

ФИЛОСОФИЯ

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<https://doi.org/10.47526/3007-8598-2026.1-40>GULZIRA SHADINOVA^{1*} , NURIYA MURATBAEVA² 

^{1*} *Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Acting Associate Professor
(Kazakhstan, Turkestan), e-mail: gulzira.shadinova@ayu.edu.kz*

² *Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University, Student, (Kazakhstan, Turkestan),
e-mail: nuriyamuratbaeva@gmail.com*

**HAPPINESS AS A PHILOSOPHICAL CATEGORY: HISTORICAL FORMS AND
CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS**

Abstract. The article presents a philosophical analysis of the phenomenon of happiness as a key category for understanding the human being and their lifeworld. It examines the evolution of conceptions of happiness from antiquity to contemporary interdisciplinary approaches, in which happiness acquires a multidimensional character. In ancient philosophy, happiness was understood as eudaimonia, associated with virtue, a rational way of life, and harmony of the soul; in the medieval tradition, as spiritual bliss and closeness to God; and in modern philosophy, as personal autonomy and the pursuit of individual well-being. Hedonistic, Stoic, utilitarian, existential, and humanistic interpretations of happiness are discussed, along with their influence on contemporary notions of subjective well-being and self-actualization. Particular attention is given to the ethical and axiological foundations of happiness, its connection with the meaning of life, values, and human essence. The views of classical and modern thinkers, including Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, S. Freud, A. Maslow, V. Frankl, and W. Tatarkiewicz, are analyzed, making it possible to identify universal and culturally conditioned aspects of the understanding of happiness. It is concluded that contemporary philosophical interpretations of happiness view it not as static pleasure, but as a dynamic process of inner integrity, spiritual harmony, moral self-determination, and personal self-realization within the context of a meaningful existence.

Keywords: happiness, philosophy, axiology, ethics, existence, hedonism, meaning of life.

Гульзира Шадинова¹, Нурия Муратбаева²

¹ *Қожа Ахмет Ясауи атындағы Халықаралық қазақ-түрік университеті, философия
ғылымдарының кандидаты, доцент м.а., (Қазақстан, Түркістан),
e-mail: gulzira.shadinova@ayu.edu.kz*

² *Қожа Ахмет Ясауи атындағы Халықаралық қазақ-түрік университеті, студент, (Қазақстан,
Түркістан), e-mail: nuriyamuratbaeva@gmail.com*

**Бақыт философиялық категория ретінде: тарихи формалары және қазіргі
интерпретациялары**

Аңдатпа. Мәтінде бақыт феноменіне адамды және оның өмірлік әлемін ұғынудың негізгі категориясы ретінде философиялық талдау жасалады. Бақыт туралы түсініктердің антикалық дәуірден бастап қазіргі заманғы пәнаралық тұжырымдамаларға дейінгі

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эволюциясы қарастырылады, бұл тұжырымдамаларда бақыт көпөлшемді сипатқа ие болады. Антикалық философияда бақыт ізгілікке, парасатты өмірге және жан үйлесіміне байланысты эвдемония ретінде түсіндірілсе, ортағасырлық дәстүрде ол рухани рахат пен Құдайға жақындау ретінде ұғынылды; ал Жаңа дәуір философиясында тұлғаның автономиясы мен жеке игілікке ұмтылуы ретінде қарастырылды. Бақыттың гедонистік, стоиктік, утилитаристік, экзистенциалдық және гуманистік интерпретациялары, сондай-ақ олардың субъективті әл-ауқат пен өзін-өзі жүзеге асыру туралы қазіргі көзқарастарға ықпалы талқыланады. Бақыттың этикалық және аксиологиялық негіздеріне, оның өмір мәнімен, құндылықтармен және адам мәнімен байланысына ерекше назар аударылады. Аристотель, Эпикур, стоиктер, З. Фрейд, А. Маслоу, В. Франкл және В. Татаркевич сияқты классикалық және заманауи ойшылдардың көзқарастары талданады, бұл бақытты түсінудің әмбебап және мәдени тұрғыдан шартталған қырларын айқындауға мүмкіндік береді. Қорытындыда қазіргі философиялық түсінікте бақыт статикалық ләззат ретінде емес, мағыналы өмір сүру контекстінде тұлғаның ішкі тұтастығының, рухани үйлесімінің, адамгершілік өзін-өзі айқындауының және өзін-өзі жүзеге асыруының динамикалық үдерісі ретінде қарастырылатыны тұжырымдалады.

Кілт сөздер: бақыт, философия, аксиология, этика, экзистенция, гедонизм, өмір мәні.

Гульзира Шадинова¹, Нурия Муратбаева²

¹*Международный казахско-турецкий университет имени Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, кандидат философских наук, и.о. доцент, (Казахстан, Туркестан), e-mail: gulzira.shadinova@ayu.edu.kz*

²*Международный казахско-турецкий университет имени Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, студент, (Казахстан, Туркестан), e-mail: nuriyamuratbaeva@gmail.com*

Счастье как философская категория: исторические формы и современные интерпретации

Аннотация. В статье представлен философский анализ феномена счастья как ключевой категории осмысления человека и его жизненного мира. Рассматривается эволюция представлений о счастье от античности до современных междисциплинарных концепций, в которых оно приобретает многомерный характер. В античной философии счастье понималось как эвдемония, связанная с добродетелью, разумной жизнью и гармонией души; в средневековой традиции - как духовное блаженство и приближение к Богу; в философии Нового времени - как автономия личности и стремление к индивидуальному благу. Обсуждаются гедонистические, стоические, утилитаристские, экзистенциальные и гуманистические интерпретации счастья и их влияние на современные представления о субъективном благополучии и самоактуализации. Особое внимание уделено этическим и аксиологическим основаниям счастья, его связи с смыслом жизни, ценностями и сущностью человека. Проанализированы взгляды классических и современных мыслителей, включая Аристотеля, Эпикура, стоиков, З. Фрейда, А. Маслоу, В. Франкла и В. Татаркевича, что позволяет выявить универсальные и культурно обусловленные аспекты понимания счастья. Сделан вывод, что современное философское понимание счастья рассматривает его не как статичное удовольствие, а как динамический процесс внутренней целостности, духовной гармонии, нравственного самоопределения и самореализации личности в контексте осмысленного существования.

Ключевые слова: счастье, философия, аксиология, этика, экзистенция, гедонизм, смысл жизни.

Gulzira SHADINOVA¹, Nuriya MURATBAEVA²

¹*Hoca Ahmet Yesevi Uluslararası Kazak-Türk Üniversitesi, Yrd. Doç. Dr. (Kazakistan, Türkistan),
e-posta: gulzira.shadinova@ayu.edu.kz*

²*Hoca Ahmet Yesevi Uluslararası Kazak-Türk Üniversitesi, Öğrenci, (Kazakistan, Türkistan),
e-posta: nuriyamuratbaeva@gmail.com*

Mutluluk Bir Felsefi Kategori Olarak: Tarihsel Biçimler ve Güncel Yorumlar

Özet. Makalede, insan yaşamını ve varoluşunu anlamada temel bir kategori olarak mutluluk olgusu felsefi açıdan analiz edilmektedir. Makalede, mutluluk kavramlarının antik çağdan günümüzün disiplinlerarası çerçevelerine kadar olan evrimi incelenmekte ve bu süreçte kavramın çok boyutlu bir karakter kazandığı vurgulanmaktadır. Antik felsefede mutluluk, erdem, akılcı yaşam ve ruhun uyumu ile ilişkili olarak eudaimonia şeklinde anlaşılmıştır; ortaçağ geleneğinde manevi mutluluk ve Tanrı'ya yakınlık; modern felsefede kişisel özerklik ve bireysel iyilik arayışı olarak ele alınmıştır. Mutluluğun hedonist, stoacı, faydacı, varoluşçu ve hümanist yorumları ve bunların günümüzün öznel iyi oluş ve kendini gerçekleştirme anlayışına etkileri tartışılmaktadır. Mutluluğun etik ve aksiyolojik temellerine, yaşamın anlamı, değerler ve insanın özü ile ilişkisine özel önem verilmiştir. Aristoteles, Epikuros, Stoacılar, Z. Freud, A. Maslow, V. Frankl ve V. Tatarkevich gibi klasik ve modern düşünürlerin görüşleri analiz edilerek, mutluluğu anlamadaki evrensel ve kültürel olarak belirlenmiş boyutlar ortaya konmuştur. Sonuç olarak, günümüz felsefi söyleminde mutluluk, statik bir haz veya tatmin durumu olarak değil; içsel bütünlük, ruhsal uyum, ahlaki öz-belirleme ve anlamlı bir insan varoluşu bağlamında kişisel kendini gerçekleştirme süreci olarak anlaşılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: mutluluk, felsefe, aksiyoloji, etik, varoluş, hedonizm, yaşamın anlamı.

Introduction

Every person dreams of being happy in life. Human imagination is characterized by changeability. At every stage of life, a person wants to see themselves as happy. In other words, human dreams cover all periods and spheres of life. The dream of happiness constantly drives a person forward and is always present in their life. However, in real life there are many people who have never managed to realize their dreams. Realizing this, a person begins to feel unhappy.

The only reason a person finds themselves in this state is their inability to turn a dream into a goal. The fact is that a goal requires persistent effort. A goal is single, whereas a person may have many dreams. Once a person achieves the first goal, they can move on to the next, while a dream in itself never runs out. When a person works diligently and takes the first step toward fulfilling a dream, it becomes a goal. A dream that has become a goal leads a person to results.

In fact, a person's ability to attain happiness is largely determined by themselves, yet not everyone realizes this. One of the key problems that has accompanied both individuals and humanity throughout history is the search for the meaning of life. How should one live so that life is full? What does a person exist for? Such questions have concerned people in every era. Reflecting on and accepting them helps a person develop stable guidelines for behavior and activity, strengthens self-confidence, and contributes to building relationships that correspond to their life goals and values.

The outstanding French thinker and scholar Blaise Pascal noted: "Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed. The whole universe need not arm itself to crush him; a vapor, a drop of water is enough to kill him. But even if the universe were to crush him, man would still be nobler than that which kills him, because he knows that he dies and knows the advantage the universe has over him. The universe knows nothing of this" (Паскаль, 1995: 136-137). Unlike other living beings, a human is capable of reflecting on their own existence. An

individual's life and their attitude toward themselves as a conscious subject are revealed through an understanding of the meaning and purpose of their own being.

The problem of happiness has long occupied a central place in the philosophical understanding of the human being and the world. Since ancient times, thinkers have sought to determine what true happiness consists of, as well as its sources and the conditions for attaining it. In ancient philosophy, happiness was associated with virtue and harmony between reason and nature; for medieval thinkers, it was linked to spiritual perfection and closeness to God; in the modern era, the emphasis shifted toward personal autonomy and the pursuit of individual well-being. In contemporary philosophical discourse, the category of happiness has acquired a multidimensional meaning, encompassing ethical, existential, and socio-cultural aspects of human existence.

Ideas about happiness are the oldest element of the human worldview. From Plato to the present day, the category of happiness has been at the center of intense debates in ethics and politics. Every person has their own understanding of happiness: for some it is material well-being, for others the presence of meaning in life, and for still others it is a combination of many different factors - positive emotions, interpersonal communication, health, and so on. A person's whole life is a natural striving for happiness. Although happiness is often understood as the meaning of human life - that which a person pursues throughout their life - there is still no single definition of happiness. What, then, is happiness? If we can fairly clearly define what unhappiness is, it is much more difficult to define happiness. There is no doubt that each person understands happiness in their own way and seeks to achieve it in their own way (Argyle, 2001: 155).

Happiness is usually described as the highest degree of joy that arises when a strong desire is fulfilled, a deep sense of satisfaction from achieving a goal. Since people's desires and goals differ, happiness is understood differently. A person's ideas about happiness form part of the value-meaning system of their life and express their essential attitude toward the world. Happiness and well-being are among the fundamental human values studied by a special branch of philosophy - "axiology," the theory of values. Some scholars also identify an entire field known as "felicity studies", or the philosophy of happiness. According to dictionary definitions, happiness is a psychological state in which a person experiences inner satisfaction with the conditions of their existence, feels the fullness and meaningfulness of life, and the realization of their purpose.

Until now, the phenomenon of happiness has been studied by philosophy, ethics, and psychology. Happiness is the fruitful search for oneself, self-realization. The desire for love, often identified with happiness, is nothing more than the search for a person who would help us discover the best in ourselves. In this sense, there is no such thing as unhappy love. In Plato's understanding, love is an ascent from physiological attraction (sensory beauty) to the beauty of the soul and spirit - entelechy. Love is a striving toward the ideal.

From a philosophical perspective, happiness is the search for truth and the realization of one's creative potential. In the awareness of questions of happiness, the whole personality of a person is revealed: the emotional, volitional, and intellectual spheres.

How can the concept of "happiness" be defined from the point of view of philosophical thought? The understanding of happiness most often depends on how one resolves the question of human nature, the meaning and purpose of human existence, as well as on the historical era and culture. In the study of human happiness, three approaches are applied: the so-called "psychology of happiness," the "axiology of happiness," and the "sociology of happiness." The first of these approaches considers happiness as an experience, a personal characteristic of a "happy person." Incidentally, to this day in Western philosophy happiness is commonly regarded as a problem of scientific psychology.

Research methods

The object of the study is the phenomenon of happiness as a philosophical category reflecting the value-based and meaningful dimensions of human existence.

The subject of the study is the historical evolution of ideas about happiness and their modern interpretations within the context of ethical and axiological issues.

The research methods include historical-philosophical analysis, comparative-analytical, and hermeneutic methods. The historical-philosophical method makes it possible to trace the development of ideas about happiness from antiquity to the present; the comparative-analytical method is used to identify common and distinctive features of different concepts; the hermeneutic approach ensures the interpretation of the semantic aspects of the concept of happiness within the context of philosophical traditions.

Discussion and Results

From an axiological perspective, happiness is understood as “a value, the measure of good in a person’s life, and the ideal of the perfection of both the individual and existence as a whole.” The sociology of happiness considers happiness as a social good and examines the definition and significance of this philosophical category from a social standpoint. So-called “felicitarian” ideas have existed in all historical periods; they can be found in the philosophical views of nearly all thinkers from antiquity to the present day, from Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus to contemporary philosophers.

Turning to historically established concepts of happiness, it should be noted that the main approaches to its understanding were formed in ancient philosophy, while in subsequent historical epochs hedonism, Stoicism, and eudaimonism were further developed.

The hedonistic concept, formulated by Aristippus, regarded happiness not only as the avoidance of suffering but also as the maximal attainment of pleasure. It became the object of criticism in later theories, where pleasure was considered a “trap,” since a person is inclined to become its slave. Aristippus, the founder of hedonism, argued that the highest good consists in pleasure and joy, distinguishing between two states of the soul: one fragile and gentle, the other coarse and harsh. He believed that the path to happiness lies in maximizing pleasures and avoiding pain.

The Stoics (Epictetus, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius) believed that proper desires, self-restraint, and a person’s actions and conduct are the key to happiness; however, to achieve it, an individual must fully develop themselves regardless of external circumstances. Compared with hedonism, this was a step forward: here happiness is no longer linked to bodily pleasures but to personal development.

Eudaimonism, represented by Plato and Aristotle, regarded happiness as the highest good for human beings. Thus, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines happiness as follows: “Happiness as the goal of actions is clearly something complete, [full, final] and self-sufficient” (Аристотель, 2022: 62).

In his teaching, happiness appears as a perfected activity with intrinsic value. Modern researchers note that the understanding of happiness may be more complex: external goods can play a role not only as conditions but also as components of a flourishing life, which reflects the difficulty of defining the formula of eudaimonia throughout a person’s life (Symons & VanderWeele, 2024: 10). At the same time, contemporary studies also demonstrate the possibility of empirically examining virtues associated with well-being: McManus et al. developed and validated a scale for measuring the virtue of conscientiousness based on Aristotelian theory, showing that philosophical ideas about virtues and happiness can be observable and measurable within modern psychology (McManus et al., 2024: 21323).

In the Middle Ages, life guidelines were oriented toward the realization of Christian ideals and estate-based values. As a result, happiness came to be perceived as a phenomenon of life connected with faith, patience, compassion, and love. Thus, Augustine of Hippo believed that happiness arises from an inner transformation brought about by accepting the truths of the Christian religion. It is based on the rejection of egoism and on love for God and one’s neighbor.

Moreover, earthly happiness was regarded as lacking full value, since it was constantly compared with the promised heavenly happiness of the future.

Philosophers of the modern period made a decisive contribution to the formation of the Western understanding of happiness. The works of John Locke, the founder of the liberal tradition, are especially significant in understanding the individual and the main goals of human life. He argued that happiness is individual and that no one has the right to impose their own idea of it on another person. For Baruch Spinoza, happiness meant liberation from passions and from one's own ego, enabling a person to reveal their spiritual foundations.

Immanuel Kant sought to overcome the naturalistic view of the human being and emphasized the duality of human nature: as part of nature, a person is subject to its laws, but as a rational being they are free. Natural impulses determine egoism and the pursuit of well-being and happiness, whereas rational impulses compel a person to fulfill duty and thereby limit these aspirations. In the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, the idea of happiness was simpler: it restores natural human impulses and is expressed in self-realization and the defense of one's own egoistic interests. In the views of these thinkers, happiness always stems from human "nature," yet it is not limited to physical existence and includes a spiritual principle.

These limitations were largely lifted by the French materialists of the Enlightenment — Julien Offray de La Mettrie, Paul-Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach, and Claude Adrien Helvétius (at least in a "problematic" sense). They continued the hedonistic tradition, viewing the human being as a bodily creature subject to the laws of nature, yet they also advanced the idea that happiness combines the good of the individual with the good of society as a whole. In this direction, later Ludwig Feuerbach, reflecting in the spirit of Aristotle, considered the human striving for happiness as the fundamental principle of life. He also emphasized the moral and rational pursuit of happiness, which overcomes egoism and transforms into love for oneself. A person's understanding of their dependence on others contributes to their striving for personal happiness.

In the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard, love is defined as a feeling that originates in a person's inner world. Love cannot be fully conveyed through words and expression. Poetry can, to some extent, transmit love through metaphors, yet no other art conveys it as precisely as music. Poetry also uses the word as an intermediary. Moreover, love is emotion rather than description. It is instantaneous and exists beyond time. Love that is true, strong, and honest arises from the deepest depths of the human soul (Толегенов & Мухамедалы, 2025: 75).

In the 20th century, thinkers such as Erich Fromm and Viktor Frankl believed that happiness is achieved through the realization of a person's actions and their integration with one's personality. Essentially, they continued this line of thought, although they did not address the question of the dependence of human happiness on social conditions. In Eastern philosophy, a person was regarded as part of a whole, and the pursuit of opposing others or defending personal interests was perceived as a "disturbed" state of consciousness.

During the Soviet period, happiness was viewed from the perspective of the "work-centered" ideology: its source was considered to be socially useful activity. People united by the common idea of building communism envisioned a happy future and, most importantly, their place in it. Thus, in each historical era and across different civilizations, happiness was understood differently. At the same time, its dependence on the conditions of social life was emphasized. Undoubtedly, philosophical thought developed through the clarification and deepening of views on this aspect of human existence. Our time is no exception: new social realities compel us to rethink the humanistic understanding of happiness and the challenges on the path to achieving it.

If the meaning of life is linked solely to satisfying a person's natural needs, the pursuit of power, or, ultimately, activity subordinated to the fulfillment of these and other needs, human life loses its "higher" significance, since the meaning of any phenomenon implies something more elevated. This represents a step forward compared to hedonism: here, happiness is associated not with physical pleasure but with personal development.

According to this “reference point,” one’s understanding of life serves as a measure of its social significance. Therefore, sooner or later, a person whose life lacks social significance begins to feel the meaninglessness of their existence, its “uselessness.”

The result is often disappointment in life, which can sometimes lead to suicidal tendencies. John Stuart Mill once noted: “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied” (Mill, 2001: 55). At the same time, it is not wrong to assert that a person’s happiness depends on how they understand the meaning of life and how much their life is filled with that meaning.

The meaning of life is determined by the degree of development of a person’s system of needs. If a person has developed high spiritual needs, they become an individual who directs their activity toward the creative fulfillment of society’s needs. In this way, a person works together with others, creates a common good, and feels happy in accordance with the social significance of this creativity.

This idea underlies N. Bradburn’s theory of psychological well-being, where happiness is seen as a balance of positive and negative emotions. John Stuart Mill, in his work *Utilitarianism*, described happiness as the pursuit of pleasure and the absence of suffering (Mill, 2001: 70).

The founder of psychoanalysis, S. Freud (Фрейд, 1992: 67), emphasized that the leading role in a person’s mental life is the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of suffering. He also argued that civilization hinders a person from achieving happiness by forcing them to suppress instincts, give up desires, or postpone their fulfillment. Freud noted that “happiness” is a momentary satisfaction of desire rather than a permanent state.

The Polish philosopher and art historian W. Tatarkiewicz, studying the phenomenon of happiness, described it as a complex moral and psychological state that includes objective aspects (favorable life circumstances) and subjective ones (pleasant experiences). He does not view happiness as possession of material goods, but rather as a positive balance in life, where good outweighs evil. Tatarkiewicz emphasizes that happiness lies in the sense of life’s dynamism and the striving to achieve goals, rather than in a constant state of joy (Татаркевич, 1981: 253).

The French writer P. Bruckner considers the concept of happiness extremely vague and calls it “this most fragile feeling” (Bruckner, 2010: 6). In opposition to Tatarkiewicz, he argues that the dream of perfect happiness is unattainable, which is why we value coincidences and moments of pleasure more.

If a person finds it difficult to realize themselves in society, not everyone pursues happiness in the same way: while some are able to focus on a collective endeavor, others think more about life comfort and physical well-being.

The characteristics of modern society significantly influence interpersonal relationships, shaping the phenomenon of “personal happiness” connected to love, marriage, and family. However, for the first time in human history, family relationships have found themselves in a state of widespread crisis.

Let us begin with the phenomenon of sexual love as the foundation of marital and family relationships. As is well known, sexual love draws from two sources—natural and socio-psychological. The first manifests as physical attraction and serves the continuation of the species; the second lies in spiritual unity. Their combination transforms love into a holistic feeling, and it is in this quality that it becomes a force uniting all aspects of human experience—physical, emotional-psychological, and spiritual—elevating life above the mundane and allowing a person to experience a joyful, truly celebratory sense of existence.

However, in modern society, romantic relationships are closely intertwined with other aspects of human life. Previously, V. A. Tuev considered the understanding of happiness through the lens of life’s meaning, while E. Fromm wrote extensively about the formation of a particular anthropological type of person—a “market”-oriented personality (Тувев, 2009: 90). Today, this type of person largely dominates, resulting in the loss of integrity and the genuine phenomenon of

sexual love: the lofty feeling that was once one of the most important conditions of happiness is being displaced from life and often reduced merely to sexual relations.

This reality is reflected even in language: it is not uncommon to hear a young woman say, “We have a relationship,” which is in fact a euphemism referring only to an intimate connection, unburdened by deep love. Yet physical attraction fades quickly and may eventually disappear entirely. Often, there is nothing to replace it: a market-driven society spiritually impoverishes the individual, as “pure” material success, bodily comfort, culinary indulgences, fashionable items, and other “delights” of consumerism occupy the leading positions in their system of value priorities.

In this case, the suppression (pushing to the background) of such spiritual values as duty, nobility, courage, reason, erudition, creative abilities, talent, the romance of labor, and devotion to ideals becomes evident. The underdevelopment of the emotional and sensory sphere in modern young people, along with the impoverishment and weakening of their spiritual sensibilities, turns the surrounding world into a continuous gray reality, deprived of vivid colors, causing life to lose its appeal. In the absence of a striving for personal self-improvement, the spiritual potential of spouses, accumulated in youth, is quickly exhausted, and with it fades the light of love.

According to E. Fromm, “all his attempts for love are bound to fail, unless he [an individual] tries most actively to develop his total personality, so as to achieve a productive orientation; that satisfaction in individual love cannot be attained without the capacity to love one’s neighbor, without true humility, courage, faith and discipline.” (Fromm, 2000: 5).

It cannot be claimed that this is always the main reason for such losses, but for understanding life, this factor is of critical importance. The loss of life’s meaning at an early age is increasingly becoming a widespread phenomenon. Constant disappointment in life becomes a persistent backdrop to all experiences and often leads to suicidal decisions.

As a result, in modern society, instead of a shortage of material goods, a paradoxical situation of a “happiness deficit” arises, associated with the phenomenon of the “existential vacuum” (Fromm, 2013: 36). This leads to a misunderstanding or loss of the meaning of life. Contemporary society primarily directs people toward satisfying material and prestige-status needs. Consequently, the simplification of social priorities results in the standardization of needs, desires, tastes, and other aspects of life.

It is clear that such social conditions are unfavorable for the realization of an individual’s creative potential, solving life problems, and achieving happiness. All these false manifestations of happiness replace the processes of self-organization, self-discipline, and self-actualization.

For instance, Ray Bradbury’s dystopia *Fahrenheit 451* depicts a model of the future in which life is seen as the elimination of negative emotions, its simplification, and its filling with pleasures (Bradbury, 1953: 156). People strive for entertainment, indulgence, meaningless leisure, and ultimately for the simplification of their own life activity. Philosophy, history, literature, and other fields that cultivate human development are pushed out of life, distancing a person from their true human essence.

Today we have also embarked on the path of this “development.” According to social surveys, currently one-third of the adult population reads books a lot, while another third does not read at all. Unfortunately, the problem of reading goes beyond this. What matters is not only what a person reads, but also how they perceive what they have read.

E. Fromm noted that reading novels, for example, “can be read with inner participation, productively—that is, in the mode of being.” (Fromm, 2008: 29). This means that a person deeply analyzes what they read, compares it with the issues of the era in which the author lived, and forms their own conclusions on the questions raised in the book or related to them. Essentially, it is an act of co-creation between the author and the reader. Otherwise, a person is limited in acquiring new knowledge and in creative expressions of life, which does not contribute to achieving happiness, since life lived without creativity becomes meaningless, and the monotony of everyday existence tires and drives a person toward the world of entertainment.

According to I. I. Changli, “work, being a specifically human mode of existence, to some extent satisfies all higher human needs (in creativity, cognition, communication, self-improvement, etc.), generates the noblest movements of the human soul, and therefore serves as a source of human happiness” (Чангли, 1973: 527). E. Fromm emphasizes that “productiveness is the source of strength, freedom, and happiness” (Frankl, 1992: 139).

V. Frankl said about this: “Don’t aim at success - the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one’s dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one’s surrender to a person other than oneself.” (Frankl, 1992: 10).

American psychologist Abraham Maslow, who developed the model of the hierarchy of human needs, asserts that a person can achieve true happiness only by realizing themselves in life, which allows them to experience “peak experiences” - states of maximum joy and positive emotions. Here are the five main levels of Maslow’s pyramid:

1. Physiological needs – basic needs essential for survival: food, water, air, sleep. Without satisfying these, a person cannot move on to higher levels of needs, as these are fundamental for life.

2. Safety needs – include physical and emotional security, protection from threats. This can involve safe housing, financial stability, and health. Meeting these needs gives a person a sense of confidence and protection.

3. Social needs – the need for love, belonging, and social interaction. It is important for a person to feel part of a group, have close relationships, friends, and a supportive environment. Social connections contribute to emotional well-being.

4. Esteem needs (recognition) – the desire for self-respect, confidence, recognition, and respect from others. At this level, a person seeks to feel valued and respected, achieve success, and gain status in society.

5. Self-actualization needs – the highest level, where a person strives to realize their potential, achieve personal growth, and self-fulfillment. Here, they engage in creativity, self-expression, and pursue goals important to themselves rather than for the approval of others (Maslow, 1987: 20).

These levels of needs show how, as a person satisfies basic needs, they strive for higher ones, and how this affects their personal development.

The inability to experience positive emotions constantly is rooted in human nature: emotions come and go in stages. People cannot remain in the same state indefinitely; emotional states alternate. Negative “addicts” spend most of their time in negative emotions, whereas happy people, on the contrary, more often experience positive emotions.

The depth of experience is an important aspect of happiness. “Peak experiences” provide access to new emotional states that are unavailable to negative addicts. To understand these states, one must experience them.

Understanding happiness as an imperative of a full life is important for every person, which is why philosophers have always shown interest in questions related to this concept. The understanding of happiness is reflected in fairy tales and folklore, in mythology, and in the artistic literature of all peoples around the world.

Over a long period, many interpretations of this concept have emerged, which are generally associated with the idea of the future and the search for what brings a person the greatest satisfaction.

The scholar V. Tatarkevich, who conducted theoretical studies on these questions, noted: “It is difficult to define the concept of happiness for three reasons: first, it is polysemantic; second, happiness is defined as an ideal, and it is indirectly and approximately connected to reality; third, it is a dual concept, including a subjective element comparable to the objective” (Татаркевич, 1981: 46).

Indeed, happiness, when defined theoretically, reveals its various aspects. Based on life experience, a person often realizes that achieved happiness can be deceptive and illusory. The noblest aspirations may turn out to be mistaken, hopes - unfulfilled, and love - often genuine but not always justified.

In all aspects of life, happiness appears as an illusion and fragility, and it is necessary to consider how much it depends on circumstances beyond our control. It is no coincidence that the ancient Greeks believed the gods envied human happiness and took measures to punish a happy person.

Alongside general notions of the value of happiness, it is unsurprising that pessimistic concepts of its perception exist. For example, A. Schopenhauer doubted the possibility of happiness and considered it a “negative” phenomenon (Шопенгауэр, 2019: 140). In his philosophical work *The Meaning of Life*, L. Frank emphasizes the close connection of happiness with sadness and suffering, as well as the problematic relationship between happiness and justice (Frank, 1976: 54). This raises the question of achieving an ideal society in which everyone could fully attain happiness.

Therefore, it is fair to say that a person’s happiness depends on how they understand the meaning of their life and how much their life is filled with that meaning. The meaning of life is determined by the level of development of a person’s system of needs. If a person has high spiritual needs, they become someone who directs their activity toward creativity that satisfies the needs of society. In this way, a person works together with others, creates a common good, and feels happy in accordance with the social significance of that creative work.

Thus, happiness includes moments of positive experiences, which are remembered more intensely if they are deep and long-lasting. Complete maximization of happiness is unattainable, and constant bliss appears more like a utopia for those who do not take human psychophysiology into account.

Active research on happiness within psychology began roughly in the 1960s–1970s. Over the next forty years, science followed roughly the same path in understanding happiness that philosophy had taken over the previous two millennia. Now, the conclusions drawn by thinkers were receiving empirical confirmation. Today, psychology has accumulated extensive data: on cultural variations in understanding happiness, its relationship with indicators such as material well-being, age, and education, as well as subjective factors like life meaningfulness, goals, and perception of events. However, a question arises: is something important lost with this approach to understanding happiness? Many studies are sociological in nature. Their data are interesting, but they only “capture” familiar information, without bringing us closer to understanding the complex phenomenon that is human happiness. Thus, research on happiness in psychology raises difficult questions: what is the essence of happiness, what are the methods of study, and what are the conceptual frameworks?

According to B.S. Bratus, psychology was for a long time built on a natural-scientific basis. However, a shift is now emerging, since attempts to understand human psychology lead to questions about the essence of a person and the meaning of their existence. Psychology cannot avoid turning to ethical, philosophical, and theological understandings of these questions. In our view, limiting research on such a complex topic as happiness solely to psychological methods is unlikely to bring us closer to understanding the phenomenon. Research on happiness must introduce terms such as “human essence,” “alignment with one’s purpose,” and “following the voice of conscience.” Certainly, all these phenomena are difficult to classify as proper objects of psychological study. However, describing happiness in terms such as “achievement of goals” or “presence of positive emotions,” in our opinion, provides only a somewhat reduced understanding of this complex phenomenon. The meaning of life and personally significant goals undoubtedly constitute a major source of happiness. Yet can we speak of true happiness without addressing the content of these goals and meanings? Of course, achieving any goals significant to the individual and having any meanings can, for a time, give life value, generate satisfaction, and evoke positive

emotions. However, meanings, goals, and values are not ultimate categories; they do not close in on themselves. It is important to consider what lies behind these phenomena, what they can be related to, and through what they can be evaluated. The question of what this is is extremely complex (Леонтьев, 2002: 57).

One possible answer lies in the concept of the “essence of a person.” E. Fromm, for example, wrote about a developmental path that aligns with human essence. Failure to follow this path leads to suffering and illness. A person may lead an active life, set and achieve many goals, but this does not necessarily bring happiness — on the contrary, it is more likely to increase suffering.

A similar idea is developed by B. S. Bratus, who argued that normal human development contributes to a person’s connection with their generic essence. Bratus does not give a definitive answer to the question of human essence but links it to one’s relationship with other people.

V. Frankl claimed that meaning is not created but discovered, and in every situation, one should be guided by conscience: “Conscience is the organ of meaning.” This highlights an important point - life’s meaning goes beyond the individual and is grounded in ethical principles. Although Frankl noted that conscience does not always guide correctly, it generally signals to a person what is worthy and what is not. The intense excitement felt by those who enjoy loud, lively events, and the quiet joy of those who prefer calm, solitary activities - these are all manifestations of happiness (Фрэнк, 1976: 126).

Although the problem of happiness has long been studied, each investigation opens new perspectives. This topic has gained particular significance in contemporary Russia. Interest in it has always existed, though from different viewpoints, and there have always been unresolved questions and unexplored aspects. The topic remains relevant and intriguing for researchers. Today, it attracts not only philosophers but also psychologists and educators.

Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist, believed that happiness lies in self-actualization, which a person attains through the satisfaction of their needs - from basic ones such as food, drink, and safety, to those of recognition (Maslow, 1987: 52).

A self-actualized person is calm, confident, talented, tolerant, resistant to depression and hysteria, possesses a healthy self-esteem, and has a harmonious outward appearance. Philosophical schools such as hedonism and utilitarianism link happiness primarily to physical pleasures, which explains the happiness of lovers, driven by the need for recognition and chemical-biological reactions. Nietzsche believed that happiness is unattainable, at least for the majority of Europeans of his time. Christianity, in his view, had killed the true God - the God who gives - and instead created the ideal of the suffering God. Humans are prescribed to strive toward God, purifying themselves through suffering and deprivation. They are not entitled to be happy; they must suffer for the sake of the soul’s purity.

The problem of happiness is closely connected to the question of the meaning of life. Does this meaning change over the course of life, or does it remain constant? Can happiness itself be the meaning of life, or is it merely a means of achieving it?

It should be noted that most Russian philosophers did not address the topic of happiness. However, some, when discussing the meaning of life, touched upon it. Vasily Rozanov was one such thinker. His approach is based on a contradiction: on one hand, a person cannot help but be drawn to the pursuit of happiness; on the other, they are obliged to follow this drive, even though they sometimes resist it. Attempting to resolve this contradiction, Rozanov turns to the history of the idea of happiness. A person is always driven by the desire for happiness, often without even realizing it. The demand that everyone should pursue only their own happiness implicitly denies the significance of those ideas for people “which, only to the extent of their connection with personal happiness, should become objects of aspiration and aversion.”

Rozanov defines the very concept of happiness as “a term denoting the highest guiding principle or ideal, in light of which we apply a specific order of thinking to a given object.” He also believes that there is no universal happiness; it is individual, a personal experience. Rozanov

notes that happiness is a state in which a person has reached the highest degree of satisfaction and no longer strives for new goals or pursuits (Розанов, 2018: 38). The only differences in people's experiences of happiness are their duration and intensity. Preference should be given to happiness that is longer-lasting and quantitatively greater. If it is possible to make several people happy rather than just one, it is desirable to do so.

People cannot be divided into higher or lower based on their experiences of happiness, since all who "experience equally" are equal in their right to happiness. The feeling of happiness should not be overanalyzed or anticipated, because then it disappears; any reflective contemplation drains its energy. Such happiness will be less intense or may vanish entirely. Therefore, one should think less about happiness. Here one can find a parallel with Viktor Frankl, who also argued that conscious striving for happiness is impossible. Rozanov stated that if a person makes happiness their goal, they turn it into an object of attention and lose sight of the reasons for it, causing it to slip away. This perspective can be contrasted with that of Ludwig Feuerbach, who argued that all human desires and aspirations are directed toward happiness and that it is impossible to avoid them. Rozanov also speaks of the dependence of truth on happiness: "only to the extent that happiness is achieved can a person know the truth" (Розанов, 2018: 35).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that happiness is primarily linked to the growth of a person's needs. It is important to emphasize that the expansion of an individual's needs involves "the emergence of higher spiritual needs. This is seen not only as a measure of satisfying existing needs, but also as a system of activity that determines the appearance of new needs or, conversely, the disappearance of previously formed ones. The restructuring of a person's system of needs occurs through their creative and labor activities, where their interests are realized, abilities are developed, and their spiritual structure is reorganized."

Such a transformation is possible within a social context, providing an individual with the opportunity to realize themselves through work and other activities aimed at social creativity—a "common cause." However, as a widespread phenomenon, it presupposes the presence of a social environment that stimulates self-knowledge and creative choice.

Ultimately, it is a manifestation of creative activity, which not only allows one to satisfy existing needs but also acts as a social means of creating new ones. In this case, the growth of needs becomes an important condition for a person's social and creative activity, filling their life with profound meaning. Only in such a situation does a person's happiness acquire genuine human content. Therefore, only happy people can make discoveries, improve something; in other words, everything a person achieves is the result of their experience of happiness. One manifestation of happiness is utility (the utilitarian principle), but it does not encompass the full scope of happiness. Utility is a good achieved through institutions. However, this approach can distort human life. There are higher needs of a spiritual nature (religion, philosophy, art) that cannot be expressed through utilitarian principles. If humanity constantly strives only for happiness, it will find itself trapped, like in a stifling ring, not knowing how to live differently and lacking the means to do so, except by turning away from happiness, which must be learned to accept.

Thus, the concept of happiness has undergone significant transformation throughout the history of philosophy, reflecting changes in worldview, value systems, and socio-cultural orientations of humanity. From ancient eudaimonia and Christian bliss to modern concepts of self-actualization and subjective well-being, the idea of happiness remains key to understanding human existence.

Contemporary philosophy views happiness not as a static state but as a process of continuous spiritual and personal development, a search for balance between individual and societal values. Awareness of the historical forms of this category helps develop a more holistic approach to the problem of human well-being in the 21st century, connecting the wisdom of the past with the challenges of the present.

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