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THE HORIZON OF HAPPINESS

An Honors Thesis

presented to

the Department of Philosophy
of the University of New Orleans

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of the Arts, with University Honors
and Departmental Honors in Philosophy

by

Benjamin D. Gilbert

May 2012

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First and foremost, thank you to *all* of the professors who have helped me along this writing process; in that the subject of Happiness was nowhere close to the pleasant or simplistic voyage I had originally assumed it would be. I would particularly like to thank Dr. Frank Schalow for putting up with my endless barrage of philosophical questioning amid months of ever-evolving ideas and insights. I thank the advice first offered by Dr. Edward Johnson to write on this subject, and the succeeding and dependable help that was given in every day that followed. Further, I would like to thank Dr. Carl Malmgren, whom brought this thesis back to reality; an imperative place not engrossed by philosophical theory, one not weighted down by the heavy detail, scientific figures or facts. Essentially, he helped me to draw out the eye of the ‘loose baggy monster’ that was the two hundred page thesis preceding this one. Being that, only by staying true to my own writing style would I be able to draw out from this eye the depth of what I had originally intended to say. Thank you to Dr. Gilda Reed, who showed me that kindness is not weakness, and that by not quelling to the fears of others, we are free - free to be ourselves, to let own light shine, and by doing so, we unconsciously give other people the permission to do the same. Concluding, no one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others. From the array of professors, to the patience of my family and friends; from those at work, to those at my college, to my blood, your thoughtfulness and generosity have taught me much of life’s central philosophy. In that, from all of you I have learned many things, and the core message can be summed up pretty easily: I have learned about being kind to others. Because to the happy, lonely, tired, hopeless, sick, hurt, hungry, confused, or the perfectly fine, kindness is a friend to them all. Thank you.

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NEITHER OUT FAR NOR IN DEEP

The people along the sand
all turn and look one way.
They turn their back on the land.
They look at the sea all day.

As long as it takes to pass
A ship keeps raising its hull;
The wetter ground like glass
Reflects a standing gull.

The land may vary more;
but wherever the truth may be –
The water comes ashore,
and the people look at the sea.

They cannot look out far.
They cannot look in deep.
But when was that ever a bar
to any watch they may keep?

- Robert Frost

ABSTRACT

This thesis is not intended for those who regard practical problems as something to be talked about. It is not for those who believe that every question has an objective, absolute, or interpretable answer. It is not intended for the individual who knows what happiness is, in that the very definition of happiness is not to be found; at best only suggested. It is not intended solely for Eastern thought. It is not intended solely for Western thought - it is intended for both. Most importantly, this thesis attempts to exclude the esoteric language common in the philosophical discipline. Arthur Schopenhauer once said that one should use common words to say uncommon things. This thesis is intended for both the common and the uncommon reader, as is the subject - **Happiness**. Simply stated, *this thesis is an exploration into why the contemporary notion of how one should best pursue happiness is flawed*. This exploration shall encompass a vast array of subjects, many now far departed from the philosophical tradition. In by neglecting these deeper, sometimes more intimate forms of inquiry, is to waste a central resource for the study of philosophy; let alone a study on happiness. From this, I take a particular interest in culture. And, regarding America's contemporary culture, I hold, that *we make a distinction between behaviors that bring true happiness and behaviors that only make you feel happy*. For this reason, my thesis is as followed: **The 21st century's primary conflict is not the poverty in plenty but the unhappiness brought in the pursuit of pleasure by most. I hold that the current American model of what brings happiness is in direct contradiction to what it takes for actually being happy**. In short, there is ongoing contradiction between restraint and freedom, between adversity and fulfillment, and between the individual and the whole. We pursued freedom but we now live in a world that is more monitored, and more subjected to a network of small complicated rules that strangle freedom. We pursued happiness and it leads to resentment, it leads to pathological disease, and it leads to even more unhappiness. We pursued happiness within, and forget that happiness is only real when shared. In sum, my attempt is to elucidate the themes, problems, and contradictions within today's pursuit disclosed on the - *Horizon of Happiness*.

Keywords: Happiness, Happy, Depression, Philosophy, Psychology

INTRODUCTION

My grandmother once told me what happiness was, or at least she directed me towards how to pursue such an abstract concept. Every Thanksgiving, as she told, her family would come together around the dinner table in anticipation for her Mother's holiday cooking. My Grandmother was an individual who was as wise as she was kind. And in her life, kindness was never a stranger. As this particular virtue was common practice throughout her life, so was the practice of preparing the turkey for the holiday feast. Philosophy was born in the waters of doubt and inquisition. In this way, my Grandmother may have been the greatest holiday philosopher of them all. One particular Thanksgiving, she questioned the method in which her own mother had prepared this holiday delight. In her tradition, preparing the turkey meant removing both the front and back ends. As this seemed like an obvious and natural process, there was still no clear reason why this procedure was done. In asking her mother about the meaning behind this tradition, she stopped, and then came to the conclusion that she simply had never taken the time to know why. In pursuing this question further, she decided to ask her own grandmother in hope of an answer. The answer to my grandmother's great turkey inquisition came in the following response: "Well, you see, we never had a pan large enough to fit the turkey. So we just cut off the edges, it worked, what else were we supposed to do?"

My grandmother's story illustrates three imperative points as they regard to this philosophical exploration into the horizon of happiness, as well as most subjective explorations for that matter: namely, (1) not everything appears as it is, (2) history can help solve today's problems, and (3) the use of metaphor helps us to understand new things in relation to things we already know, that is, most of all human thinking depends on the use of metaphor, because they help cut out the detail; they work. For these reasons I will expound upon these points in the following section – Methodology.

For these reasons I will now show what I hope to exploit, as well as to achieve: man's contemporary quest for happiness is one amidst a jungle of truth, fighting through the wrist-thick vines of contradiction that confine an era with no purpose or place; a new millennium defined by no great war, no great depression. Our great war has become a personal war, a war to be happy; our great depression has become our lives. Wilderness begins in the mind¹, and the beast within all men shall devourer until it is freed from the vines of hypocrisy - free to roam, free to pursue, and free to dream. Only once we have stepped out of this dark forest, once we have found the shore, may we then voyage into the horizon; a place always in sight, sometimes near, sometimes out far. As we step from these shadows, step into the waters that define our voyage, I feel we must first understand what I hope we need to achieve; in which Albert Einstein suggested best:

“A human being is part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest; a kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living things and the whole of nature in its beauty. We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive.”²

METHODOLOGY

This is a philosophical paper. Philosophy defined is the love of wisdom. Wisdom defined is the soundness of an action or decision with regard to the application of such experience, knowledge, and good judgments. So what is philosophy? *It is the application of wisdom.* In explaining my methodology, as well as this voyage, I will expound on upon the three points taken from the great Turkey inquisition: (1) not everything appears as it is, (2) history can help solve today's problems, and (3) the metaphor helps us to understand. In concluding this section, I will give brief account of the author's perspective, along with a closing statement as it pertains to this method.

ALL I KNOW IS THAT I KNOW NOTHING: APPEARANCES

In clarifying the notion that (1) *not everything appears as it is*, at first glance, seems self-evident, and needs no further explanation. However, as soon as one recognizes this, they have only solidified what I am trying to say. In that, by assuming anything - from the preparation of a turkey, to the ideology behind a country - we are taking for granted the power of individual choice, the power of individual thought. Regarding thought- philosophy is the practice of critical thinking. Critical thinking is what happens when you analyze the world around you and begin to examine yourself by calling into question the indoctrinated notions and unarticulated pre-suppositions that you always assumed to be true. The modern philosopher Rene Descartes (the guy who said 'I think, therefore I am'), said at the beginning of his book, *Meditations*, that 'the single design to strip one's self of all past beliefs is one that ought not to be taken by everyone'³ With this statement, I would have once fully agreed; hence that it is not easy, it is not healthy, and in many ways, at times, it is maddening. However, concerning the waters of doubt in which this method was conceived, as well as the

contention I have with our pathological producing state, I would seek to amend his words by attaching a paraphrase from Henry David Thoreau: ‘the single design to strip one’s self of all past beliefs is one that ought not to be taken by everyone. However, if one is to seek the horizon, rather than love, than money, than faith, than fame, than fairness... strip me raw and give me truth.’ In seeking truth, in taking the voyage, you have to be going to explore. To explore the world without, you must first have the courage to examine the dark corners within. Friedrich Nietzsche’s life embodied such explorations, in which he agreed in saying that ‘whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.’⁴

In sum of the abyss - these appearances, this voyage into horizon takes courage. With the courage to face life, you must have the courage to face death. And with courage to face death, you are closer to the truth within life. You cannot talk about truth, without learning how to die. Theodore Adorno said ‘the condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak’⁵, because with suffering, you learn the courage to grow, and to grow is to change, to change is think. Thinking critically has global dimensions; because an unintended side effect of one’s natural dedication to think is inescapable from charting a course greater than oneself. As can only hope to show, this dedication brings about certain virtues, a certain life, and ultimately - brings about happiness.

HISTORY HELPS: THREE POINTS OF REFERENCE

In clarifying the notion that (2) *history can help solve today’s problems*, I have garnered that history is a simply a story of events, with praise or blame. This story is filled with aggregated chapters of truths, half-truths, semi-truths, fables, myths, rumors, prejudices, personal narratives,

gossip, and accredited prevarications. Essentially, it is a story written upon the memories of man. Even the word history contains the word story. Given this, my thesis seeks to pursue happiness within the *present* stories our lives, and in doing so, it helps to reflect on the stories of the past. So what does history tell us about happiness? Fundamentally, history helps to solve some problems of today because of these three points of reference: (A) Some things never change, (B) two philosophies still guide our present voyage, and (C) historical wisdom can help guide us through the tides of life.

In clarifying the first point, in drifting the first tide, **(A) some things never change**, because men do not learn much from the lessons of history. This single fact may possibly be the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach. History has told us an ample amount of information as it pertains to happiness. However, because history is written on the minds of men, it is rarely sought in the writings of men, thus much of its timeworn wisdom on this subject often gets discarded; if not forgotten all together.

The second point of reference, the breaking the tide, is that **(B) two philosophies still guide our voyage**. For this, we need to take a closer inspection of these fundamental philosophies that serve as guiding post for our present voyage. These post are (I) the **Aristotelian** notion and (II) the culminated thoughts held by the **Stoics and the Buddhist**. In short, the former advocates that happiness is the result of pursuing the horizon, that is practicing virtue. The latter, who *do* agree that practicing virtue is important, ultimately advocate that happiness is found on the shore, that is, the practice of virtue is not a ready condition for obtaining happiness, because happiness is state found within, a state not attached, a state that *just is*. Because these two guiding post also serve as the polarities defining the problems within our contemporary state, it is imperative to expound on both.

DEFINITIVE GUIDING POINTS: MARKERS OF TODAY

Clarifying the first guiding post, (I) the **Aristotelian** notion, I turned to the Greek philosopher and father of the happiness conversation known as Aristotle. Aristotle explained his definition of happiness by first making assumptions about the character of the human soul, in which he divided into three parts. He believed one part governs (reason), another part is or ought to be governed by reason (the passions or sentient appetite), and a third part which is mostly unresponsive to reason (biological functions, digestion, etc.) Thus, the differences among virtues will mirror the differences among the various passions and among the various functions of reason. So what, then, is Aristotelian virtue, Aristotelian happiness?

According to Aristotle, happiness is found in virtues, whereby virtues are habits of the soul by which one acts well, that is, for the sake of what is fine and noble. As he puts it, virtuous actions express correct (good) reason. They are defined by moral excellence; goodness; righteousness. Virtues are acquired through practice and habituation. One becomes virtuous by acting virtuously, thus the virtuous person comes to take pleasure in acting virtuously. However, virtue is difficult to attain, since if we simply follow our very human inclinations, we become vicious. And much like the pleasure derived from doing virtuous actions, one becomes vicious by allowing certain defective or harmful ways of acting to become habitual. Essentially, even though we have a natural desire for happiness, our inborn inclinations often lead us away from our true happiness, away from the horizon. For Aristotle, then, happiness is not something that happens to you. Even though happiness may require a foundation of moderate good fortune, winning the cortical lottery or the lottery of fortune will not guarantee happiness. Happiness is 'the virtuous activity of the soul in accordance with reason'. In short, true happiness or the term he referred to - *eudemonia* (a breed of happiness that was just *not* another sensual pleasure), is not possible without the practice of virtue (*arête*).

However as it pertains to our contemporary state, **the practice of virtue often brings about unhappiness**. From this, we ultimately find our first primary guiding post.

In clarifying the second guiding post I turn to the culminated thoughts held by the **Stoics and the Buddhist**. In combing the thoughts held by these two schools, it must first be shown how the guidepost of Stoicism is departed from the school in which makes the voyage waters rough – the tide of pleasure - Epicureanism. Both schools were dominant philosophies of the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. And, in our contemporary state, these traditions have undergone a revival in popularity, not only amongst academic philosophers, but also amongst lay people and psychologists. This may well because both are practical philosophies, whose aim is not simply to establish what is true, but how to *live* wisely and happily. Encapsulating to dismiss the Epicurean thought, the founder Epicurus stated that ‘pleasure {is found} in the beginning and end of the blessed life. We recognize pleasure as the first and natural good; starting from pleasure we accept or reject; and we return to this as we judge every good thing, trusting this feeling of pleasure as our guide.’⁶ Regarding morality and virtue, the goodness of some course of action, depends on whether there is more pleasure (*good*) than pain (*evil*) involved in pursuing it. Given the fact that the Epicurean life (or hedonistic life as we know it today) of happiness was one defined by pleasures, Aristotle’s hard fought happiness dissipated in place of an easy and pleasant life that was available to all. In summary, the Epicurean philosophy was defined by pleasure, from the alpha to the omega.

In dismissing this Epicurean thought, I turn to the author of the Old Testament, in the book of Ecclesiastes. The text attributes itself to a king in Jerusalem, who has become engrossed by the deep contemplation of happiness and fulfillment within his life. Essentially, he is trying to “make a test of pleasure,” by seeking happiness in his riches. After failing miserably, in what may be the

earliest reports of a midlife crisis, the author finds himself with these words of isolated despair: “then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun”⁷. In dismissing this Epicurean notion for pleasure, this king’s problem would have been diagnosed under the philosophical themes of the Buddhist and Stoic traditions. In diagnosing the king’s dilemma, they would have pointed to the author’s problem as obvious: *his pursuit of happiness*. Unlike the Aristotelian notion that pointed to virtue, the Buddhist and Stoic traditions taught that striving for external goods (esp. pleasure), or to make the world conform to your wishes, was *always* like chasing the wind. In short, these sages described *eudemonia* (happiness) in terms of a state of mind that was *apatheia*. This state of mind has often been translated as ‘tranquility’, since *apatheia* is the absence of all types of *pathos*, or mental disturbance. In summary, the culminated thoughts held by the Stoics and the Buddhist on happiness involve breaking attachments to external things (both material and relational), and cultivating an attitude of acceptance. However as it pertains to our contemporary state, **the practice of detachment amid the cultivation of a state of mind that may be best translated as ‘*apathy*’ brings about isolation and contentment, thus bringing about unhappiness.** From this, we ultimately find our second primary guiding post.

THE HUMAN HEART THAT HISTORY PAINTED: THE BEAT TO LIVE BY

In clarifying the third and final point of reference, in swimming the tide, **(C) historical wisdom can be used in our contemporary voyage.** In elaborating, I am essentially enumerating how the past may speak in the present. As already stated, history is written on the minds of men, in their nerves, in their habits. Because wisdom is rarely sought from the literature of the past, it is rarely applied towards the problems of the present. Nevertheless, there are four troubling problems of

the present that may be quelled by four imperative themes taken from the past. Regarding happiness in our contemporary state, the primary errors to obtaining happiness are that: (1) we cannot see ourselves or much about the world we live in, (2) we are ruled by our relentless desires and emotions, (3) we will not take our place or rise to the role in which we are given, and (4) we are oblivious to death if not terrified or paralyzed by it. In seeking to amend these errors, I turn to the corresponding themes extrapolated from the wisdom literature, the voice of the past:

I - KNOW THYSELF

“Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.” – Aristotle

The Socratic claim that the ‘unexamined life is not worth living’ is the fundamental mantra for the discipline of Philosophy. However, as trite as it may appear, we often forget how important and powerful it really is. When it comes to the error that we cannot see ourselves or much about the world we live in, Bertrand Russell may have said it best as it applies to our troubling nature that consumes our contemporary state. In his book, “The Conquest of Happiness”, he said that “the secret to happiness is this: let your interest be as wide as possible, and let your reaction to the things and personas that interest you be as far as possible friendly rather than hostile.” In short, to know yourself, you must take another approach for the things you cannot explain. In that you must learn to not write them off; stay with them, think about them. Confusion is your quarry. Rejoice when you find an answer, bear with the pain that it may inflict, and do not let it go of them until you have made peace. If all that you know is you know nothing, make sure to know thyself. When you do, you may begin to understand others, in a friendly and caring way.

II - CONTROL YOUR DESIRES

The Roman Philosopher/Emperor Stoic, Marcus Aurelius, said that you should be able to sleep in a palace one night and on the floor of a hut the next. He meant that you should be equally happy on both nights; for happiness is not attached to what you have. Following Stoic ideology, there is no reason to want things that are entirely out of your reach; it is merely chasing wind. Fellow Stoic yet slave, Epictetus, wrote that you should not “spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; but remember that what you now have was once among the things only hoped for”⁸. Controlling your desires comes down to controlling your wants. And for happiness, you need to want what you have, want what is in reach; essentially, you need to “want what you can get.”⁹ With controlling your desires, you understand that you can say ‘no’ at any given time. A decade ago the headlines were about anorexia, and now they are about obesity; both are all about control. Being able to say ‘not now’ prevents having to learn to say ‘none for me, ever’. Essentially, the big lesson is this: a decision to change one's life has to take place in the present, because ultimately, soon never comes. However, do not take pleasures for granted. In that by learning about yourself, learning to control your desires, you may make decisions about which desires you would like to indulge.¹⁰

III - OWN UP: TAKE WHAT IS YOURS, TAKE WHAT YOU ARE

The phrase *carpe diem* appears in the odes of the Roman poet Horace (65-8 B.C.E.), the whole line is *carpe diem quam minimum credula postero* - seize the day, put as little trust as possible in the future. *Carpe* literally means ‘to pluck, pick, gather, crop, gather’, so in a sense it is a call to remember death, but this famous statement is ultimately an assertion to take what is yours.¹¹ With this comes the inextricable matter of seizing your role in life. As we speak in languages, we act in

roles. If you don't take on your role, things go wrong for everyone else. For example, a driver who lets other drivers go when it is their turn to go disrupts the rhythm of the traffic; the flow of life. When roles change, from schoolgirl to bride, from child to parent, from knowledge to wisdom; it may be hard to adjust. However, the rhythm in life comes from people owning up, both to the world, and to who they are. Marcus Aurelius asked the question: "With all your soul to do justice and to say the truth. What remains except to enjoy life by joining one good thing to another so as not to leave even the smallest intervals between?" The last chapter of his "Meditations" illuminates the point: "all of those things of which you wish to arrive by a circuitous road; you can have now, if you do not refuse them to yourself."¹² Choosing what is yours is rarely as obvious as some well-worn path; however it is not as vague as the volatile sea. Erasmus wrote in his "Praise of Folly" that "for the most part, happiness consists of being willing to be what you are." And he holds his folly with the fact that most do not realize "self-love has provided us a shortcut".¹³ Erasmus was simply saying that through self-love, not only may you own up to what you are, and take what is yours, you may seize the life – *Carpe Vitam*. You may be happy with what you take, and what you are.

IV - REMEMBER DEATH: LEARN TO DIE BEFORE YOU DIE

"No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven do not want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new. Right now the new is you, but someday not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away" - Steve Jobs¹⁴

Death is the inverse of life. Happiness is found while living, and to appreciate the day, we

must come to terms with the night. As he lay dying, the Buddha told his students not to grieve. He explained that “if he were to live in the world for a whole eon, his association with {them} would still come to an end, since a meeting with no parting is impossible”¹⁵. In fact, Buddha wrote that “of all the mindfulness meditations, that on death is supreme.” Most every philosopher I have come across places upon this voyage places an emphasis on death; in that the very nature of death makes men honest, and brings about the question on how to best live. From all the great thinkers of the past to what I have taken in the present, I have garnered that everything has to be learned twice. In childhood we have an ignorant happiness, and we must lose this happiness if we are ever able to get beyond it. Some few people actually grow wise by acting wise. Most grow wise by accruing a variety of experiences, by taking chances, and essentially taking childish bliss and transmuting it into an adjoining adult happiness, or as Steve Jobs concluded, “stay young, stay foolish’. In summary, to learn how to die is to learn how to live. Learning to die and learning to think take practice, and the worst barrier against your own happiness is you, your wrong thinking – need that be in life, or need that be on death. As Buddha encapsulated this point best, the goal of enlightenment is “to learn to die, before you die”¹, and in only beginning in this way, can we seek the horizon of happiness.

HISTORY HELPS: CLOSING

To use history in helping to amend some of the troubles of today, we need to remember three things: Some things never change, there are two historic philosophies that still serve as the guidepost for our voyage today, and this wisdom of the past can help us thread the tides of the present. Eclipsing these points, some things never change, because men do not learn much from the lessons of history, and this single fact may possibly be the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach. The two philosophical guidepost are found in the **Aristotelian** notion and the culminated

thoughts held by the **Stoics and the Buddhist**. These guideposts serve the metaphor to follow, in that the former advocates happiness as the result of pursuing the horizon, which is practicing virtue. However, the problem is that **the practice of virtue often brings about unhappiness**. The latter, who do agree that practicing virtue is important, ultimately advocate that the practice of virtue is not a ready condition for obtaining happiness, because happiness is state found within, a state not attached; a state that *just is*. However, the problem is that **the practice of detachment amid the cultivation of a state of mind that may now be best translated as ‘*apathy*’ brings about isolation and contentment, thus bringing about unhappiness**. In conclusion, the take home message from the wisdom literature of the past, as it speaks truth into the heart of today, is that to thread through the waters of life, we must (1) know ourselves, (2) control our wants and desires, (3) own up to what is ours and what we are, and most importantly to (4) remember death, in that we must learn to die before we die. As such, our job is to master these four errors in our everyday life. If you do, you will be happy and be liberated to seize your life – *carpe vitam*. None of this comes easily; it has been practiced a great deal, and it never fully works completely. However, there is no useful alternative to effort, for as Epicurus reminds us that “we must exercise ourselves in the things which bring happiness, since, if that be present, we have everything, and, if that be absent, all our actions are directed towards attaining it.”¹⁶

THE METAPHOR

The study of happiness is synonymous with the study of philosophy in the sense that both fundamentally reflect the same wildly erratic tempo that life so often presents. In trying to articulate a coherent metaphor in which best to present an otherwise capricious pursuit is one that does bring about its own unique challenges. However, as I have taken most of my research from history thus far,

it is appropriate to again turn to history to help show how the use of metaphor works. As already stated, metaphors are the how we understand new things in relation to things we already know. Most all human thinking depends on the use of metaphor, because they fundamental reflect how to connect thoughts, and how to interpret and apply them in a simplistic and understandable manner. In short, we need a metaphor that works. Aristotle used a three part metaphor, as already shown, to encapsulate the use of reason and passion within the soul. Plato used the metaphor of the “Victorian Chariot”, which essentially was his own three part metaphor embodying what was best said by Benjamin Franklin in that “if passion drives, let Reason hold the reins”¹⁷ From Aristotle, to Plato, to Benjamin Franklin, to even Sigmund Freud, some ideas are expressed better in threes. Appropriately, staying in accord with three’s company, my metaphor is as followed:

I – THE SHORE: The shore is essentially found deep within the individual; it is the isolated, it is always there, it is home. This place is where we stand on solid ground, it is where we are comfortable, it is what we know, it is where we feel safe, and it is the fixed. This is the happiness they comes from frolicking in the sandy games of stationary pleasures; the many, many things. It is the deep peace of contemplation we sometimes find when passively looking out upon the seemingly unmoved sea. This is where the culminated thoughts held by the **Stoics and the Buddhist** may be found, in that virtue is not actively practiced. In fact, the social world is blind on this shore, it does not matter. And, while most gather in crowds to blindly stare out upon this sea, only the one-eyed individual may be king in the land of the blind, hence he may see the horizon. Essentially, this is tranquility brought upon by the deeper happiness found within. There is no need to worry here, because you are detached from everything else, and happiness is already there. This shore is the happiness that *just is*. Or as Lord Bryon encapsulated best: “There is a pleasure in the pathless woods; there is rapture on the lonely shore; there is society, where none intrudes, by the deep sea,

and music in its roar; I love man not the less, but nature more.”

II – THE VOYAGE: The voyage is essentially everything between the shore and the horizon, within and without. This voyage is traveled, it is the world. This voyage is where we have no footing to solid ground, it is the unknown, it is where we are never content, it is where we find fear, yet it is ultimately where we find change. This is the happiness that comes from swimming into the waters of life; the calm and the storm. It is the deep peace of effortless movement sometimes felt in the active absorption treading through the waters of an always volatile sea. This is where the **Aristotelian** notion may be found. In that, this is where virtue and excellence are to be best pursued; for they point us to this ever-approaching horizon in which we all seek. The voyage is where the individual often finds no place, for the attached world takes much room. However, when this nameless individual leaves the shores of the crowd, this voyage is where they may come to realize that the horizon is found through the eyes of an individual who seeks out; the individual with a name. On this voyage, we are guided by virtue, yet if we never seek up from its relentless pursuit, we may never know when to turn to the shore. We swim, we grasp, we plan, we obsess, we often travel off course, and we risk the fact they we may very well drown. In a quote commonly attributed to the king of such virtuous pursuits, Benjamin Franklin encapsulated this message for our contemporary state in saying that “the Constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness. However, you have to catch it yourself.”

III – THE HORIZON: The horizon is where we are all united; this is where we all want to be and in the very nature of things, never fully graspable, never perfectly known. It includes happiness, it including truth, and all things between. We travel this voyage because we innately know that they exist; we in that we feel them beyond some sensational pleasure, beyond some objective measure. However they do not have a tangible voice, there is not meaning behind the words in which we seek

to describe them; hence the horizon cannot speak with mere words. I use the metaphor of the horizon because of two primary reasons. The first is that it is always in sight, and as we feel voyage closer to it, we never fully obtain it, we may never fully understand it. The second reason I use the horizon as my metaphor is because of the problem found in the first, it that it may not be articulated. Because of this, as most do when they think of such horizons, I think of a place in which the sun may fall, and where the sun may rise. In speaking on this sun, I am speaking of an object that assumes form of an elliptical shape. In speaking on this shape, I am speaking of a form that may only circumscribe these intangible things in which we all undoubtedly seek. Hence this Frost poem at the beginning of this thesis, they cannot look out far, they cannot look in deep. The land may vary more, but wherever the truth may be, the water comes ashore, and the people look at the sea.

PERSPECTIVE OF THE AUTHOR

In knowing the author, you better understand the theory, you better understand their perspective. It is these little pieces that comprise the whole puzzle I feel most people often neglect. Take the manic writings of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard for example. Both men committed themselves seemingly blind to an all out pursuit of truth. Both men, brought up in the polarities of two religious beliefs, wrote the polarities of two different notions. It helps to know that the hopeless writings of the young David Hume came only after appealing to that fact that he was dying of a bowel disorder. Thomas Hobbs, Epictetus, and countless others wrote about hopeless struggles. Thomas Hobbs, Epictetus, and countless others lived in civilizations defined by hopeless times. As all of these men were brilliant in their own right, I feel that with all things being fair, the reader should know how I garnered my own perspective; starting with my own given circumstances.

My grandfathers who I never met, both were men of war, men of military. As I have been told, both men were of good heart, though both men were heavy drinkers (they say genes skip a generation). My grandmothers, who lived a much longer life, were an essential part in my upbringing. One was from the country. One was not. One was educated. One was not. All the same, both were incredibly kind; both had seen their own wars. I watched one die, this changed my life. One found me a stranger, as dementia took hers. I was born when my mother was forty, hence a philosophical oriented upbringing. My mother is a teacher. She is that middle school teacher with the motivational posters of trite sayings hanging in the sky of some out of place basket overflowing with sobbing beagle puppies. She is rational. She hardly takes risk. She needs financial security. She has none. She is unhappy. She is secure in her heart, as am I, in that we share the same. She has taught me so much. My father is unemployed. He is that football star that got intoxicated and ran into a news station. He is impulsive. He takes too many risks. He is obsessive. He weighs well over five-hundred pounds. He needs emotional security. He has none. He is unhappy. He is secure in his beliefs, as am I, in that we do not share the same. He has taught me so much. Both parents are complete opposites. And they are the same. Both do not drink. They are still married, but they are not in love. They have had two children, five years apart. My father dropped to his knees in pleading for the second. I am the youngest. My brother has an acute learning disorder. He is that middle-aged bag boy at your local grocery store, always smiling, half-way there. He does not think like most. He needs financial and emotional security. He has some. He is sometimes happy. He is secure in his mind, as am I, in that we share two halves of the same. My name is Benjamin D. Gilbert. My life has been rooted in contradictions, in opposites, and this thesis is in tune with why I feel our contemporary state fails to acknowledge the same.

CLOSING MESSAGE

When I finished the original draft of this thesis, it was roughly two hundred pages of scientific facts amid logical proofs defending my original attempt to elucidate the simplicity of happiness. Yet, only in trying to articulate a paper I had rooted in simplicity to the questioning of a counsel of wise professors did I realize that the entire scientific process was counterintuitive from the start. I had developed a heavy paper weighted down by scientific detail, one that only sank the simplicity of rather unscientific subject. Ergo, this finished project is essentially what a philosophy paper should be; it is an argument defended by counter-arguments, by what I hope is to be common sense. This same theme, in which I first feel victim to, is the same reason in why I feel the contemporary institution of philosophy no longer longs much weight. In that this institution tries so hard not to root itself in objective facts that it too has become blinded by the very science in which it first sought to depart. In short, it has lost sight of the intangible qualities in which such pursuits seek immeasurable truths; it is cognitively inflicted. In closing this methodology, I will say three final things. The first is that this is an undergraduate honors thesis, hence I am not attempting to answer doctoral level questions such as meaning; it is not my place. The second is that although science does add a heavy burden to such subjective accounts, it nonetheless is a vital and useful tool, thus it will be used. Concluding, I am straying away from the mode of inquiry that defines happiness under an umbrella of morbid neurological processes. Ultimately, if I am to make my peace with argumentative science, I believe that it is true that we should never neglect passion or reason, and we do need our entire brain. Yet, pertaining to happiness, there is a need to appreciate both sides, especially the intuitive. Einstein's thinking presaged this notion, in that he said that "the intuitive mind is a sacred gift, and the rational mind is a faithful servant". I believe we have created cognitive models, as well as a contradicting society, that honors the servant, and has forgotten this gift.

THE CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT OF HAPPINESS

OVERVIEW

As stated in the introduction, the contemporary culture of the American ideal makes a distinction between behaviors that bring true happiness and behaviors that only make you feel happy. For this reason, my thesis is as followed: **The 21st century's primary conflict is not the poverty in plenty but the unhappiness brought in the pursuit of pleasure by most. I hold that the current American model of what brings happiness is in direct contradiction to what it takes for actually obtaining happiness.** In seeking to illuminate this fact amid offering advice on how to amend this contention, I will break this analysis into four parts: **(I)** the contradiction between restraint and freedom: consumption; **(II)** the contradiction between adversity and fulfillment: ambition; **(III)** the contradiction of the individual and the whole: attachment; and **(IV)** the contradiction of the pursuit of happiness: romance and time. In short, by enumerating these notions by individual section, I hope to show that the horizon of happiness, like life, is a paradox. It is such, namely because the 21st century's mental model of the happy life is in direct contradiction to what actually makes for living a happy life. A mental model, or cognitive construct, is assuming the structure of life. However, as prefaced in the methodology, nothing is ever how it seems. As I will gradually move from attachments *without* to attachments *within*, the voyage out in the sea to seek peace on the shore, I will conclude on what I feel the horizon of happiness circumscribes, and close on what I hold this horizon to eclipse. As I begin the first section on attachments without, I preface that this voyage on is not a matter of objects or events, and ultimately the seas in which we travel rest on the tides of the mind.

PART I: THE CONTRADICTION OF RESTRAINT & FREEDOM: CONSUMPTION

When speaking of restraint, freedom, and happiness in the 21st century, one very important and very misunderstood aspect of material consumption rises above all, that being found in the consumption of money. When speaking of money, we are talking about the primary source for both power, and the ability to buy time, namely the freedom in which time allows us to spend on doing things that bring happiness. Time is freedom. Freedom is power. Power is time. Either way you mix these around, that all eclipse the subject of money and consumption. The contemporary notion is that if we do not acquire an ample amount of money, we will be cut from freedom, and we will drown under the heavy restraints of burden; however this is not the case. In first quelling any Buddhist, Stoic, or contemporary myths that believe you do *not* need money to find happiness, I will simply say that they are right on the shore within; however trying to voyage in the world without is a different story. It is true that you do not specifically need money to buy happiness, yet it is also true that you need money to buy shelter, cloths, food, and other things that keep us not only satisfied but alive. Here is the point, money matters, yet the value we place on obtaining money does not matter as much as the value we place on happiness. In short, if money can buy happiness, it already did, and it did so a long time ago.

In elaborating, Since World War II, the average standard of living has gone up tremendously, however our level of happiness (or subjective well being as researchers often refer) has stayed the same. Despite the fact that we live at a time where most all families are financially better off, a time defined by rampant opportunity to break the defining factor as it applies to happiness - *the poverty line* - studies done by the Sustainable Scales Project tell the full story. This project measured economic growth in the GDP between the personal levels of happiness reported for Americans in the

1950s and people in the 21st century. Their conclusion was that find the 21st century notions report themselves to be no happier (Graph I, page 55). And, not only have individual levels of happiness stayed the same, taking a look a macro America, we remain one of the richest countries in the world, yet we rank only in the middle of developed nations for reported personal happiness (Graph II, page 55). When seeking to explore why these trends are the way they are, we turn to the root of the problem, *abundance*. In short, money helps us to buy things. And, it is the false notion held by our contemporary state that the more things we acquire, the happier we will become. In speaking on abundance, political scientist Robert E. Lane has provided us with an eloquent compilation of such studies in *The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies*. His findings exploit two, now, very important facts: (1) abundance does not correlate with happiness and (2) abundance has been guided, at every stage, by desire.¹⁸

THE VALUE OF MONEY: NOMINAL VALUE

Cornell economist Robert Frank was concerned with why people are so devoted to spending money on luxuries and other expensive goods, rather than on things that would make them happier. After extensive research, Frank's explanation is simple: “conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption follow different psychological roles”.¹⁹ **Conspicuous consumption** refers to things that are visible to others and that are taken as markers of a person's relative success, i.e. their value comes from the statement they make about their owner, e.g. Rolex Watch. **Inconspicuous consumption** refers to goods and activities that are valued for their own worth. In essence, they are usually consumed more privately, and that are not bought for the purpose of achieving status. Frank's conclusions are essentially bolstered by the benefits of doing vs. having. In making all this relevant to the horizon, research affirms that money it is not what makes us happy. What makes us happy is the experience and activities that connect us to others. In short, coming together amid experiencing

the voyage of life helps us to see the horizon, whereas mere objects which often separate us, tend to make us drown, or as the Chinese sage Lao Tzu once stated:

"Fame or integrity: which is more important? Money or happiness: which is more valuable? Success or failure: which is more destructive? If you look to others for fulfillment, you will never truly be fulfilled. If your happiness depends on money, you will never be happy with yourself. Be content with what you have; rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you."²⁰

Staying in tune with the Aristotelian guidepost, researchers have confirmed that our instincts were shaped by natural selection to win at the game of life, and part of that internal strategy is to impress others, gain the admiration, and rise in the social stratospheres. Our automatic thoughts care more about outside appearance than our inner happiness. However, as we have seen, the pursuit of conspicuous objects is a happiness myth.²¹ Breaking another modern myth that money and happiness are unrelated for the wise in direct proportion for the shallow, the truth is that they are never unrelated, and, above the poverty line, they are never in simple direct proportion²². In short, if money does not bring about happiness above the poverty line, then why do we still wear the mask of appearance? What else plays into our desires?

THE VALUE OF MONEY; INTRINSIC VLAUE

Reflecting on other archaic sages, Aristotle said that if you are searching for a happy person, look for someone who is materially at ease i.e. look for someone who is not dependant in material possessions. His *Nicomachean Ethics* is primarily devoted to the relationship between virtue and happiness; however he *does* say that wealth, fame, friends, and honor do all help to bring about a

good life. Happiness, Aristotle held, requires a degree of comfort, and an ability to support those who are naturally dependent on us. Essentially what he is saying is that money is important, and if you earn it, enjoy it, take what it yours; yet money is not the root cause. History agrees, in that happiness depends more on how you *value* money, not by abundance, but by the quality of care in which it brings. Koheleth, the author of Ecclesiastes, exemplified this notion best: “Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor that he takes under the sun, all the days of his life, which God gave him: for it is his portion.” If you have “riches and wealth, and ...power to eat thereof,” Koheleth is essentially saying that it is your role to “take [your] portion,”²³ and to “rejoice in your labor. ” In so many words, as he famously put it: “Eat, drink, and be merry.”²⁴ For both Aristotle and Koheleth’s Ecclesiastes, money can be of use for happiness. However, pointing to what Lao Tzu said, taking care of your thoughts and yourself was what mattered. When you are content with what you have and when you realize there is nothing lacking, you may then find happiness.

Putting this advice on value under the microscope of science, for decades now, economists and sociologists have been finding that money does not reduce another great equalizer – the degree to which we *worry*. A 1976 study done on worry by Frank M Andrews and Stephen B. Withey found that, above the poverty line, “[t]here are virtually no differences associated with socioeconomic status.”²⁵ Another study, in 1981, showed that people with less money and less education worry about their health and income, whereas those with more money and more education worry about their spouses and children.²⁶ We can worry, researchers say, yet the general amount of worry impinging one’s life is not in direct correlation with how much money you have. Research and studies confirm what ancient literature was saying: Above the poverty line, happiness is not dependent on the amount of money we have; it is dependent in how we value the quality in which it brings.

THE VALUE OF HAPPINESS: THE PRICE WE CONTINUE TO PAY

In closing, if money can buy happiness, it already did. Above the poverty line, money does not increase overall happiness. From the ancient wisdom of the past, to the current research in the present, all signs point to how we value the immeasurable things; along with how we value money itself. Or as Einstein once said, “Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.” Essentially, abundance does not correlate with happiness. Experiences and activities that connect us with others do. Everyone worries, yet the emphasis to the degree of worry we have placed on money is a direct contradiction to what it takes to actually be happy. In our contemporary state, people seek truth in order to fill this void of happiness, yet they are met with the adjoining contradictions found through the results of conspicuous consumption. This masked consumption only furthers the problem of power and the stratosphere of status. Fueled by biology, we now live in a contradiction. We pursued happiness, by pursuing freedom. Yet, we live in a world that is more monitored, and which our daily lives are more subjected to what De Tocqueville called a network of small complicated rules that cover the surface of life and strangle freedom:

“Society will develop a new kind of servitude which covers the surface of society with a network of complicated rules, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate. It does not tyrannize but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.”²⁷

In sum, the voyage of life is rough, and although money can help, it cannot save us from the storms. Yet, when it comes to consumption: Seek experience, knowledge, and peace - for seeking money often costs too much.

PART II: THE CONTRADICTION OF ADVERSITY & FULFILLMENT: AMBITION

When speaking of adversity, fulfillment, and happiness in the 21st century, it is important to note that we live an era where many do not leave the shore, hence the apathy brought on by the false notion that the voyage is not worth the swim. Essentially, why try to venture to voyage to the horizon, when we can find it sitting on the shore? Why try to be more, to do more, to seek more? What is the point of adversity, if we know that we will never be fulfilled; why have ambition?

In first tackling the question of ambition itself, I turn to what Adam Smith said in his *Theory of Moral Sentiment* (written before his famous *Wealth of Nations*). In speaking of ambition amid overcoming the adversity to acquire wealth, Smith is essentially saying that when a man who finds himself on the shores of poverty is driven by the voyage to see his way out, as it pertains to seeing the horizon, it is a curse. He points out that the condition of the rich “appears in its fancy like the life of some superior rank of beings,” and to reach it, this young man must “sacrifice a real tranquility that is at all times in his power.” If he attains this sought after wealth, “he will find it to be no preferable to that humble security and contentment in which he had abandoned for it. He said that power and riches were high maintenance machines “contrived to produce a few trifling conveniences to the body.” And that these sought after machines “must be kept in order with the most anxious attention, and in spite of all of our care, we are ready at every moment to burst into pieces.” He pointed out that these possessions were for the “unfortunate possessor” hence, “they leave him always as much, and sometimes more exposed than before, to anxiety, to fear, and to sorrow; to diseases, to danger, and to death.”

When speaking the ones without wealth, Smith writes that when talking about what

“constitutes the real happiness in human life, they are in no respect inferior to those who would seem so have them.” In that they possess an “ease of the body and a peace in the mind.” However, when speaking about knowing when to turn back to the shore, that is in not sacrificing the search for the horizon for placement in some hierarchy, Smith states that the “different ranks of life are nearly upon one level, and the beggar, who suns himself by the side of the highway, possesses that security which the kings are fighting for.”²⁸

In short, status and money does readily matter when it pertains to happiness, and ambition is a double edged sword. However, if one wants live, to leave the shore, and they do so with ambition, they should be reminded that when one seeks riches, they often drown by the heavy burdens in with which they come. Ideally, the contemporary notion is that a simple life would prove to be a happy life. However, from being the king of a city to being a beggar on the side of the highway, simplicity is how you perceive it. In sum, to seek the horizon of happiness, to be a happy person, if you want to shoot higher than what you know you can do, do not seek to be better than those of the past or those that will come in the future. What Smith is saying, when seeking the horizon as it pertains to the voyage of ambition, just try to better than yourself, and know when you need to turn back to the shore. Money matters. Acquiring money amid the waves of society brings about adversity, yet in knowing what makes us fulfilled, we may know that ambition matters even more.

WE ALL HAVE A CHOICE

Departing from seeking money, and illuminating the contention I have with the contradiction between adversity and fulfillment, I now speak on the contemporary research done on the quality of choice. Essentially, the contemporary state is in a contradiction between adversity and fulfillment,

because it is in a contradiction of choice, in that quantity undermines the quality of our engagement. We value choice and put ourselves in situations of choice, even though choice often undercuts our happiness. As I confirm these notions in search of a field on the eve of graduation, I can only solidify this contradiction in trying to pick the write subjects in which to write this paper. The point is, the more choices there are, the more you expect to find the perfect fit; yet, at the same time, the larger the array of options, the less likely it becomes that you will feel that you picked the best one. Because of this fact, you feel less confident in your choice, more regret, and more likely to think about the options you did not choose; hence, “the grass is always greener on the other side.”

Along with coining this contraction of choice as “the paradox between adversity and fulfillment”, psychologist Barry Schwartz²⁹ and colleagues solidified the notions above. They found that this paradox mostly applies to people who they call “maximizers” - those who are on the voyage, those who habitually try to evaluate all the options, seek out more information, and make the best choice, that is they maximize their utility. In summarizing what they found, when compared to those on the shore, the ones who were more ‘laid back’ concerning choice – the *satisficers* as Schwartz called – the maximizers, on average, do make slightly better decisions. However, as this obsessive and analytic utility is beneficial, studies show that they are less happy with their decisions, and directly concerning the horizon they are more inclined to depression, to anxiety, to drown. In short, maximizers engage in more social comparison, ergo they are more easily drawn into conspicuous consumption. Concerning money and the 21st century contradiction of choice, “maximizers get less pleasure per dollar they spend.”³⁰ Concerning knowledge and the 21st century contradiction of choice, the how has become subordinate to the what. And, as our society may be deemed the era of information, we have it only in spades, in that we have become less and less able to use it in regards to understand it, to be wise.³¹ Winston Churchill said it best, in that “never in the field of human

history has so much been used by so many to say so little.”³²

SUFFERING: THE STORM OF ADVERSITY

“So we shall let the reader answer this question for himself: who is the happier man, he who has braved the storm of life and lived or he who has stayed securely on shore and merely existed?”

— Hunter S. Thompson³³

In closing this section on the contradiction between adversity and fulfillment, an obvious point arises, in which we may transition into the next section focused primarily on attachment. This point is in why most never leave the shore, it is the point to why few continue their voyage. This point helps to show why the voyage of virtue brings unhappiness, and better helps to answer why the ones on shore practice detachment amid cultivating contentment, thus isolation. This is the inextricable storm of life, this is the storm of voyage, and this point is the storm of suffering. In short, why even think about ambition, if it we know it will bring about pain through adversity? To this same accord, why have attachments with others, if they are only going to bring about suffering? If the horizon shines on us all, why bear the storm?

The Buddha defined happiness rather simplistically: ‘The end of suffering’³⁴. As much as I love this idea, this would imply that only in death may we see the horizon, thus there is no point to seek this voyage in life, and if he was right then the prevailing apathy found on shore of our 21st state is right. However, doing nothing does not seem right. Because of this, I must ask, is this true? Reflecting on personal experience, I had the pleasant opportunity of living in homeless shelters for a few months. While in conversation with a man who knew no other way, he was kind enough to share

with me a troy about how he once stabbed a man for absolutely no reason – “I just felt like it, it made me happy” – was his response. The point to this is that there are always outliers. In that, there are always those who become wicked, and there are always those who suffer the tremendous pain in which these wicked inflict, the innocent. Both victims suffer from the pain caused by the contradictions of society, in that the wicked suffer, these contradictions often manifest into reality, to the innocent. I am not advocating that people who stab people are victims, something’s are just wrong, however I am advocating that the ‘wicked’ are in part sick. And, this sickness is a direct effect from the perpetuation of pathological disease brought on by the contradictions of contemporary society. Nevertheless, this man’s comment brings about two important questions: namely, can the people that we deem to be wicked or sick truly be happy? And, more importantly, may the innocent victims who drown from this unnecessary suffering break through these waters of pain to again see the horizon of happiness?

In trying to emphasize with the man whom invoked such questions, amid answering the questions at hand, I have found that most psychopaths are not violent (although most serial murderers and serial rapists are psychopaths). They are people, mostly men, who have no moral emotions, *no attachment systems*, and no concerns for others³⁵. In short, they are numb, and they are the outliers of the outliers of the ones who severely suffer. They may claim to be happy, yet their sickness knows a different sort of horizon; one in which I can simply no longer explain. In understanding the innocent victim, it has only been since the very end of the 20th century that researchers have gone beyond resilience and begun to focus on the benefits of severe pain. These benefits are sometimes referred to collectively as “posttraumatic growth”.³⁶ From earlier studies, along to the contemporary findings found in the brain states of trauma patients, we can conclude there *are* three benefits to suffering:

The *first benefit* is that rising to a challenge reveals your hidden abilities, and seeing these

abilities changes your self-concepts; it keeps you self in check, it keeps you humble. Religious leaders have often pointed to exactly this same benefit of suffering. Paul said in a Letter to the Romans that “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character; and character produces hope.”³⁷ More recently, the Dalai Lama said that “the person who has had more experience of hardships can stand more firmly in the face of problems than the person who has never experienced suffering.” From these perspectives, then, some suffering can be a good lesson for life.³⁸

The *second benefit* is that adversity is a filter, it is the great divider. I believe this is best made evident by relationships and age, for as we grow older, adversity does not just separate pseudo relationships from authentic relationships; it *strengthens* the relationship and challenges people to care for one another³⁹; an inextricable and necessary condition from departing this manifested reality brought on by our contemporary state. Ultimately, as we continue this voyage, it helps to know that smooth seas very rarely make skillful sailors.

The *third benefit*, and most imperative, is that trauma gives the drowning person on this voyage a limited window to change their priorities, philosophies, and personality towards becoming aligned with the horizon. It may also stir up the sand on the shore, and unexpectedly throw the untested and comfortable individual into the waters of doubt and inquisition. This window is limited however, for once the storm subsides, the drowning may continue to drown, and the isolated and content individual may be further detached; again the polarity of opposites. Consider the mantra proposed by Nietzsche: ‘What does not kill me makes me stronger’⁴⁰; he is right, however being strong and being happy are not necessarily the same. Essentially, suffering is not always bad for all people. Happiness typically grows from these experiences, and the individual who has weathered the storm has found a compass to moral and spiritual development, ergo an insight into the horizon. Ultimately, suffering and adversity may offer a path; yet it is the outcome that resides along the path

of choice that matters.

In closing on suffering, making sense of this man I met in the homeless shelter (a lifelong struggle), at best, I can only say that some choose the path less traveled, some choose the path of least resistance, and a few drown lost along the way. However, suffering is a natural part of the voyage, of life. Yet, with courage, suffering allows us to draw the depth of the eye within the horizon. Hence, the horizon circumscribes truth, and the “condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak”⁴¹. And, when you have the courage to suffer, to whether the storm of life, you have the courage to grow, the courage to change; the courage to think. Premising the next section as it pertains to attachments with others, the horizon reveals fact in that everyone is going to hurt you, and for the happy life you have just got to find the ones worth suffering for. In doing so, in turning to attachment, one more truth is disclosed upon this horizon. This word is universal phenomenon, for it may be shared deep within, and found out far. In closing on suffering, and bringing life to this word, it is only appropriate to end with a quote from, I believe, the greatest tragic playwright that has ever lived. We find these archaic words of wisdom in that of the Greek author, Sophocles:

“One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life: That word is love.”⁴²

PART III: THE CONTRADICTION OF INDIVIDUAL & WHOLE: ATTACHMENT

When speaking on the contradiction between the individual and the whole in the 21st century, we find again come to ever-evolving notion of *attachment*. In speaking on attachment in this section, I am speaking of attachment with other people, and the world around in which we live. I am seeking to bridge the gap between the shore and the voyage. I am turning to the tide; the back, the forth. Summarizing, there has been clear evidence that as our morality and ideology has drastically evolved; the idea of pursuing happiness became a story about pursuing freedom at the expense of the group. As morality and ideology grew towards simplicity, we grew both towards ideologies and cognitive models that saw the world in black and white manner. Elaborating on black and white, this is where we ultimately may use and answer the guidepost found from the philosophical account, in that (1) the practice of virtue often brings about unhappiness and that (2) the practice of detachment brings about isolation. In short, our contemporary morality is guided by a black and white model, often leading to an unhappy voyage. More importantly, given the evolution to the false notions assumed behind the pursuit of freedom, the contemporary state suffers from the breakdown of the group amid the isolation of the individual. We live in a world of contradiction, in that we believe acting in your own self-interest is not in your self-interest. These two breakdowns are grave errors in the sociocultural evolution of man, in that they do not agree with our biology nor do they agree with our voyage into the horizon. Can we voyage in virtuous path? Can love set us free?

BLACK AND WHITE: THE POLARITIES OF VIRTUE, THE DEATH OF CHARACTER

Tying this all together, I will first expound on the notion that our contemporary virtue is guided by a black and white model of morality by briefly recounting its evolutionary transition.

Following, I will elucidate the conjoining evolutions behind the breakdown of the group and the individual; all of which have come to shape this current world in which we know. This first historical account is quite simple. In that, as morality evolved from cultures that placed emphasis on virtue and character, we slowly lost sight of character in place of the black and white moral theories proposed in the 17th century which focused primarily on value. In speaking of the contemporary descendents, the first group is found in the proponents of Immanuel Kant's *categorical imperative*, in which we refer to as the *deontologists* (from the Greek word *deon*, meaning *obligation*); the second group is found in the proponents of utilitarianism, which we often refer to as *consequentialist*; hence, cause and effect of utility. Essentially, the former places value on individual rights, and the latter places value on the highest good for the most people; they are the polarities of morality, they are the black and white.

Contemporary morality in our American culture today finds itself today as a nation trapped in the contradiction of freedom - some constraint is good for us, whereas absolute freedom is not. Durkheim, the 19th century French father of sociology, coined the word "anomie"⁴³ - meaning normlessness. Anomie is the condition of a society where there are no clear standards of value. In an anomic society, people are truly free; however there are no social institutions to enforce these ambiguous standards of value. Essentially, we pursued freedom by allowing choice, and we removed such emphasis on character in place of this black and white emphasis on value, thus, as character died, virtue inevitably become a hollow word. As sociologist James Hunter points out in his book, *The Death of Character*⁴⁴, "America has deeply lost its footing on virtue and in character, both intrinsically and institutionally." In elucidating the conjoining evolutions behind the breakdown of the group and the individual, I will start with the united group, and I will end with the isolated individual and where we find ourselves in the 21st century.

UNITED THEY STAND: THE BREAKDOWN OF THE GROUP

As associationalism faded in the 19th century, the nuclear family took on a much greater importance than ever before. As the nation grew, life included *less* extended groups. This is important because in almost all cultures across time and geography, the middle level of culture - the extended family and the town - had always been the most important attachments in one's life. Long before people would die for their country, they would die for their town; they would die for their family. This transition to our contemporary state resided in the oppressive overtones left from medieval ideology. Reflecting back on the contradiction of freedom we may now find, the demands of the extended family, or town, or church had moral standards, or rules, standing in the way of individual progress, liberty and most importantly, love. The great theme was how love and creativity suffered under the burdens of respectability; as was a common subject in the writings of Leo Tolstoy. In the interest of democracy and capitalism - freedom won out. And at the end of 19th century, into the early 20th century, there was a remarkable return to civic activity in stable and lasting associations, along with more local, and grass-root social clubs.⁴⁵

One of the main historical observations made on groups comes from Alexis de Tocqueville. In his powerful, *Democracy in America*⁴⁶, he showed how the young United States was surprisingly vigorous in the creation of clubs and associations. Tocqueville came to believe that new associations were imperative for democracy in that "democratic countries knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge; on its progress depends that of all the others." On further analysis and to my surprise, political scientist Teda Skocpol made a list of all the mass-membership organizations in U.S. history that had ever enrolled at least 1% of the *adult* male or female population (e.g. NAACP, Lions Club, etc.). He found that all of them – *all* – were founded between 1870 and

1920.⁴⁷ The point to this is that given the evolution of the conjoining virtue, society assumed that the new generations would carry on the torch of community and group associations. Yet, few groups were formed, many more died, and the breakdown of the individual started to begin.

From the 1960s onward, there has been a clear trend towards social behavior that requires no commitment to actually show up on more than one or two occasions. Kids have as many progressive clubs as ever, but in regards to social interaction, adults reflect nothing in a similar accord. Take the working-class example of bowling for example, as the number of bowling leagues lessened throughout the last half of the 20th century; we see that very few still exist. Thus, for most, when we leave our urbanized homes, which are now more geographically condensed than ever, we typically bowl alone, never to know the neighbor who lives next door. Historically speaking, the unity of contemporary humanity is historically very strange.⁴⁸

DIVIDED THEY FALL: THE BREAKDOWN OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Coming back to Emile Durkheim, in the late 19th century, he performed a miracle for the voyage on horizon. He gathered data from across Europe to study the factors that affect the suicide rate. His findings may be summarized in one word: **constraints**. No matter how he presented his data: people who had fewer social contracts, bonds, and obligations, were more likely to kill themselves.⁴⁹ Durkheim concluding his findings by stating that the “more weakened the groups to which [a man] belongs, the less he depends on them, the more he consequently depends only on himself and recognizes no other rules of conduct than what are founded on his private interest”⁵⁰ In short, all people need attachments, and all people need obligations to find meaning in their lives. A century of further studies have confirmed Durkheim’s diagnosis, in that if you want to predict

how happy someone is, or how long they will live (not including genes or personality), you should find out about their social relationships, because **“having strong social relationships strengthens the immune system, extends life (more than does quitting smoking), speeds recovery from surgery, and reduces the risk of depression and anxiety disorders.”**⁵¹ In speaking on society, Durkheim proposed suicide is more likely when a society is too individualistic, and if its citizens do not feel a sense of being part of a community or group; that is, they feel alienated from others⁵². Seneca, another philosophical sage on wisdom, was trying to say the same in that *“no one can live happily who has regard to himself alone and transforms everything into a question of his own utility”*.

From science, we now know that these notions are also in tune with our genetic and heretical structure. From the findings first found in the case study done on children by Mary Ainsworth’s “Strange Situation”⁵³ to the research later confirmed by contemporary research, it is clear that all adults go through three particular stages as it pertains to trauma and isolation: *initial anxiety and panic, followed by lethargy and depression, then followed by recovery through emotional detachment.*⁵⁴ According to the authors of *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection* “at any point in time, roughly 20% of individuals are severely depressed and social isolation is the number one cause of unhappiness. The emotional pain brought upon by loneliness, or social pain in turn, is at the same level as physical pain”⁵⁵. And if this was not convincing enough, “major depression is now the leading cause of disability globally. Projections for the coming 20 years indicate that it will become second only to heart disease among causes of death and disability.”⁵⁶ As sales of anti-depressants have sky-rocketed, while the correlating suicide ratio has not followed to the same degree [Graph III, page 56] we do indeed face a contradiction in both the individual and the whole. Where the culminated thoughts of the Stoics and Buddhist advocated detachment, they were wrong, or as the poet John Donne said, “No man, women, or child is an island.”⁵⁷

In closing on attachments, I come back to virtue. In that the evolution of morality has places the map of good actions in between the center of two polar points. I hold virtue to be the most-overcomplicated subject I have dealt with. In short, the quality of everything we do: our physical actions, our verbal actions, and even our mental actions; depends on our motivation. That's why it's important for us to examine our motivation in our day to day life. If we cultivate respect for others and our motivation is sincere, if we develop a genuine concern for others' well-being, then all our actions will be positive. If there is a set of moral standards, it is not black or white, because life is not black or white. From what I have lived, I find the following to be some set of things to live by: Acquire your wealth through work. Enjoy your pleasure with conscience. Practice science with humanity. Exhibit knowledge with character, commerce with morals, and practice politics with principles. Learn to worship with sacrifice, and again, have courage. People stray from a moral life because it is often hard, it is heavy, and often leads to unhappiness. However, once you leave the shores of content and venture into the uncharted waters of life, it becomes evident that a moral life is indeed a good life. Make a radical change in your lifestyle and begin to boldly do things which you may previously never have thought of doing, or been too hesitant to attempt. So many people live within unhappy circumstances and yet will not take the initiative to change their situation because they are conditioned to a life of security, conformity, and conservation, all of which may appear to give one peace of mind, but in reality nothing is more damaging to the adventurous spirit within a man than a secure future. The very basic core of a man's living spirit is his passion for adventure. The joy of life comes from our encounters with new experiences, and hence there is no greater joy than to have an endlessly changing horizon, for each day to have a new and different sun. If you want to get more out of life, you must lose your inclination for monotonous security and adopt a helter-skelter style of life that will at first appear to you to be crazy. But once you become accustomed to such a life you will see its full meaning and its incredible beauty.⁵⁸

PART IV: CONTRADICTION TO PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS: ROMANCE & TIME

The crux of this voyage is the contradiction in the actual pursuit of such happiness within our contemporary age. The reasons for this are found in two truths affirmed by literature, science, and most importantly individual experience. Durkheim's conclusion on the need for social attachments was that people need obligations and structure in their lives to garner a sense of meaning within their lives. Supported by the research of Dan McAdams⁵⁹, this fact ultimately comes down to the way in which we distort reality, the way in which we perceive time. Both aspects are the catalyst feeding the false ideology behind the American model of pursuing happiness. And, as I have contended, this ideology on reality and time is a direct contradiction to what it takes for actually obtaining happiness.

In elaborating, McAdams' research concluded that the individual personality has three levels as they pertain to time⁶⁰. Pertaining to my contention, I will focus on the third and most important level which pertains to how we interpret our life story. McAdams interprets this level as an "evolving story that integrates a reconstructed {perceived} past, and {an anticipated} future into one coherent and vitalizing life story."⁶¹ The point to all of this is how we come to define the future and the past of our voyage; the alpha and the omega. There are two reasons why we distort reality and along with why we distort our perception of time. Aside from the science I have already shown, the first and most important reason is that we are human. And, the second reason which explains the first is that by being human we are scared, hence it is natural to be afraid; to venture in the unknown. We are afraid because we inherently know that if we are to leave the shore, if we pursue a voyage, dark storms will come; and they will often hurt. However, as we are almost cast into these waiting waters at birth, I hold that we manifest a distorted reality that is in large part not true – a romantic reality.

ROMANCE: TO BE OR NOT TO BE – THAT IS THE REAL QUESTION

Think about it; take the example of the quintessential romantic relationship between Romeo and Juliet. Most all would agree that this is a timeless story about two lovers dying for each other's love under the constraints of their opposed families. However, only in taking the voyage to read such a tale, only in taking the voyage to truly love another, do we come to understand that we only perceived it to be this way. The truth is this is not a story of love, because true love, compassionate love, is not a relationship. Albert Camus encapsulated this mood best in saying "do not walk in front of me, I may not follow. Do not walk behind me, I may not lead. Just walk beside me and be my friend". In short, a relationship is a noun. Relationship means something complete, finished, and closed. Love is never a relationship; love is relating. It is not like this romantic story that starts at a certain point and ends on another. Love is a continuum. It is a verb, not a noun. Our contemporary state has indoctrinated most all in thinking that you should love others first before you may love yourself. And, in this way we have created a contradiction even in love, in that we think acting in your self-interest is not in your self-interest. Evolved from a cultural history where love prevailed, we over-emphasized the idea and we created a society where many people feel like they do not deserve love; only quietly walking away into empty spaces, attempting to close the gaps of the past. The point is when you love life; you understand that you must love yourself first in order to love others. Love and life are not romantic love. In short, only by realizing this, do we see that Romeo and Juliet was not a story about love, it was 3 day relationship between a 13 year old and a 17 year old that caused 6 deaths. People need to wake up, and this first begins with loving yourself. Once free to be who we are, we are free to let own light shine, and by doing so, we can only hope that this love will unconsciously give other people the permission to do the same

Clarifying any contentment left from our current state, even the definition of the word

‘romance’ brings about some obvious misunderstandings behind this assumed romantic ideal. Defined, romance is “something (as an extravagant *story* or *account*) that lacks basis in fact; and/or often a love affair.”⁶² The point to all of this is that given the fact that we are humans seeking meaning to the stories of our lives amid the fact that we are naturally afraid, we have created a romantic notion in which has come to define the stories of our lives. In undergoing this endeavor into the horizon, I have found myself with Cornell West and the school of thinkers whom believe that “the romantic ideal of wholeness has thoroughly devastated the discourse of contemporary thinking.”⁶³ The truth I have found regarding our contemporary ideology, is that we supersede reality with this romantic ideal of wholeness, in which is simply not there, or as G.M. Curtis said, “Romance is like a ghost that escapes touching; it is always where you are not, not where you are. The interview or conversation was prose at the time, but it is poetry upon our memories⁶⁴.” An obvious rebuttal to these notions is that there is nothing wrong with this way of thinking, there is nothing wrong with masking reality with romantic notions; however concerning this fairy-tale existence, I hold it to be one of the primary reason in which many are blinded from seeing the horizon. Yes, it is a problem.

What is the reason why this way of thinking is detrimental to happiness? It is not hurting anyone, or is it? The truth is, it is hurting someone, it is hurting each and every individual in which lives by it, along with all of those they will eventually touch. This perceived reality sets up a life that lives in the distorted memories of the past, amid the anticipated manifestations of the future. In the romantic life, like the story of Romeo and Juliet, everything has a beginning; everything has an end, and everything an eloquent whole. In essence, there is a sense of harmony to life, one not consistent to the erratic tempo that life often brings. In seeing this we are left with two questions that need to be addressed: Can you make things whole? Can you sustain a perfect harmony?

The truth about this harmonious sustained wholeness is that real life does not play to the same cord. Life is raw. People are raw. People do hurt and people do die. When an individual adapts this romantic mindset, they set themselves up for failure. In that, if one does not take care of the actions needed to be addressed in the present, then their anticipated outcomes in the future will not follow what they had originally anticipated. Naturally, you feel let down; you feel disappointed or taken to an extreme, you feel as if you have failed. In speaking of the 21st century ideals embodying America, people wave their flags because they romanticize that America was the land of the free, and the is still the home of the brave. However, while there is some truth to this, the brave are the ones who step into the waters of reality, step away from the alpha of this romantic notion that thinks “we had it all”, and we have lost it. Thus “we need it all”, which will inevitably lead to the omega of our pursuit in believing, that one day, “we will have it all”. The truth is, reality is that we never did, we do not need to, and we never will. The truth is America is a very fragile democratic experiment predicated on a disposition of the lands of indigenous people, enslavement of fellow men, and the subjugation of women⁶⁵. To be or not to be happy, with or without truth, that is the real question.

DISTORTIONS OF TIME: THE FIRE IN WHICH WE BURN

This is what it comes down to: time which occurred in the past no longer exists, and time which occurred in the future has yet to happen; ergo the past and future are never a part of the reality in which we experience. Thought is inseparable from time. And, reality is in the present. Walt Whitman said it best by saying that “happiness {is}, not in another place, but this place; not for another hour, but this hour.”⁶⁶ In this, he is right. In this, he is on the shore. The problem is that in taking the voyage, we often live according to time, we analyze, we obsesses, we maximize, we ironize, and often undercut the reality of the present moment. Concerning the current state, the

romantic notion on wholeness is in accord with the idea that that time is a taker, that time is lost. There is an underlying theme that even if we have done a lot, some things, good things; we need to keep trying, again and again, until we have done it all, until we are complete, until we are whole. Our contemporary notion, and the economy in which only perpetuates it, feeds off of this i.e. instant gratification. We must rush. We must hurry. We must do more! The point - life is not a romantic story, authentic gratification is not instant, and we never quite achieve this wholeness we relentlessly seek. When we identify with these romantic notions, we set ourselves up for disappointment and failure. This way of living almost always leads to unhappiness, to misery, to abuse, and as this is becoming rampant in our contemporary state, it often leads to pathological disease.

DUMPING DISTORTIONS: TYING THE KNOT WITH TRUTH

To be or not to be happy, with or without truth, that is the real question. In acknowledging this, you have a choice, one is real, and one is not. The horizon is found within truth. The horizon is disclosed in understanding that life is raw, people do hurt, and one day, you will die. Even though you acknowledge that time is not permanent, in knowing death - knowing truth - you naturally garner a certain gratitude for the time that you *do* have. What if in writing the story to your life, you can only fill the pages with some experiences you did have, some places you did go. What if in the conclusion to this story that you call your life, you find what all inevitably find – that you did all that you could have done with the time that you had. The 21st century ideals are predicated off of a flawed romantic ideal, an ideal that leads to manifestations in thought, obsessive wants, addictions, depression, apathy, and ultimately, a relentless appetite that cannot be fed. This same appetite feeds an economy that is driven by instant and fake gratification; fast food, false truths, fraudulent lives, and ultimately a synthetic skyline to which many turn. The truth is that when you evacuate this

romantic ideal, you evacuate this superman mentality, this perfected self, you evacuate the language of disappointment and failure; you evacuate the notion that you must have it all. Certain humility is brought by the fact that, as you age, there are certain things that you can no longer do. In evacuating this language of failure, a wave of gratitude should come in the acknowledgment that you were able to live as much, to enjoy as much, to think as much, to love as much as you did. And, only at the end of all stories do people come to the horizon. In that, you no longer find reasons to seek this horizon in the future, for you understand that time was not the taker. In understanding the present reality amid the truth of death you see that time was ultimately a gift. That is all it ever was.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS: THREE PARAMOUNT TRUTHS

In America's contemporary culture, as my thesis follows, we make a distinction between behaviors that bring true happiness and behaviors that only make you feel happy. For this reason, my thesis is that the 21st century's primary conflict is not the poverty in plenty but the unhappiness brought in the pursuit of pleasure by most. I hold that the current American model of what brings happiness is in direct contradiction to what it takes for actually obtaining happiness. If there is one contradiction that stands about the rest than it would be in found in the actual pursuit in which we seek this notion of happiness. Concluding on the actual cognitive model, I will first show the three paramount truths illuminated by the light of this new science on happiness in the 21st century.

The last few decades have brought about a revolution in the scientific study of happiness. "A combination of radical new thinking and sophisticated methodology has allowed psychologist to co-infer with domains that have historically only been open to the domain of philosophers and theologians. Used together, these methods help us to understand the brain, and assess this issue in a way never before seen in the history of human existence. For the first time, we are able to measure

happiness.”⁶⁷ The first paramount truth found from this new science is that “heredity really does matter.”⁶⁸ Essentially this first truth is premised on two principles, the first is what is now called the progress principle: pleasure comes more from making progress when we make a step in the right direction, or as Shakespeare said best: things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing.⁶⁹

The second premise to this first truth on heredity is that of the adaptation principle. Essentially, we are bad at ‘affective forecasting’⁷⁰, which is, predicting how we will feel in the future. Taken from extensive studies conducted on the future states of well being between lottery winners and paraplegics, we find that by living in anticipation of the future, we grossly overestimate the intensity and the duration of our emotional reactions. Measuring happiness from the initial incident, to a year later, studies show that both groups, on average, return to a baseline level of happiness⁷¹. While there are a myriad number of reasons the lottery winners return to their baseline, the recurring theme with the paraplegics is that they once you hit ground, once you sink, each step back up is reinforced by the progress principal; hence, we naturally float. Take for example, world-renowned physicist and paraplegic Stephen Hawking. Trapped in the shell of a body since his youth, he would go on to resolve significant questions dealing with the universe, amid writing the best-selling science book of all time. During an interview with the New York Times in 2009, he was asked how he remained happy. To this question he replied: “my expectations were reduced to zero when I was twenty-one. Everything since then has been a bonus.”⁷²

The second paramount truth found from this new science is that “most environmental and demographic factors influence general happiness to only a small degree”⁷³. In speaking of environmental and demographic factors, science has shed truth on this vast sea of timeless misconceptions: White Americans are free from many of the hassles that still affect black Americans

to this very day, however, on average; they are only very slightly happier⁷⁴. Men seem to enjoy more freedom and power than women, yet they are not, on average, any happier (although women do experience more depression)⁷⁵. Further, the young have so much more to look forward to than the elderly, yet ratings of life satisfaction actually rise slightly with age, up to age 65, and in some studies, well beyond⁷⁶. People who live in cold climates expect people who live in Sunny California to be happier, yet they are wrong⁷⁷. And my personal favorite, most people believe that attractive people are happier than unattractive people, and yet again, results show that they are not, and this notion is simply a common misconception.⁷⁸

The third and final paramount truth is that happiness does not live on a continual linear spectrum as we so often perceive it does; meaning there is no such reality behind such notions like natural happiness or true happiness; they are one in the same⁷⁹. It is true that temperament matters; however, it is also true that our physiological happiness is bound to set lows and highs; everyone is united under this fact; everyone fights the same fight of moods. Ultimately, what these three paramount truths found within our new science tell us is that attitude really does matter. It is true that when it comes to heredity, we are in a game of sorts – some get better deals than others, some win, and some lose. This game of heredity is not a game in which is often fair. Nevertheless, in seeking the horizon, we need to enjoy what we do have. We need to use our bodies every way we can, because at the end of the day, it is the greatest instrument we will ever own. Regarding virtue, it does sound like a lot of hard work, and it often is. However, from the lottery winner, to the shell of a body that Steven Hawking inhabits, virtue has been proven to be a cognitive pleasure. Aristotle would have been pleased, in that when virtues are reconceived as excellences, and when we practice our strengths, physiologically speaking, virtues actions, ones of progress, are intrinsically rewarding⁸⁰

ULTIMATE CONTRADICTION: THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS: THE IF-THEN MODEL

If there is one contradiction that stands about the rest regarding the direct contradiction between pursuing and obtaining happiness, it would be in found within the cognitive model I will call the IF-THEN model. In essence, our contemporary state conditions most to be unhappy their entire lives, because our conditional state confines happiness to a conditional model. As previously stated, cognitive models, or constructs, are assuming the structure of life. On the structure of contemporary happiness, we believe happiness was built on the IF-THEN condition, for example: IF I obtain a certain amount of money, THEN I will be happy. IF I obtain this particular status, THEN I will be happy. If I get this girl, THEN I will be happy. In deconstructing this model, we may be happy. To deconstruct this model, we need more truths.

One of these truths was found by Hungarian-born co-founder of positive psychology; Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced 'cheeks sent me high'). In his studies⁸¹, people carried with them a pager that beeped several times a day. Through this beeping of thousands of people, tens of thousands of times a day, Csikszentmihalyi was able to discover what people really enjoy doing, not what they romantically idealized. For the most part, these beepers pointed to the obvious: people love hedonistic pleasures and they do not love to be interrupted by 'beeps' while they are enjoying them; especially eating and sex. Csikszentmihalyi concluded that these pleasures were satiating; and taken to excess, can lead to disgust.⁸² However, amid this process, he did find one imperative truth. What he found was that there is a state of action that people value *even more* than the highest somatic pleasure. It is a state of total immersion in a task that is challenging and yet closely matched in one's abilities. Take this idea applied to the physical movement found in sports, best known as "being in the zone". This concept is in present action, and is best exhibited by effortless movement, or complete immersion in a task. Csikszentmihalyi coined this big discovery, as the state of 'flow'.

In summary, the if-then model has unconsciously set up many people to live their entire lives unhappy. This mental model is a vast array of assumptions about the structure of life that are simple not so. The truth is, unknowingly or not, actions are in your control, and the outcome is not. Staying in accord with my claims on time, the only true condition of this model is that IF you invest in the outcome, THEN you are almost always setting yourself up to be unhappy. What do I need to get? What has to happen? The truth is that all the problems you have are equally perfect. Anything you can get, you can un-get. Focusing is a good thing, it gives you direction. Investing in the outcome is not. You have to invest in the process - *the flow*. This involves immersing yourself in the steps of action. Yet, what if you fail? Then, it is not a manifested catastrophe, it is life. You select a new outcome and keep going. If you follow this same rhythm of life; it is hard to get off beat. All you do in life is a journey. Everything you do is part of that journey. You have to ask yourself the journey you are on is where you want to spend your time. Declining romantic notions, meaning will follow.⁸³

‘You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life.’⁸⁴

– Albert Camus

CONCLUSION: THE HORIZON OF HAPPINESS

“All things come into being by conflict of opposites.” – Heraclitus, c. 500 BCE⁸⁵

What is happiness? I do not know, nor does anyone else; at best, we may only circumscribe the horizon in which sometimes may fully eclipse what this means. However, from the shore to the edge of reason, from the East, to the West, I can undoubtedly affirm that happiness is found in between, it is found somewhere in a balanced voyage. Balance is the one route in which all philosophies, of all schools, of all cultures, may follow. Too much consistency is as bad for the mind, as it is for the body. Consistency is contrary to nature, both the nature of reality and the nature of being human, essentially, it is contrary to life. The only completely consistent people are the dead. Balance is the great moderator between belief and doubt. Eastern and Western approaches to life are said to be opposed: the East stresses acceptance and the collective; the West encourages change and the individual. However, as we have seen, both perspectives are valuable. Different people at different times of life will benefit from drawing more heavily on one approach than the other. Voyaging happiness needs balance, from the relationships between yourself and others, between yourself and your work, and between yourself and something larger than yourself. Ultimately, in answering my thesis, my contention that the American model of what brings happiness is in direct contradiction to what it takes for actually being happy, I have found that happiness is not the IF or the THEN, it is the between. The 21st century's primary conflict is not the poverty in plenty but the unhappiness brought in the pursuit of pleasure by most, because people forget that true pleasure is actually found in the pursuit. We make a distinction between behaviors that bring true happiness and behaviors that only make you feel happy; when in fact, the behavior of pursuit is the same. We live in the IF, we seek gratification in the anticipated THEN, and we forgot that happiness was in between;

it was in the harbor. In closing, it is only appropriate that I give my own definition of happiness, and although no definition fully encapsulates this nameless subject, part of seeking the horizon is to call everything by its right name. To call the horizons right name, I will draw the definition followed by the harbor in which it sets, from this, my definition is as followed:

Happiness is the humility brought by an honest living, and the balanced pursuit of an excellent life.

Happiness is found in the harbor. Happiness is to be human.

In closing, dream what you may dream, go where you want to go, be what you want to be, because you have only one life, and one chance to do all the things you want to do. With love you obtain enough happiness to make you sweet. With love you endure enough trials to make you strong. Only in this way will you grieve enough sorrow to keep you human, enough hope to keep you happy. Living a moral life is not a hard life. When in doubt, put yourself in others' shoes. If you feel that it hurts you, it probably hurts the other person, too. Love lies for those who hurt, those who have searched, and those who tried, for only they can appreciate the importance of people who have touched their lives. The brightest future will always be based on a forgotten past, you cannot go on well in life until you let go of your past failures and heartaches. When you were born, you were crying and everyone around you was smiling. Living you're a happy life means that when you die, you are the one who is laughing while everyone around you is crying. There is no better medicine for the sick, the hurting, and the confused. No medicine cures what happiness cannot. HAPPINESS [is] ONLY REAL WHEN SHARED. Live, love, let go, and enjoy the horizon of happiness.

GRAPH 1 United States Rankings (Compare w/developed countries)⁸⁶

Subjective well-being in 97 countries
 based on reported happiness and life satisfaction, equally weighted
 (Ranked from happiest to least happy. Negative scores indicate that
 a majority of the population is unhappy/dissatisfied with life)

Country	Mean	Country	Mean	Country	Mean
Denmark	4.24	Malaysia	2.61	Croatia	0.87
Puerto Rico	4.21	W. Germany	2.60	Morocco	0.87
Colombia	4.18	Vietnam	2.52	India	0.85
Iceland	4.15	France	2.50	Uganda	0.69
N Ireland	4.13	Philippines	2.47	Zambia	0.68
Ireland	4.12	Uruguay	2.43	Algeria	0.60
Switzerland	3.96	Indonesia	2.37	Burkina Faso	0.60
Netherlands	3.77	Chile	2.34	Egypt	0.52
Canada	3.76	Dominican Rep	2.29	Slovakia	0.41
Austria	3.68	Japan	2.24	Hungary	0.36
El Salvador	3.67	Spain	2.16	Montenegro	0.19
Malta	3.61	Israel	2.08	Tanzania	0.13
Luxemburg	3.61	Italy	2.06	Azerbaijan	0.13
Sweden	3.58	Portugal	2.01	Macedonia	-0.06
New Zealand	3.57	Taiwan	1.83	Rwanda	-0.15
U.S.A.	3.55	E. Germany	1.78	Pakistan	-0.30
Guatemala	3.53	Slovenia	1.77	Ethiopia	-0.30
Mexico	3.52	Ghana	1.73	Eastonia	-0.36
Norway	3.50	Poland	1.66	Serbian Bosnia	-0.45
Belgium	3.40	Czech Rep	1.66	Lithuania	-0.70
Britain	3.39	China	1.64	Latvia	-0.75
Australia	3.26	Mali	1.62	Romania	-0.88
Venezuela	3.25	Kyrgyzstan	1.59	Russia	-1.01
Trinidad	3.25	Jordan	1.46	Georgia	-1.01
Finland	3.24	Greece	1.45	Bulgaria	-1.09
Saudi Arabia	3.17	S Africa	1.39	Iraq	-1.36
Thailand	3.02	Turkey	1.27	Albania	-1.44
Cyprus	2.96	Peru	1.24	Ukraine	-1.69
Nigeria	2.82	S Korea	1.23	Belarus	-1.74
Brazil	2.81	Hong Kong	1.16	Moldova	-1.74
Singapore	2.72	Iran	1.12	Armenia	-1.80
Argentina	2.69	Bangladesh	1.00	Zimbabwe	-1.92
Andorra	2.64	Bosnia	0.94	Mean:	1.57

Source: Combined data from 1995 – 2007 World Values Surveys.

To maximize reliability, data from the last three waves are combined.

Countries in bold face have negative scores, indicating predominantly unhappy or dissatisfied publics.

GRAPH II HAPPINESS RATING VS. AVERAGE INCOME⁸⁷

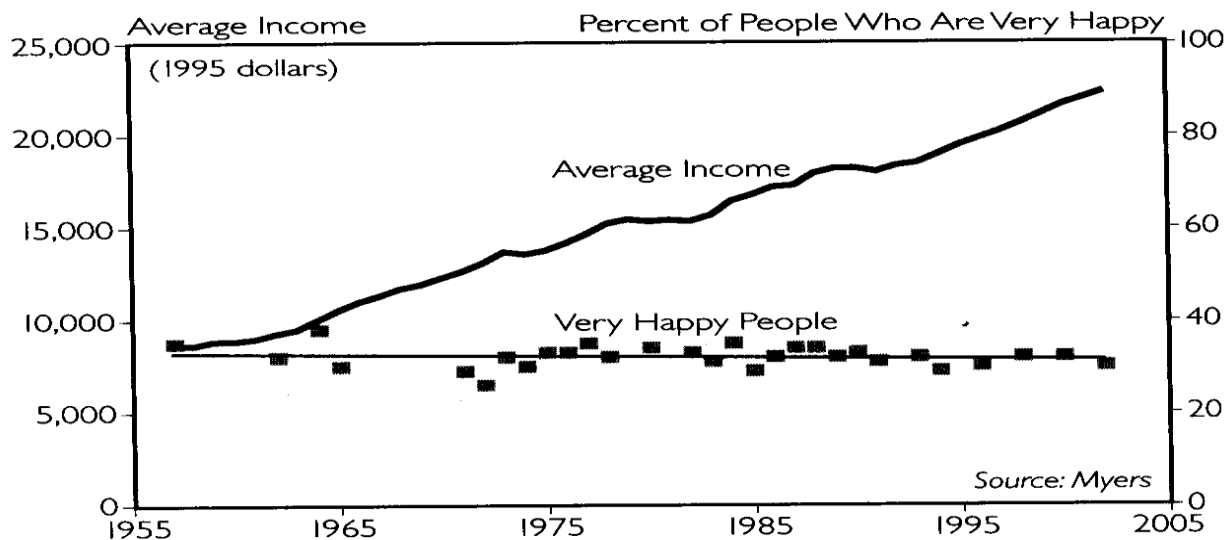
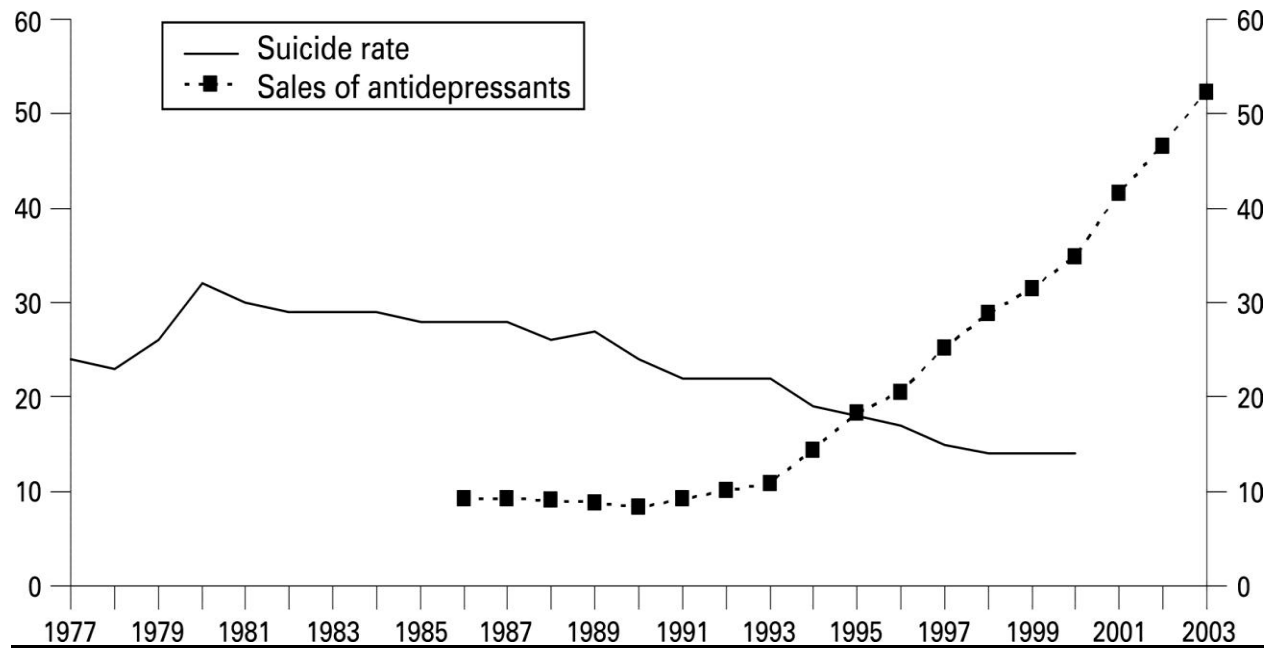


Figure 8-1. Average Income and Happiness in the United States, 1957-2002

Graph III RATIO OF SUICIDES vs. ANTI-DEPRESSANT SALES⁸⁸



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APPROVAL SHEET

This is to certify that Benjamin D. Gilbert has successfully completed
his Senior Honors Thesis, entitled:

The Horizon of Happiness

Frank H. Schalow Director of Thesis
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May 7, 2012
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