

Solution

Inner width

Inclusiveness, universality,
in - dependence

Outer concentration

attention - painstaking
training and perfecting

Analogy: a good actor
who studies carefully

and temporarily

puts his life into

the roles he plays, into

the characters which

he “represents” - but

remains ever himself -

ever conscious of not being

those characters - of having

his own independent life.

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24

DETERMINING A GOAL: HAPPINESS

Nowadays happiness as a topic has become very fashionable. Actually it is a subject that is always up-to-date because it deals with the existence of man in a wider sense.

Roberto Assagioli has marked a turning point on this subject by looking differently on human beings: it is not a question of curing or healing something bad which is present in a suffering person but to release the healthy part.

Assagioli suggests working towards the positive thus allowing that what makes us feel good to come out instead of combating against that what makes us suffer. When we think of all that a person desires we can conclude that at the end all of us are looking for only one thing: happiness! No matter if we are wealthy, famous, successful, admired, or acknowledged: the ultimate aim of all of us is happiness.

Often we have a problem without knowing how to solve it. The solution always seems to be reached by something concrete such as: “When I reach my goal X, my problems will disappear.” It seems to be that every bad thing can be cured once we have reached our goals (to graduate, to marry, to find a job, to be promoted, to overcome an illness).

Being happy doesn't always mean being in an euphoric state of mind. A person can suffer from an emotive pain and, nevertheless, be a happy person in general. Happiness doesn't refer to a concrete event but a general state of mind. Once we can appreciate life, we can experience that pleasure is the rule and pain is the exception.

It is true that you can be overwhelmed by a strong emotion when you reach your goals, but later on, when everyday life takes over, the sense of emptiness can come back. Therefore there is a need to distinguish between the emotion connected to reaching a goal and the sentiment of lasting happiness. It is not by chance that we imagine happiness to be the end of a process, a precise point which indicates the conclusion of our ambitions.

Nevertheless this point doesn't exist and it is unavoidable that the mere idea of its existence makes us feel unsatisfied and frustrated. Once we have achieved all that we wanted, we have noticed that it is not enough and that we want more. On the other hand, thinking of happiness in terms of an infinite process will enable us to perceive it as a progressive evolution. Instead of asking ourselves if we are happy or content we should ask ourselves: “How can I be happier today than I was yesterday?” This question recognizes the nature of happiness as an infinite process and not as a goal. Instead of being unhappy for not having yet reached a certain objective, we can consider happiness as a lifelong ambition, trying to feel happier in the present than in the past. This will help us to increase our contentment.

What can we do, therefore, to live our life in the most joyful manner?

Emotions play a fundamental role in all types of research within the field of psychology, this includes research for happiness since it is the emotion that gives us motivation and drives us on to further action. Deprived of emotions we would almost be vegetating; we could maintain cognitive function but we would then live in a state of total indifference towards the events of life and our thoughts.

Indeed emotions are so important in terms of choice and behaviour that “Positive psychology” is even attributing them to intelligence.

On an emotional level we have the capacity to recognize our sentiments and those of the others, to motivate us and to direct our personal and social relationships. Actually, it is these emotions that help us to control any impulses and to postpone any gratifications, they help us to modulate our moods thus avoiding losing our power of reasoning. Therefore our emotions should not be controlled but be recognized and channeled.

On the one hand happiness requires positive emotions and a meaning to our actions. This means that a happy person enjoys positive emotions that give a meaning to their actions. We create our own choices and give meaning to our actions. We need a purpose with personal signification not dictated by norms and social expectations that is often the case. Therefore, rather than to

blindly fix aims we ought to give them a meaning resulting from our inner motivation. Consequently we ought to know who we are and what we want. Being conscious of ourselves is not only necessary but also helps us to become “owner of our own house”, like Assagioli used to say. To know and possess ourselves is a basic condition to create fair and harmonious relationships with others and to understand what kind of actions are meaningful to us and thus make us feel good. To be conscious of ourselves and to accept who we are and what we need is a “sine qua non” condition that leads us to the transformation act and the conquest of Self.

Speaking in terms of Psychosynthesis, being happy means to be in harmony with the Self, to be congruent with the essence of the Transpersonal Self. There are obstacles preventing our real Self from expressing itself which makes us feel ill and unhappy, but there are some techniques we can use to evolve towards the Transpersonal Self by way of the Personal Self. The more we get in contact with the Transpersonal Self, the happier we are. Psychosynthesis refers to the human being a spiritual dimension and a terrestrial dimension. In the spiritual dimension there is a continuous exchange of energy flux with all human beings and the universe. Our personality, however, is a projection of this spiritual dimension, of the Self, and it is a vehicle to the terrestrial dimension. Therefore, different people find different significances in different things. It is important that everyone chooses their real intentions in harmony with their own values and passions. It is important to distinguish between that which comes up from the deep Self and that which emerges from a sub-personality because it is the choices that we make at the beginning that makes the difference whether the journey we start turns out happy or not.

The sub-personalities are characteristics differentiated in everyone’s personality, that means roles and behaviours with which the same person expresses themselves in different ways. Just as the Portuguese Fernando Pessoa has written thanks to his intuition as a poet: “Each of us are many people”. By simply observing people in different situations of life or while interacting with others it can be seen how people seem to have different personalities. The personality of the individual is composed of multiple elements which are often in conflict or tension with each another. Daniele De Paolis maintains that we can consider not only one personality but various personalities as characteristics of an individual: the major prominence of one or more of these sub-personalities gives us the – wrong – impression of an ordinary or single personality. The difficulty we feel occasionally towards the multiple personalities within us is due to the lack of cooperation of the sub-personalities which can become evident by internal conflicts and ambivalences. Synthesis is being done by accepting and integrating our sub-personalities. We can find sub-personalities in

family, social and professional fields. They make us feel ill if they do not become recognized or lack consciousness and when we become dominated by them we lose the notion of our essential self. In fact the sensation of emptiness comes over us when we identify with a certain sub-personality which has made us lose the direction in which we wanted to go. Alberto Alberti maintains that the conscious self ought to assume the director’s role who regulates and directs the actors (the sub-personalities) in order to interpret, each one for itself; the performance without changing the sense, but meanwhile, favouring the expression of the profound significance which is indeed that of the Self, thus being, in this analogy, the author of the works.

Therefore it is convenient to distinguish between that what belongs to the conditioned and constructed part of the personality and that what is real in the person, arising from the Self.

It needs an accurate objective analysis of our behaviour and of our choices since those that come from the higher level are giving us a sense of harmony within ourselves and are contributing to our happiness.

The solution is found in reaching the center of consciousness, in becoming aware, accepting and transforming. This is, to my mind, one of the strengths of Psychosynthesis: recognizing a spiritual part within us which goes beyond the personality, but to which we achieve through terrestrial dimensions.

Among the values of humanity Assagioli specifies pleasure, joy and humour. In his works “Atto di Volontà” (“The Will”) he speaks about the “Psicologia della Gioia” (“Psychology of Joy”). Proceeding from the assumption when the act of will arises from the wish of Self, it can only be joyful. Assagioli explains that “since the result of a successful act of will is the satisfaction of our needs, we can see that the act of will is essentially joyful.”. The expression of Self always leads us back to a sensation of joy and wellness. Indeed the difficulty lies in becoming aware of the wishes of Self, in defining the aims which bring us to its realization. The definition of objectives is a fundamental starting point for the self-realization of the human being. The experience of sustainable happiness needs activities created by the definition of objectives in life. It is our wish to aim for determined

objectives and developed actions to achieve them which than gives us satisfaction and positive emotions.

The performance of this action plan is an act of self-determination with the intent to give a meaning to life.

We should also be objective by taking into account what are our capabilities and potentials. Psychosynthesis considers the technique of the “Ideal Modell” as something very practical and functional: “It is a matter of fulfilling our deepest tendencies in a most efficient and desirable way”. It is a process towards an ideal which takes form through everyone of us following a specific purpose. In reality we are aspiring towards that what we are; in this way the technique of the “Ideal Modell” is attempting to do work concentrated on an internal ideal form which tries to manifest itself. Following happiness doesn’t mean to be free from wishes, aspirations or objectives, on the contrary. People who aim at objectives are more likely to be successful than those who don’t. Having certain objectives which challenge us brings us better results because it lets us concentrate on a goal. Having aims gives us the power to believe that we can overcome any obstacles and thus we will find the way to do it. When we believe in it, we can do it: it is a matter of some kind of prophecy which comes true thanks to our strong believe in it. In any case, it must be repeated that the sole act of achieving a goal doesn’t bring us happiness. After having reached an objective we easily return to the same state of emotion we had before the event. So, what are goals good for? It seems to be a paradox, but in reality objectives help us to become free, because they allow us to appreciate the “here and now”. When we don’t know where we are going to, every path turns out to be ambivalent and instead of concentrating on the landscape we get absorbed by hesitation and uncertainty. Having a destination in mind, we are free to give attention and find pleasure in every point no matter where we are. Therefore it isn’t a matter of just thinking of the top of the mountain (future) or of feeling that only the process is important (present), neither of being slaves of the past nor of being convinced that both the journey and the destiny aren’t worthwhile. But it is a matter of experiencing the journey with ones eyes fixed on the goal. Once again, it is the process that makes us reach the goal and not the goal itself that makes the difference.

Therefore objectives not only serve as aims but also facilitate the pleasure of our present experience whilst indirectly increasing the level of our wellness, too.

To have an aim and following it allows us to feel good.⁴ In the context of choices and objectives let us speak about the will. Speaking in terms of Psychosynthesis, the will is a psychological function, the one nearest to the Self – centre of consciousness that directs our choices, helping us to reach our goals. It is a matter of an inner energy which is like “a power of choice, decision, dominion, which makes us feel free, strong, possessors of ourselves, capable to confront any obstacle”.

The will differs from the other psychological functions in being able to propose itself an aim and to choose the means to follow it. “The real function of the will is not to act against the impulses of the personality in order to push ahead the realization of our aims. The will has a directive and regulative function and utilizes in a favourable way all the other activities and energies of the human being without repressing any of them.”

The will, too, can be repressed and encounter obstacles during the manifestation of itself. It is, however, a faculty existing in us which doesn’t get “constructed”. The exercise and the use of the will itself make it release from the Self and emerge. Our will is the dynamic energy which moves us in this world and gives us the possibility to be, make and become all that what we want. Every choice or decision is an act of will. The basis of all what we do is properly the discovery and the continuous exercise of the will which can be reached by direct experience.

And this presupposes consciousness, as already mentioned, since the more we put awareness in our decisions, the more we will be capable to individualize what is significant for us. To be conscious of what is right for us helps us to take the path to happiness. Assagioli resumes the process of personal growth in his motto: Know yourself, master yourself and transform yourself.⁵ In order to start this journey, it is necessary to begin a work of discovery, sincerity and courage.

The sense of life in effect is being found here, the work we perform to be happy.”To realize the own Self therefore signifies doing a profound act of love for live (...) wherever there is life, there is a harmonious synthesis of energy and consciousness (...) To say yes to life signifies to say yes to Self”.