prompts Fellinghauer et. al. (2012) to realign the disabled category according to “limitations in activities and participations” and find, in compliance with the social model, that those who have access to support enabling them to complete every-day tasks and participate in society experience an at least average quality of life. Thus, the potential of the disability paradox to question the connection between happiness, activity, and ableness is not used. By emphasizing the abilities and active lifestyles and attitudes of their respondents, the assumption that disabled people are passive is countered, but not the belief that happiness requires ableness and activity. In other words: the discourse of happiness itself remained unaltered.

An earlier attempt to dissolve the disability paradox gives a more elaborate example of this strategy. In the late 1990’s Albrecht and Devlieger undertook an interview study among disabled residents of Chicago. After estimating their own quality of life, the respondents were also asked to explain why they rated and evaluated themselves the way they did. Those who were satisfied with their lives are quoted as mentioning commonplace ‘happy objects’, such as family, friends, sports, and work as reasons for their wellbeing: “My body was in a wheelchair but I could still be a father, husband, son and have friends. I could coach my daughter’s softball team” one respondent is quoted as saying. Another participant added: “I can get around with a cane. I have a job. I can drive a car. I have friends and a good sex life” (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999, p. 982). In addition, , the sense of being ‘in control’ appears central. The happy respondents “still had control over their bodies, minds and lives” (ibid., p. 982; cf. also Bowling et. al.) in spite of their disabilities; their unhappy counterparts, on the other hand, felt that their bodies were in control of them. Here, unhappy disability is constructed in terms of chaos, whereas happiness is a

state of order: “Usually, those people with disabilities who do not experience a high quality of life do not have ordered and predictable worlds” (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999, p. 986). This is because, according to Albrecht and Devlieger’s findings, the body in some cases prevents people from being as active as they want to be. Especially pain and fatigue limit the ability to work, to socialize, and to move around, which gives some respondents the feeling of a lack of control.

Recent studies revolving around the ‘disability paradox’ recall the juxtaposition of the passive, dis-abled, “moping”, unhappy blind and the lack of professional intervention with their active, cheerful, useful, happy educated counterparts in the *New England Magazine*. We would like to suggest an analysis that views efforts to make disabled people happy as an instance of pastoral power, a “form of power [that] cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people’s minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets” (Foucault, 1982, p. 783). When the question of happiness is raised, the child in the chimney-corner and the disabled softball coach are inscribed with a particular meaning, that of being un/happy. They receive, either by being categorized or by being invited to think of themselves along the lines of un/happiness, a socio-emotional status. In the previous section we concluded that imposing un/happy subjectivities on disabled people provides a motivation for and justification of intervening in their lives in order to manage the emotional state that has been made public. Research about the disability paradox is a contemporary example of un/happy subjectivities being imposed on people with disabilities. We will now turn to an example of how science presently is concerned with intervening and modifying the behaviors of disabled people for the sake of happiness.

A recent technique for managing the happiness of disabled people are the so-called “indices of happiness” and programs designed to increase them. This movement within behavioral sciences began in the 1990’s and is directed towards people in physical, sensory and mental states that make them unavailable for the methods usually employed to measure happiness, i. e. the verbal self-report. In order to assess levels of happiness, researchers have turned to a catalogue of observable behaviors that are believed to indicate happiness (or unhappiness). These include smiles, laughter, and responsivity for happiness, and crying, frowning, and lack of response for unhappiness (Green & Reid, 1996, p. 69; Parsons et. al., 2012, p. 17): reactions that can be counted by observers during controlled tests. By exposing their trial subjects to stimuli such as tickling, toys, talking, rubs, or tasty foods and beverages, an increase in happiness indices has proven to be achievable; or, as pioneered by research teams led by the Dutch psychologist Giulio Lancioni, personalized devices – microswitches – can be introduced enabling people with very limited mobility control their own exposure to a particular stimulus (cf. Lancioni et Al., 2005; Maes et Al., 2007).

With happiness indices, an observer supposedly gains access to a territory that had previously been obscured by persistent communication barriers. These indices are intended to reveal the inner, emotional realm of a person who does not readily offer such insight. Thus, indices are instruments designed to render a “private event (i. e., happiness)” (Reid & Green 1996, p. 77) visible and measurable. The target groups for the application of happiness indices are people who are highly reliant upon care either by professionals or family members. Happiness indices in this context provide feedback as to whether the interaction between carer and recipient is purposeful: is tickling Sonny or talking to Don (ibid., p. 74) fulfilling its purpose in achieving happiness? Are the hugs, the dolls, the head rubs provided to Pam, Tommy, Tony and Thad (Ivancic et Al., 1997, pp. 80, 86) efficient?

The main point of, and difficulty with, the indices is that they should be truthful, accurate, that is, to come as close as possible to representing the happiness going on right now within this particular individual (Reid & Green, 1996, pp. 76f; Parsons et Al., 2012). Some authors sooner refer to possible gains that do not concern happiness as a goal in itself; for instance, Lancioni et Al. argue that:

The long-term benefits of establishing microswitches would seem rather obvious. Persons could remain profitably engaged (with some possible beneficial mood changes and developmental gains [...]) with only minimal staff/parents' support for various periods of the day. (Lancioni et Al, 2002, p. 158)

Or, as Parsons et Al. suggest, happiness could be used as a selling-point for agencies that offer care for people with autism (2012, p. 24). Furthermore, the objects provoking happiness matter. The happy objects used in the studies are, as mentioned above, toys, interaction, physical contact, i. e. objects and actions that can be provided without much difficulty in both home and institutional setting and without having to fear adverse effects. In cases, however, where joy is apparently caused by behaviors that cannot be accepted due to being inconvenient or harmful, Rush et Al. suggest re-directing happiness by punishment (2001). As harsh as this might sound, their approach still acknowledges the happiness imperative: it is not, they stress, enough or even desirable only to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but rather to keep happiness intact while projecting it onto acceptable objects. Happiness thus still serves as the general background towards which professionals have to work. This also echoes research that happiness indices may induce merely an increase in smiling, but not enhance true happiness (Parsons et. al., 2012, p. 23; Green & Reid 1996, p. 77; Green & Reid, 1999, p. 292). The development of happiness indices shall not, therefore, be viewed simply as a way of facilitating and streamlining care efforts. Much rather, they represent an attempt to produce certain subjectivities. They are supposed to produce knowledge about the emotional realm of people who cannot verbalize their experience of happiness, and based on that knowledge ensure that their happiness is aligned with proper objects.

Concern for the happiness of people in states of very limited mobility and with little or no verbal expression arguably represent a departure from earlier merely custodial practices or programs designed to “increase appropriate client behaviors and skills” (Ivancic et Al., 1997, p. 80). Combined with microswitches, it shall not be questioned that the application of happiness indices offers the potential increase in self-determination and possibly allowing the target group to experience more enjoyment. However, at the same time happiness indices represent a technique that enables the expansion of control over people with disabilities. Control might take the shape of institutionalizing, the obvious exercise of power that is locking people up, which has historically been used to protect society from the purported danger emanating from “abnormal” people (cf. for instance Trent, 1994). We recall here that the independent living and psychiatric reform movements have to a varying extent in different national contexts, been successful in dismantling many of these practices (cf. for instance Zames Fleischer & Zames, 2011, pp. 33-48; Markström, 2003; Jantzen, 2003). It may, therefore, appear that control mechanisms have diminished and people have been empowered – happiness indices can be viewed as part of this process. If we, on the other hand, focus on the way that happiness has accompanied discourses and techniques surrounding disabled people – from moping blind children in the chimney-corner to the operators of microswitches that produce verifiable, efficient happiness – we instead discover a continuity of increased control.

What becomes obvious is that while the concern has shifted, from protecting society from the purported danger of the abnormal to ensuring a good quality of life to people with impairments, power is wielded in a more subtle way. Recalling the emphasis on happiness in appeals for educating the blind and the deaf that we analyzed in the previous section, the pursuit of happiness in the case of the happiness indices again justifies the intervention of professionals who apply carefully designed programs and technologies, producing visible, positive emotionality. Not just any emotionality, but one that is directed towards acceptable objects and, ideally, helps streamlining care efforts and advertises treatment concepts. The precondition to achieving this goal is that the barrier between the observers and the emotions of the disabled must be broken down, making them knowable, that is, the emotional realm is penetrated by rationalizing efforts that describe and manage the un/happiness of disabled people.

## IV. Conclusion: The Colonization of Happiness

Although the ‘sciences of happiness’ and the commercial happiness techniques emphasize the domestic sphere, spirituality, and relationships as sources of happiness, this happiness is at the same time possible to define and quantify. Today, happiness does not, as was suggested by the original meaning of the English word, merely happen (cf. Ahmed, 2010, p. 25), but can and must be achieved. Because happiness is no coincidence, but something that can be actively pursued, it can and should be managed by experts, either external ones or the expert self (cf. McMahan, 2006, pp. 454-480; Ahmed, 2010, pp. 3-12).

In the examples provided, we noted that the pursuit of happiness for disabled people took place by making a previously private and obscure emotion come to light so as to be measured and controlled. The experience of happiness was problematized: whether or not it happened, why it happened, and how it could be produced was put into question. This questioning and the kind of action that resulted when it came to producing happiness is, thus, a rationalization of previously unquestioned experience. According to Jürgen Habermas, Western society has in the past couple of centuries witnessed a disintegration of the informal horizon of understanding that is reproduced by linguistic communication, i. e. the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*). The lifeworld is always intersubjective and given and contains what we call culture, society, and personality. Increasingly, however, rationalized entities – systems – are disconnected from the lifeworld and thus form spheres of action that function by the means not of intersubjectivity and communication but through money and power. Areas that previously belonged to the lifeworld are, as a result of its disintegration, transferred to the latitude of system interaction. The system, thus, colonizes the lifeworld (Habermas, 1980, pp. 449-488).

When experts – educators, sociologists, behavioral scientists – decide to scrutinize the un/happiness of certain people and to make provisions to increase their happiness, they enter the private, emotional realm equipped with tools from the spheres of bureaucracy, therapy, government and technology. That is, they impose system interaction to areas previously belonging to the lifeworld. Un/happiness is no longer an unquestioned state in the lifeworld, but becomes available as a domain for system efforts. Happiness loses its position as *hap stance*, as something given (or not) within the lifeworld, and becomes a concern of politicians, bureaucrats and economists. Even though, then, the concern about the happiness of disabled people may appear progressive, the way that it is exercised is troubling since it bypasses communicative action. Happiness becomes a task assigned to the system, rather than an experience belonging to the lifeworld. This is evident in our first case study through the insistence of 19<sup>th</sup> century educators that happiness is to be achieved by directing monetary and administrative efforts towards educational initiatives. In our second example, we showed how, with happiness indices, interactions that usually belong to the realm of intersubjective relations – playing, embracing, chatting – become annexed by the system in the name of happiness.

Our concern is that the colonizing aspect of rationalized care has not been recognized by those who advocate disability rights and the social model, which leads to a failure to notice central features of how power is exercised over disabled people. This is because too many activists in disabled people’s movements and scholars in disability studies, the emotional dimension of care represents charity – instead of civil rights –founded approaches to meeting the needs of disabled people. Arguably, an ethic based on emotion renders people who need care services dependent on the goodwill of benevolent providers. Rationalization of care has therefore been advocated as a liberating strategy (Hopkins et Al., 2005). The insights from the case studies we have discussed seem to suggest an alternative perspective: Since the eighteenth century Western societies have continuously been struggling with the paradoxical situation that people wanted to become emancipated, autonomous and free, yet still needed to be governed and controlled. Since that moment techniques and strategies that were able to match the desire for freedom and the need for governance have continuously been invented. Happiness in our opinion is one of those instances

where freedom and power have been coupled to each other in such a way that people have come to be governed not against but by means of emotion. Considering the role of happiness as reflected in our case studies, we observe, that sooner than an emotionally based, benevolent paternalism being replaced by a de-emotionalized, rights-oriented welfare system, a continuity of system colonization.

Happiness has become a relay where the desire of people to act autonomously and freely is intimately connected to the desire and need to govern people in a particular way. Efforts promising to make people happy ‘in spite of’ their disability, such as special education or microswitch-controlled happiness indices, rely on an increased knowledge about the inner world of those people. That knowledge is gained when the professional gaze penetrates areas that were previously private and categorize them according to, in this case, the un/happiness of their condition. Make people believe that happiness is important, present happiness as the result of some well-defined behaviors and people will govern themselves in light of this happiness ideal without noticing that, in the end, their choices and actions are colonized by the expertise of professionals, the ruling norms within society and the economic needs of a state and the market.

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