

## Happiness Won't Save You: Residual Questions

Mackenzie: Is there a correlation between how one imagines oneself in the future and one's happiness in the present? What is the role of imagination in pursuing a good life, a life of eudaimonia, flow, flourishing and virtue? Does this help us, from the reading: "In order to think about the future, you have to flexibly recombine memories from the past" (Nock).

Maayan & Ashley: How did the researchers measure happiness? Brickman clearly was an expert on happiness, at least academically. This seems to demonstrate that information, knowledge, theory aren't enough. Knowing isn't enough. Action would seem to be requisite. "Doing" happiness as opposed to pursuing or feeling it.

>>The theater of the mind and back to imagination, the right role of education, Booth.

Riley: "Love finds you when you stop searching for it." Should we cease searching for happiness? Could attempts at forcing happiness actually lead to yet greater unhappiness?

Peyton: Does your own happiness influence the happiness or possibilities for happiness of or for others?

Morgan & Madeliene: How would Aristotle and Tabensky counsel Brickman? Czik?

Sarah, Sage, Madeliene, Abhi: Does a person have a right to end his or her own life, irrespective of religion or religious prohibitions? If suicide is or seems the only escape from "a gloom so thick one cannot see one's way out," the only relief from a life of slings and arrows, scorns and whips, why can't this desire be respected? Why does it carry such a stigma? Is it morally right or good to lock up people who are intent on taking their own lives? Why? On what basis? Isn't suicide, as Jamison writes, the "last and best of bad possibilities?"

BC: What obligation do we ultimately (life v. death) have towards our loved ones, friends, family, those who love us, those to whom we have made commitments, to use Brickman's own term or concept? To what extent is my life, in fact, NOT my own life with which to determine or end (intergenerational justice)? And, if we can't judge or evaluate "goodness" in a life (or a presidency) until that life is over, is it wrong or "bad" to intervene to end that life? To foreclose what might have redeemed the remainder or balance of that life?



True/False, and WHY:

- “The more we achieve, the more we require to sustain our new levels of satisfaction.” This is “fulfillment’s desolate attic,” as poet Philip Larkin put it, or the “hedonic treadmill,” as Donald T. Campbell put it.
- “The more we sacrifice for something (our commitments), the more value we assign to it.”
- “What really maintains us is *unhappiness*,” and reducing this unhappiness.
- “The bonds we often think of as ropes are really gossamer threads. (the fragility of relationships, jobs, commitments)
- We seem to have a “hedonistic set point,” or a baseline to which we quickly return after tragedy, “outrageous fortune,” or accident. One’s disposition, which might or might not be interdependent with personality. Did Brickman wonder in his darkest moments whether he was condemned to a lifetime of profound sadness?

Sarah: What’s a bad life? Can or does happiness at least save you from a bad life? What is or should be the role of *failure* in our lives? Failure seemed to *unravel* Brickman, as the writer described it. So, how does one *ravel*? (falling apart v. putting it together, unwinding v. winding)

Kelsee: In terms of the models of helping and coping, Brickman’s last published paper, how might we characterize Hamlet?

His options:

- those who think they’re responsible for both their problems and the solutions
- those who think they’re responsible for neither
- those who think their responsible for the solution to a problem but not the problem
- those who think they’re responsible for the problem but not the solution

Is *despair* the natural or expected outcome of believing you fall in the last category, as Brickman seemed to? Other options: AA, joining a cult.

**The saddest line in the piece**, to me: Katharine, the daughter perhaps closest to Brickman, tried to help by deliberately allowing him to win at cards. At 27, she determined that her Dad wanted to leave, and it was his *right* to leave. “It wasn’t about me,” she said.