

THINKING OF ECONOMICS FROM THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HAPPINESS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Research in psychology of happiness helps us in knowing ourselves better and leads to better happiness. How can economics benefit from the contribution of the psychology of happiness? In this paper, we will analyze the following: at what point happiness is important, why subjective measures of happiness are essential and how certain objective criteria can be legitimately used in the measurement of happiness. We also provide the possible aims of happiness economics, reasons why an approach using happiness economics is not enough in public policy, and what are the limits of a perspective focused only on happiness .

KEY-WORDS: happiness, subjective well-being, happiness economics, public policy, unemployment, economic growth, income, inequality, positive psychology.

INTRODUCTION

1) Happiness is not a new idea in economics. Happiness forms a central theme of Bentham and Mill's research (Layard, 2007). For a long time, emphasis has been placed on material wealth with the idea that the rest followed it. In recent decades, happiness is back in economics (Bruni and Porta, 2005). The works of Easterlin (1974) and Scitovsky (1976) have shown that the link between wealth and happiness was not as simple as was previously thought. An explosion in the studies in this area has led to the development of a new approach to economics called happiness economics, in which analysis is based on subjective data. Today, the scientific relationship between economics and psychology of happiness is increasing (e.g. Diener et al., 2009; Dutt and Radcliff, 2009).

2) Happiness economics is unique compared with other economic approaches, because happiness is the central concept of this study in economics and specialists studying this discipline are not economists, but psychologists. Thus, without being an auxiliary science of the psychology of happiness, happiness economics is heavily dependent on advances in it (Gaucher, 2009).

AT WHAT POINT IS HAPPINESS IMPORTANT?

3) Why thinking of economics from the psychology of happiness? Human beings think of happiness as a central component of the life they hope for themselves (Diener, Oishi and Lucas, 2003; King and Napa, 1998, Suh, Diener, Oishi and Triandis, 1998 ; Skevington, MacArthur and Somerset, 1997). Thinking economics from the psychology of happiness perspective is a way to rehumanize economics itself.

4) If each person can have his or her intuitive theory of happiness, the importance of happiness is also characterized by the fact that being happy has important positive consequences, that happiness can be lastingly increased, that it is not possible to be always happy, and that being happier is not always desired.

5) The most used definition of happiness in research is that of subjective well-being (Diener, 1984). Subjective well-being (SWB) is often divided into three dimensions: positive affect (PA), negative affect (NA), and life satisfaction (LS). A fourth dimension, domain satisfaction (DS), can also be taken into account (Schimmack, 2008). Various scales are used to measure happiness but the best known is the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985).

6) Studies on the long-term consequences of happiness are still inadequate (Diener, 2008). The most comprehensive study to the best of my knowledge is probably the one by Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener (2005). Their study brings together several existing studies of various kinds: cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies, and experimental studies. The results are that happiness is associated with many positive characteristics such as health, income, social relationships, marriage, life expectancy, and that the positive emotions, which are markers of happiness, may be a cause.

7) Including happiness in economics would lose its meaning if happiness could not be sustainably improved. The idea that happiness cannot be increased in the long-term was prevalent in psychology and the same idea was carried over to economics. Research in the areas of genetics, personality traits, and adaptation gave rise to this idea (Sheldon and Lyubomirsky, 2004). A fourth area for the relationship between happiness and income gave rise to the same idea: social comparison (Frey and Stutzer, 2002; Layard, 2007).

8) This research has many limitations, however. Research into the genetics of happiness (Lykken and Tellegen, 1996; Braungart, Plomin, DeFries and Fulker, 1992; Tellegen et al., 1988) involves investigating the heritability, that is, studies around a statistical concept and not on biological mechanisms (King, 2008). Studies show that personality can change and that adaptations are not necessarily total. Change may be the consequence of major negative events of life such as divorce (Lucas, 2005), disability (Lucas, 2007), or unemployment (Lucas, Clark, Georgellis and Diener, 2004). The influence of social comparison is probably overestimated (Diener and Fujita, 1997). People who undertake many social comparisons on average have higher levels of neuroticism (Buunk, Nauta and Molleman, 2005, Gibbons and Buunk, 1999).

9) The main argument is, however, whatever this research has proposed and given their scope and limitations, other researches showed that it was possible to increase the level of happiness sustainably. The ancient studies on the effects of psychotherapies show that people following psychotherapy feel better than those who remained untreated, and the effects of psychotherapy are stable (Smith and Glass, 1977, Smith, Glass and Miller, 1980, Lipsey and Wilson, 1993).

10) Even if the separation between clinical population and non-clinical population is artificial in the perspective of positive psychology (Maddux, 2005), other studies involving people who are not concerned about psychotherapy take the same direction. Positive psychologists seek ways to increase lasting happiness. They showed that some changes in daily life can improve the happiness of an individual in a sustainable way.

11) Thus, to provide realistic goals consistent with individual's values is a way to permanently increase happiness (Emmons, 1986; Sheldon and Elliot, 1999). As goals evolve, they are not or little affected by adaptation (King, 2008). Positive life events increase happiness, keeping also in mind that many positive life events are programmable (Argyle, 2001). Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) compared the effects of six exercises, including a placebo exercise. One outcome of the study is that exercises should be regular and not sporadic for a sustained increase in happiness. Emmons (2008) says he was surprised to find that many participants with neuromuscular disease continue to keep a gratitude journal long after the end of one of his studies (Emmons and McCullough, 2003).

12) Research on ways to increase lasting happiness also finds points of support in studies on the differences between happy people and very happy people. What differentiates very happy people and happy people? Diener and Seligman (2002) studied 222 students. The authors compared the 10% of students who said they are the happiest with the less happy students and with average. It emerged from their study that students who are very happy are very outgoing, have strong ties, including a strong love relationship, are more extroverted, and more agreeable. Very happy people occasionally experience negative emotions. Another study (Otake, Shimai, Tanaka-Matsumi, Otsuya, and Fredrickson, 2006) emphasizes the role of kindness especially.

13) Should we however still be happier? First, happiness has limits. It is not possible for a person to constantly increase his or her happiness as steadily as he or she can accumulate material wealth. Fredrickson and Losada (2005) show that positivity ratio of over 11 positive emotions to 1 negative emotion may be related to a decrease of generativity and resilience. In other words, too many positive emotions can disconnect people from reality.

14) Second, various studies show that greatest happiness cannot be the best choice. If happiness fosters success (Lyubomirsky, King, Diener, 2005), the greatest happiness may not favor greatest achievement. Oishi, Diener, and Lucas (2007) showed that the happiest people do not always succeed better than others. People who are little less happy achieve more success in terms of income, education, and political participation. No causal link has been established though for this fact. However, we can imagine that a happy person can sacrifice a little happiness to achieve other goals.

15) Third, cultural psychology research shows that happiness is less desired in collective cultures than it is in individualistic culture like the Western culture (Suh and Koo, 2008).

16) Fourth, we must avoid happiness from becoming a tyranny in our lives (Bruckner, 2002).

IS IT RELEVANT TO USE OF OBJECTIVE MEASURES FOR MEASURING HAPPINESS?

17) As economists, psychologists measure. The distinguishing aspect is that the psychologists widely use subjective measures, while economists mostly use objective measures. But happiness and its components can be measured subjectively. There are different methods to measure happiness. The most widely used in studies is that of self-reports; the Day Reconstruction Method (DRM) (Kahneman et al., 2004) and the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) (Larson and Csikszentmihalyi, 1983) are two other methods. The U-Index is unique in that it does not measure happiness, but the fraction of time that a person is in a unpleasant state daily (Kahneman and Krueger, 2006).

18) The subjective measures are influenced by biases, contextual influences, and response styles (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964, Schwarz and Clore 1983, Schwarz and Strack, 1999; Green, Goldman and Salovey, 1993). Informant reports, neurobiological measures (Davidson et al., 1990, Tomarken et al., 1992) or, more generally, physiological measures (Dinan, 1994) may give clues to happiness. Non verbal measures are also used (Harker and Keltner, 2001).

19) Studies show the validity of subjective measures. Thus, the individual self-report was confirmed by informants report by spouses (Costa and McCrae, 1988), family members and friends (Sandvik, Diener and Seidlitz, 1993), and peers (Watson and Clark, 1991). Joiner et al . (2005) showed that self-reports could be more accurate than estimates of experts. Children self-rated their anxiety level. The anxiety level of these children was also assessed by clinicians. The scores of self-reporting children were found to be much better predictors of their neuroendocrinian profiles.

20) The value of DRM is that it minimizes memory biases and is less intrusive in the daily activities than the ESM. However, neither the ESM nor the DRM can measure the dynamics of happiness. The moments are not necessarily independent. The most extreme dynamic is that unhappy moments can lead to happy moments, and vice versa. In the first case, post-traumatic growth provides an example: a trauma may be followed by a cognitive elaboration that leads to personal development. Trauma are always unpleasant, can last longer, and can even lead to the development of psychiatric disorders. At the same time, the cognitive elaboration that follows trauma may not lead to unhappiness and even can result in a personal development that makes a person more happy than before (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2004; Joseph and Linley, 2006).

21) It is preferable to use various measures to measure happiness (Diener, 2008). Different measures may lead to different results (e.g. Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz and Stone, 2006). Rather than being a problem, this divergence can be a source of information (Diener, 2008; Kim-Prieto et al. 2005).

22) Do objective measures of happiness exist? There is no neurobiological measure of happiness, but only correlates are available (Lucas, 2008). Neurobiological measures determine different aspect of neurobiological phenomena, and their relationship to happiness is established through the use of subjective data. Moreover, even if such measures existed, they have one important limitation: the value of subjective measures is that they measure happiness at its level of meaning or consciousness, because it is not reducible to another level (Peterson, 2006). However, it is interesting to use these tools to obtain additional information.

23) Among the various theories of happiness, an approach has emerged known as objective list theory. This approach is based on the idea that happiness can be described by a list of objective criteria. These may be health, material comfort, education, fun, friendship, love, etc. (Nussbaum 1992, Sen 1985). The problem with objective list theories is that they do not provide much information about happiness. If a person has a safe and well-paid work, is married to a loving companion, has two children who have good marks in school, a dog, a home, does not suffer from physical or psychological illness, and has friends, then there is probably an objective list theory that says she or he is happy because she or he is fulfilling the criteria prescribed in the list. In reality, we may not be aware if the person is happy because anytime the question whether the person is happy could have been asked to that person. Perhaps a person fulfilling the objective list criteria finds no meaning in his life and she or he suffers, and perhaps she or he cannot develop sufficiently deep relationships or she or he waits for too close relationships.

24) Some objective measures may, however, be useful in measuring happiness. At the person level, happiness is expressed in two dimensions: the first is at what point a person is happy in the present moment and the second is that the longer a happy life lasts, the greater overall happiness he experiences. In other words, the duration of the happy life is important and the duration of happy life depends on the duration of life itself (Gaucher, 2009). Here the objective measures can be fully legitimate. If it can be difficult in later life to know whether the time that the medical support may still grant is worth being lived - this is the question posed by euthanasia - the increase of the duration of life and the continuation of a good quality of life in old age allows us to live happily longer and therefore to live a more important overall happiness.

25) The increase of life expectancy has been considerable in the twentieth century. This increase is due to advances in social and economic conditions, in the general hygiene of people and in medicine. In European countries and the United States, initially the socio economic and hygienic advances were more important than medicine for enhanced life expectancy; then the medical advances became important for longer life (Caselli, Mesle, and Vallin, 1999; Cutler and Meara, 2001). Today research on the intrinsic mechanisms of aging and their genetic determination is emerging (Forette, 1997). With the increase of the life expectancy should be added the increase in life expectancy in good health, that is, without limitation of activity or without major disability. It should be noted that subjective health correlates more to happiness than objective health (Okun et al., 1984). The introduction of life expectancy and life expectancy in good health can legitimately introduce objective criteria and demand for social justice in measuring happiness.

26) Life expectancy depends not only on objective factors, but it can be influenced by subjective factors. Probably, the most famous on happiness is the study of nuns (Danner, Snowdon, and Friesen, 2001). This study shows a correlation between positive emotions expressed in the autobiographical letters of aspiring nuns and their mortality and survival data. The 25% of the nuns who expressed more positive emotions lived on average 10.7 years longer than those expressing fewer positive emotions. It is only a correlation. Pressman and Cohen (2005) conducted a longitudinal study showing that happier people live longer.

27) Trying to measure happiness on a aggregate level, for public policy, poses additional constraints. Frey and Stutzer (2009) present two problems. The first is that the aggregate measure of happiness may be used by governments, political parties, and interest groups for manipulation, as in the case of GNP. The second is that respondents, the citizens, choose their

responses to influence public decisions in the direction they want. I would add another argument, that of the comparison. Explaining that one country or another is happier may be an incentive to re-evaluate our answers in the next survey.

28) These arguments suggest that the relationship between happiness and happiness economics and between happiness and public policy continue to be studied, without the development of official aggregate measures. The researchers did not need to develop aggregate measures for their research on institutions and policies that promote the happiness of citizens. However, it should be noted that in the perspective of positive psychology, confidence in respondents is valued (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In addition, trust is one of the political foundations for happiness (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Finally, the development of an aggregate measure of happiness, even imperfect and manipulative, is a strong signal to societies to shift to less material, less extrinsic goals over intrinsic goals. These goals are more related to happiness (Kasser, 2004).

29) There is no need to be able to perfectly measure to act. If reflection serves action, action serves reflection. This is an idea we found in positive psychology (Peterson, 2006).

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF HAPPINESS ECONOMICS ?

30) First, a framework has to be set : happiness is a private matter. It expresses itself at the level of the consciousness of the persons (Peterson, 2006) and requires a certain freedom to express itself better (André, 2006). These private matter can be favored collectively.

31) A first approach might be to move from the search for maximizing material wealth to the search for maximizing collective happiness. From this perspective, it is relevant to point out that the increase of collective happiness does not come at the expense of individual happiness already acquired. Rather than talking about maximization, it is probably preferable to speak of improvement in happiness (Gaucher, 2009). The search for optimum is certainly a traditional economic reasoning, and positive psychologists speak certainly of the optimal functioning of a person. But it seems that the search for satisfaction rather than maximization is often a much better way of thinking when the we want to be happy or happier (Schwartz, 2004). In addition, maximization also means denial of freedom, since there is consequently only one path that leads to maximization. Yet happiness depends on a certain freedom (André, 2006, Schwartz and Ward, 2004) and the acceptance that everything is not perfect (André, 2006). It would therefore be a paradox: to maximize happiness, we may avoid searching for ways aimed at maximizing happiness.

32) A second approach would be to try to guarantee a minimum level of happiness to everyone. Therefore appropriate policy interventions can be proposed for the persons who are less happy. As happiness depends on the sincerity of the answers people give in the survey, there may be an incentive to lie. So thinking of happiness in groups rather happiness of a person is maybe more appropriate.

33) A third approach would be to recognize what are the major economic destroyers of happiness, and to establish public policies and institutional changes so that these destroyers are neutralized. It would also be relevant to recognize what are the major economic creators of happiness, then to establish public policy or institutional changes so that these major

economic creators of happiness are promoted. This approach can be extended to other fields as well rather than only restricting it to economics (Gaucher, 2009).

34) We have seen that defining happiness as subjective well-being has three dimensions: negative affects (NA), which has to decrease; and positive affects and satisfaction, both of which have to increase. There is an asymmetry between positive affects and negative affects: we experience generally more PA (Diener & Diener, 1996), but NA have the greater power. It seems that the NA system is indeed more reactive than the PA system (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer and Vohs, 2001; Larsen, 2002). Studies were conducted to determine how NA is stronger than PA (Gottman, 1994; Schwartz et al., 2002; Larsen, 2002; Frederickson and Losada, 2005). According to studies, NA is 2.3 to 5.1 stronger than PA. As negative affects have on average a stronger negative impact on happiness than positive affects having a positive impact, the political neutralization of the major economic destroyer of happiness would be a priority over policy of encouraging major economic creators of happiness.

35) The fact that positive affects have on average less impact than negative affects does not mean that positive affects should not be taken into account when framing public policies. Apart from their essential participation in happiness, positive emotions has an major evolutionary role in sociability (Nesse, 1990). They also broaden the range of our thoughts and actions, and thus allow us to build durable personal resources (Fredrickson, 1998). Public policy and institutional changes aimed at developing positive emotions should also be encouraged.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ECONOMIC DESTROYERS OF HAPPINESS?

36) Some economic phenomena are more destructive of happiness than others. Highlighting the major economic destroyers can be prioritized in public interventions and institutional changes.

37) Unemployment is a major economic destroyer of happiness. Cross-sectional studies show that the unemployed are significantly less happy than employed people (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg and Kinicki, 2005). Longitudinal studies show the causal effect of unemployment on the loss of happiness (Cobb and Kasl, 1977 ; Dooley, Catalano, and Wilson, 1994). The effects of unemployment can be devastating. Clark et al. (1996) showed that the negative effects of job loss on mental health, measured by the General Health Questionnaire that aims to detect non-psychotic disorders, are higher than those of divorce. The happiness of families of the unemployed are also affected (Jackson and Walsh, 1997; Westman, Etzion and Horovitz, 2004). Finally, if the reemployment increases happiness again, it did not return on average to its pre-unemployment level (Lucas, Clark, Georgellis and Diener, 2004).

38) Unemployment is a necessity in a market economy because of the closure and the creation of firms and because of the reduction in and the generation of jobs within the same enterprise (Cahuc and Zylberberg, 2004). Full employment is not a plausible target for market economies (Mankiw, 2003). Unemployment is necessary to increase productivity and therefore wealth, and also to adapt to new patterns of consumption. From a psychological and static points of view, loss of employment is less hard when unemployment is high and when

the firm or the region is strongly affected (Warr, 1984; Turner, 1995; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). At the same time, from a dynamic point of view, finding a job is easier when unemployment is low. However, various studies show that the first effect outweighs the second (Clark and Oswald, 1994; Eggers, Gaddy and Graham, 2006).

39) The unemployed are more often victims of an excluding economic functioning. How to neutralize the loss of happiness of the unemployed? The financial compensation, even total, can only partially compensate for the loss of happiness. Clark (1998) shows that in Britain, the financial loss due to unemployment explains less than 25% of the negative effects of unemployment measured by the GHQ. In losing his job, an unemployed person does not lose only income. Work has hidden benefits: time structuration, social relations, friendly relationship, association with larger goals, status, social identity, and activity (Jahoda, 1982; Warr, 1984).

40) The unemployed have more free time than workers, but they do not use it for good activities (Feather and Bond, 1983). Fryer and Payne (1984) showed that the unemployed could be happier than they were when they had a job, by providing services in a community center where they could use their skills and be useful. The National Center for Volunteering in London has shown the benefits of volunteering and learning new skills on the happiness of the unemployed and their confidence in themselves (Gay, 1998). Pearce (1993) has even shown that volunteer workers could be happier than the paid workers doing the same work.

41) The lower happiness of the unemployed is pressure to find a job. If public policies that neutralize the loss of happiness of the unemployed were put in place, this pressure would disappear. The issue of happiness in firms is consequently a question that deserves attention of governments and happiness economists. At what point is a worker happy during his work hours is part of economic analysis in the perspective of happiness economics (Gaucher, 2009).

42) Unemployment is not the only major economic destroyer of happiness. Diener and Biswas-Diener (2005) collected data on the reported happiness of different groups of people. The results are presented in an ascending order: homeless in California, 2.8; homeless in Calcutta, 3.2; slum dwellers of Calcutta, 4.4; students of the University of Illinois, 4.7; Amish of Pennsylvania, 5.1; Traditional Maasai, 5.4; richest Americans by *Forbes* magazine, 5.8. No causal link can be established, but a direction for research concerning the major economic destroyers of happiness is given. People who have no homes are the most unhappy. Biswas-Diener and Diener (2006) conducted a study on the happiness of the homeless. If the most interesting results relate to the intangible in two samples of homeless Americans, satisfaction with one's own housing is a strong predictor of life satisfaction. For the Indian sample, it is the income satisfaction. Given also the reduced life expectancy of the homeless (e.g. Cheung and Hwang, 2004), we may also conclude that not having a home to live is a major economic destroyer of happiness.

43) If being homeless is a major economic destroyer of happiness, then housing for everyone is a real priority in the framing of public policy. Where space is limited in relation to demand, limiting the size of the area occupied by a household in accordance of the number of persons in the household and the population density of the space under study could be considered.

44) Are poverty and income inequality major economic destroyers of happiness? People living in rich countries are often happier than those living in poor countries (Diener et al.

1995; Graham, 2005), although the income difference is not the only possible explanation (Frey and Stutzer, 2002). Within a country, rich people are often happier (Diener, Nickerson, Lucas and Sandvik, 2002). These results were obtained using self-reports. Kahneman et al. (2006) compared the results obtained using self-reports and those obtained using the DRM. It appeared that the richest people reported as being happier, but the DRM did not confirm the self-reported finding, because richer people also spent more time at work, which is considered to be the time lived as less happy than free time. So there was a difference between what was lived on time and how it was lived after.

45) Furthermore, the context in which a person lives influences his happiness (Diener, 2008). The study by Diener and Biswas-Diener cited above shows that the Maasai, who live in traditional ways, and the Amish, who follow their religious precepts, may live away from the consumer society and be very happy. Studies have been conducted on the relationship between voluntary simplicity and happiness (Jacob and Brinkerhoff, 1999, Brown and Kasser, 2005). In the first study, no correlation between income and life satisfaction was found, suggesting that mediating factors such as living a mindful lifestyle may account for psychological quality of life. In the second study, participants living in voluntary simplicity reported much higher levels of satisfaction and more positive emotions than others. In fact, poverty did not appear to be a problem when humans are in a position of control. Lack of materialism may even be good for happiness.

46) In terms of income inequality, there is no absolute rule. Thus, there are great differences between Europe and the United States (Alesina, Di Tella and MacCulloch, 2004; Alesina and Glaeser, 2004). In Europe, income inequality influences the happiness of the poor negatively but does not play a part in the happiness of the rich. In the United States, income inequality does not contribute to the happiness of the poor. In Latin America, which is the region where income inequality is greatest, it has a negative impact on happiness. Specifically, such an inequality would have a negative influence on the happiness of the poorest and a positive impact on that of the richest (Graham and Felton, 2009). The mechanisms explaining the relationship between happiness and inequality are manifold (Senik, 2009).

47) The studies cited on the relationship between poverty or income inequality and happiness used subjective measures of happiness. We have seen that life expectancy can be regarded as a dimension of the measure of happiness and that life expectancy depend on objective factors. However, poverty and income inequality have an influence on life expectancy. The poor are less healthy (Blaxter, 1990; Lachman and Weaver, 1998). A lower inequality improves the health and income, which increases happiness (Helliwell, 2003). However, we must not attribute poor health condition to the financial factor alone. There are worse behaviors that may be more prevalent among the poorer classes (Argyle, 1994).

48) The list of major economic destroyers of happiness is not exhaustive. For example, when economists are concerned about stress, the problem is analyzed in terms of economic cost. However, from the perspective of happiness economics, the reference is not the economic cost, but the cost in terms of happiness, which is in the viewpoint of psychology (Gaucher, 2009). Another example is that people engaged in a job that is held in low esteem, and even stigmatized by the society, such as employment in the funeral services, prison guards, bailiffs, or sex workers, have a greater risk of being less happy (Arnold and Barling, 2003).

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ECONOMIC CREATORS OF HAPPINESS?

49) Positive affects and satisfaction are two of the three dimensions of happiness defined as subjective well-being. An economy centered on happiness must consider ways for the economical functioning that promotes positive affects and satisfaction, although negative affects are more powerful than positive affects. Some economic phenomena create more happiness than others. Highlighting the major economic creators of happiness provides a framework for prioritizing public interventions and institutional changes.

50) What are the major economic creators of happiness? The question of relationship between income or growth on one hand and happiness on the other, is debatable. Stevenson and Wolfers (2007) show that the absolute increase in income and economic growth contribute to happiness. Other studies show that happiness is linked to increase in income when income is low. When income reaches a threshold, which varies in different studies, the bond becomes weaker (Diener, Nickerson, Lucas, Sandvik, 2002; Frey and Stutzer, 2002). The degrowth thinkers point out that we live in a finite world, that the model of endless growth is false, and that for the sake of social justice, it would be good if the richest countries stop their development in favor of the emerging countries so that an equality of development is reached. The degrowth thinkers associate degrowth and happiness. Viveret (2009) speaks of "happy sobriety." Studies on materialism (Kasser, 2003) and the relationship between happiness and voluntary simplicity (Brown and Kasser, 2005) show that this relationship also exists.

51) If we take life expectancy as a second dimension of the measure of happiness, then we question the relationship between income or economic growth and life expectancy. In poor countries, malnutrition and access to medicine are related to inadequate income: economic growth is necessary. In rich countries, growing life expectancy is linked to advances in science and more appropriate behaviors (Caselli, Vallin, and Mesle, 1999), but income inequality also has an influence (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2006).

52) The question of the relationship between income or growth and happiness can be asked differently. Is economic growth the best strategy to improve happiness? Is there no better strategy than economic growth alone? How much can economic growth participate in a broader strategy to increase happiness? What kind of economic growth? (Gaucher, 2009)

53) Overall, the working time has fallen sharply over the past two centuries. The work week in the period 1830s to 1980s decreased from 72 hours to less than 38 hours (Gershuny, 1992). The increased productivity has not only been used to raise income, but also to greatly reduce the working time. Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, and Stone (2006) showed that if people with higher incomes reported higher happiness when they were asked to rate their happiness, they were not happier than others when their happiness was calculated from their statement on the time spent in their various activities of daily living and their evaluation in terms of satisfaction with these activities. Earning more but working longer, they had less free time. Yet that free time is seen as bringing more happiness than the working time.

54) In fact, economic factors do not play an essential role in happiness. Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade (2005) consider that happiness depends, on average, 50% on the genetic influence, 40% on the volitional activity, and only 10% on circumstances. Among the

circumstances, income is also included. Unemployment is not listed as such but might be considered as an event of life by the authors of the article. Research in psychology of happiness has shown that happiness has many other determinants apart from economic determinants (Argyle, 1999), although non economic determinants of happiness can have an economic dimension (Gaucher, 2009). For example, Willmott (1987) has shown that the number of friends increases with owning a car.

55) In the perspective of happiness economics, the economy provides support to a society focused on happiness and not on the maximization of wealth. This support involves giving the economy less importance and more focus on happiness. In addition to the neutralization of the negative economic effects on happiness, economics should be focused on the inside functioning of the practices in economics that make people very happy outside: promote the achievement of self-concordant goals, do good, develop gratitude, sociability, positive life events, flow, and meaningfulness in life. As such, the social economy seems more relevant than economy based on firms that aim for profit maximization.

56) Economists give a prominent role for financial incentives. In the context of public policy, such incentives may take the form of taxation. One can imagine a tax system that promotes goods and services, which in turn contribute to happiness. One can imagine a tax system that favors companies that contribute to the happiness of employees. Stress, job insecurity, occupational diseases, and satisfaction surveys may be used to assess the quality of a firm. This is not to create distortion effects, but correction effects so that the economy would not be any longer oriented toward the maximization of wealth or profit, but toward the improvement of happiness.

BEYOND HAPPINESS ECONOMICS

57) Public policy and institutional change should not focus solely on economic aspects. Other areas are very important in pro-happiness policy: especially school system, mental health, political institutions, and justice. Thinking of economics from the psychology of happiness perspective is one dimension of a broader approach.

58) From a developmental standpoint, the policies oriented toward childhood and adolescence are of primary importance. Changes in school systems may be beneficial to enable happiness of children and adolescents and their future happiness (Noddings, 2003; Baylis, 2004; Gaucher, 2009, forthcoming; Gilman, Scott Huebner, Furlong, 2009). The psychology of happiness and generally positive psychology can be taught. The school environment can be redesigned to promote the happiness of children: new goals and programs, attention to the satisfaction of children and adolescents, their emotional regulation, development of strengths of character, empathy and pro-social behavior, self-esteem, optimism, hope, gratitude, self-discipline, flow and commitment, the search for mastery rather than performance, positive relationships with others, and so on.

59) WHO (1946) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Positive psychology fits rather well in the definition of WHO. Indeed, in the perspective of positive psychology, mental health is not confined to the absence of mental illness. It is also characterized by flourishing (Keyes and Lopez, 2005). From the point of view of practitioners of mental health, it is important to

integrate the flourishing of clients as a major goal of their practice. From a public policy perspective, it is to ensure easy access, say cheap or free, to practitioners of mental health. It is also necessary to encourage short therapies when they are more efficient, because mental health needs of well-trained persons and productivity gains are not obvious. Supporting research to make these productivity gains through the development of effective and short practices is also useful (Gaucher, 2009). Schools can achieve savings through the dissemination of scientific knowledge on happiness.

60) Political institutions can influence the happiness of citizens. Democracy promotes the happiness of citizens (Frey and Stutzer, 2002 Inglehart, 2009), although there are counter-examples such as former communist countries, where the advent of liberal democracy has been accompanied by an economic collapse. However, it seems that the strongest causal relationship is inverse: happiness promotes more democracy compared to democracy promoting happiness (Inglehart, 2009). These results are obtained by rating the political regimes, the most important indicators being those of Freedom House and Polity IV (Duc and Lavalley, 2004). Yet, the question of the political foundations of happiness is probably more relevant from a historical perspective. The definition of democracy has indeed changed over time. Democracy has been long an unloved political regime, even during the Enlightenment, where the French philosophers prefer the English parliamentary monarchy, and it took until the 19th century and Alexis de Tocqueville to change that perspective. The criteria used to measure the democratic level of countries freeze the definition of democracy and are a negation of democracy as a historical process. In addition, without respect for minorities, whatever their nature, democracy is a dictatorship of the majority (Gaucher, 2009). A political system that promotes happiness is a regime that promotes the political foundations of happiness. For Inglehart and Welzel (2005), these foundations are trust, tolerance and self-expression.

61) Restorative justice is a form of justice that may be more relevant than the criminal justice from the perspective of a society focused on happiness, because it focuses on the needs of the victim and the culprit's responsibility to repair wounds. In restorative justice, if victim agrees, she or he meets the culprit in the presence of a facilitator. Others, such as parents and friends of the victim and the offender, may be present. One goal is that the offender becomes aware of the harm caused and tries as much as possible to remedy it. The results of restorative justice are positive, especially for victims (Sherman and Strang, 2007).

62) The various policies discussed earlier take into account the first dimension of happiness, the self-reported happiness. Public policy must also take into account the second dimension of happiness: the duration of life. Given that the overall happiness experienced in life depends on the duration of the happy life, increasing life expectancy and reducing inequalities in this area are major goals of public policy. These goals relate to health policy and more generally any policy that can influence the determinants of longevity, such as policies related to socio-economic conditions and research.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITS OF HAPPINESS ECONOMICS AS AN ECONOMIC APPROACH ?

63) Fukuyama (1992) considered that the history ends with the end of the Cold War and the victory of liberal democracy. Is happiness economics the end of economics? What may be the limits of an economic approach focused on happiness?

64) Happiness is not a solution to everything. We have seen that too many positive emotions over negative emotions can disconnect a person from reality (Fredrickson and Losada, 2005). Studies on the effects of happiness in many different contexts are necessary to know well the consequences of happiness (Aspinwall, 2005). Thus, Denmark, presented in the study of White (2007) as the happiest country in the world is governed by the time I write by a coalition including a far right party. The second happiest country in the world in the same study was Switzerland, which, at the end of 2009, during a voting, has just decided democratically to ban construction of minarets. These two facts do not have the same political significance, but open up similar questions. For example, can happiness lead to withdrawal? And if so, under what conditions? Do happy people fear the unhappiness of others?

65) The psychology of happiness can be considered as part of a larger set, positive psychology. In view of positive psychology, happiness is certainly an essential positive subjective state, but this is not the only positive subjective state. In addition, positive psychology is not only interested in positive subjective states. Positive traits and positive institutions are two other dimensions of positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Economics may be reconsidered in the broader context of positive psychology, which I will discuss in another paper. (Gaucher, forthcoming).

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Happiness can often be free. In the psychology of happiness, studies have shown that expressing gratitude temporarily increases happiness (Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). I therefore express my gratitude by dedicating this article to two Professors of Economics, Professor Dominique Lacoue-Labarthe, University of Bordeaux 4, who advised me to write an article in English, and Professor Dimitri Uzunidis, University of Dunkirk, who allowed me to publish my first book in economics. Thus, I increase my happiness temporarily... without costing me a cent of euro! If we want to increase lastingly happiness through gratitude, we must express gratitude regularly (Emmons, 2008).

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