

of producing PPEs, given that the standard Lakatosian criteria seem too strong? These are not questions one should expect this book to answer, but this book is what allows us to pose these questions and in this way undoubtedly moves forward the debate.

Anna Alexandrova

University of Missouri – Saint Louis

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The pursuit of unhappiness. The elusive psychology of well-being, Daniel M. Haybron. Oxford University Press, 2008, xv + 357 pages.

Haybron's book is probably going to become a classical reference for whoever is interested in academic studies on happiness. I disagree on his central thesis, but it would be hard to deny that the book is well written and puts forward original ideas – even though they are sometimes too cautiously defended, as if Haybron wanted to safeguard himself against potential criticism.

Haybron rejects the hedonic view of happiness. He argues that happiness is a deeper psychological condition than mere pleasure. For him happiness is an emotional condition involving stances of attunement (such as peace of mind), endorsement (such as joy) and engagement (such as vitality). While hedonic happiness includes only a series of conscious events concerning the past history of agents, Haybron's emotional theory is about their unconscious and dispositional components, which are related to the agents' psychological propensities for the near future. Haybron also rejects the idea that happiness is life satisfaction, since in his view life satisfaction judgments are unstable (being influenced by arbitrary perspectives) and sensitive to ethical norms (which might reasonably make

us claim that our life is satisfactory even though it is not happy: "I have done what I should have done and I do not regret anything").

The basic idea of Haybron's theory of happiness is that emotional *dispositions* matter. To be happy does not just mean to have experiences of a certain kind. More deeply, it means to have the disposition to "take greater pleasure in things", or to be "slower and less likely to become anxious or fearful, or to be angered or saddened by events" (p. 139). The role played by emotional dispositions shows that hedonism is shallow in focusing merely on people's states of mind. On the other hand, emotional dispositions show that equating happiness with life satisfaction is too intellectually oriented, since happiness is not related to individuals' judgments about their lives, but to how individuals respond emotionally to their lives (see p. 150).

The hedonic view of happiness is an easy target, whereas many life satisfaction theorists could find something to object to Haybron's penetrating criticisms. However, I shall not deal with the issue since I am more interested in discussing what Haybron calls his "central thesis". As a matter of fact, such a thesis is largely independent of his specific theory of happiness and this allows me to overlook the first part of the book, however intrinsically interesting it could be. As Haybron himself writes in this respect: "it would make little difference if we accepted any of a wide variety of theories of welfare" (p. 227).

Thus, what is his "central thesis"? For Haybron, paternalism might in principle be vindicated, at least in some circumstances, since people tend to make systematic mistakes in pursuing their happiness. As a consequence we cannot presume that people's well-being will always increase if they have more options to choose from. The social pursuit of what Haybron calls "option freedom" may prove to be unsuitable for the achievement of happiness. As he writes: "While there is a presumption favoring greater option freedom over lesser, we cannot take for granted, at least for a wide range of situations, that a regime of greater option freedom will thereby tend to make individuals better off" (p. 263). Unlike John Stuart Mill, Haybron is sceptical about our "ability to shape our lives in accordance with our own priorities" (p. 226). However, at the same time Haybron recognizes that people have the right not to be treated like children. The rejection of paternalism might be reasonable even when this leads people to be less happy. The title of the book "the pursuit of unhappiness" comes precisely from this dilemma between paternalism and happiness on the one hand, and the right to be unhappy on the other.

Why should people be unable to pursue happiness effectively? Here Haybron relies on the vast literature on psychology and behavioural economics. Examples include the hedonic treadmill (we exaggerate the importance of monetary outcomes, since we naturally tend to adapt quickly to new situations and soon we return to the previous level of happiness), positive illusions (such as inflated opinions of ourselves

or unrealistic optimism), and irrational materialism (we tend to choose greater monetary payoff even when predicting that that will worsen our conditions of life). Finally, we should consider that people can even be mistaken about their own level of happiness: "Mill claimed that individuals tend to know their own affects better than anyone else does. [...] But suppose for the sake of argument, that most people mistakenly think themselves happy. Even if they are the best judges of their specific feelings, it may be that well-informed officials have a better grip on how the population feels, in general, than the individuals taken in aggregate do" (p. 223).

Since people's systematic mistakes are empirically well documented, Haybron concludes that liberal optimism is unwarranted, where liberal optimism is defined in the following way: "given (roughly) the greatest possible option freedom, and otherwise reasonably favourable conditions, individuals will tend to choose prudently, so that most can expect to do well over the course of their lives, and better than they would given less freedom to shape their lives" (p. 229). Against the individualism that underlies liberal optimism, Haybron maintains that happiness is better served when people's lives are shaped by a more than minimally obliging context, basically provided by the community where they live. He contends that "human well-being is profoundly dependent on the health and vitality of the community and the land. Community arguably just *is* a form of coupling among diverse individuals, requiring that people adapt their attitudes and behaviour to each other in countless ways, on a continuous basis. It thrives on familiarity and trust" (p. 261). He calls this view "contextualism", which he contrasts with the kind of individualism characterizing liberal optimism.

Haybron's book makes clear what is largely implicit in the literature on happiness: when happiness becomes a social issue it is not easy to resist the temptations of paternalism (cf. Barrotta 2008). No doubt, individuals very often make mistakes, but what moral and political conclusions should we draw from this state of affairs? Millian freedom does not only consist in a large set of options, but also in cognitive capacities such as "observation to see, reasoning and judgement to foresee, activity to gather materials decision, discrimination to decide" and the like (Mill 1859, 75). In this sense it is better to call it "autonomy" than freedom. Of course, Haybron argues that there are limits to these cognitive capacities. But what are the remedies to such limits?

Let us take the weakness of will. Haybron does not deal with the weakness of will because he seems to believe that it would provide further evidence against liberal optimism. As he writes: "I will set aside the most obvious sources of mistakes, such as myopia and weakness of will" (p. 230). Yet the contrary is true. The weakness of will can be easily cured by means of an increase in option freedom. For instance people suffering

from gambling compulsion could freely decide to be included in a list of individuals who are barred from casinos (this is not a fictitious example, since the state of Missouri has implemented a similar policy). In this case, people addicted to gambling have one more option to cure their disease. People who have "judgment to foresee" may wisely realise their weakness and find a remedy proper to it. Of course, and this is a tricky question, their future selves could complain about this decision (future selves could have different interests), but there is little doubt that at the time of the decision there was an increase in the set of options available to them.

Furthermore, we should take into consideration the intrinsic value of choice which is independent of its consequences. As Mill emphasizes, only in making a choice do we exercise and strengthen those faculties which characterize us as human beings. Think of a man living in a place which is not hospitable to option freedom (for instance a monastery). He wants to know what life is like in a city and consequently abandons the monastery and moves to the nearest city. Unfortunately, he is now unhappy and disenchanted by the new life (by assumption he cannot go back to living in the monastery. If he could he would now be perfectly happy and aware of the kind of life he wants to live. This case of course poses no threat to his option freedom, since he would have at his disposal the maximum option set relatively to the case). However, it would be perfectly sensible if he said, "I have no regrets, since by making that choice I have exercised my freedom *qua* human being. Strangely enough Haybron makes a similar example, which he comments upon this way: "This sort of positive bias [such as "even so, I would not change a thing"] need not involve an illusion, or indeed be unreasonable at all, given the norms governing the way we think about our lives. People can reasonably register satisfaction with their lives even in time of great hardship, because evaluating our lives is an ethically loaded endeavour that reflects on our characters [. . .]. This is the life [I] have chosen and made for [myself]" (p. 238). This is what Haybron must claim, given his critique of life satisfaction theories (see chapter 5). However, if this is the case, why does he maintain that these situations represent a positive *bias*? What kind of a bias is a bias which is not an illusion and is not unreasonable? Why is that choice even a mistake, given that the person is now fully informed yet nonetheless would not come back to the previous situation of ignorance? I contend that Haybron overlooks the importance of the intrinsic value of making a choice, which Mill rightly emphasizes.

Finally we should not rule out that people can learn from their past mistakes. Let us take the hedonic treadmill effects, previously discussed. Even some economists of happiness are cautiously optimistic about the individuals' capacity to understand their long-term interests. For instance, Robert Frank argues that what he calls the "voluntary simplicity

movement" could help people improve precisely those faculties praised by Mill, such as patience and self-discipline (Frank 1999, 187–9).

However, I am ready to admit that people often make systematic mistakes. We can improve our faculties up to a limit. (After all we are human beings.) But what is the real philosophical lesson we should draw from this insight? According to Haybron we should reject individualism, which is one basic component of liberal optimism. It is interesting to mention Haybron's definition of individualism: "People should, ideally, face conditions of maximally unbounded and unburden choice" (p. 263). As mentioned before, he proposes the contextualist view according to which "The pursuit of happiness [...] will not be solely, or perhaps even mainly, an individual affair: it will be substantially a societal matter" (p. 264).

The kind of individualism portrayed by Haybron would doubtless be labelled by Hayek as a *false* individualism. Hayek takes pains in rejecting "the silliest of the common misunderstanding: the belief individualism postulates [...] the existence of isolated or self-contained individuals, instead of starting from men whose whole nature and character is determined by their existence in society" (p. 6). Similarly he rejects "the assumption of a strictly rational behaviour or generally [...] a false rationalistic psychology" (p. 11). As is well known, "true" individualism for Hayek not only is not incompatible but is based on fallibility and limited knowledge.

I maintain that many, if not all, classical liberals would agree with Haybron about the importance of local communities. I wholeheartedly agree with Haybron that individuals' well-being largely depends on vibrant and morally healthy communities. Thus, what is at stake here? By relying on the evidence of behavioural economics and psychology, the economists and philosophers of happiness argue that people are not just fallible and possess limited knowledge. They more precisely make *systematic* mistakes, and this makes their behaviour largely *predictable* in the aggregate. Think of the so-called hedonic treadmill. A state agency certainly ignores the desires and detailed knowledge of individuals, but it knows that they all (or at least the majority of them) overvalue the importance of an increase in income. Consequently, it is paternalistically legitimate to increase taxes on their extra income. For classical liberals this is like showing a red rag to a bull. Readers may reasonably wonder on whose side Haybron is.

On this issue Haybron is so cautious as to take the risk of being accused of ambiguity. He is happy to claim that government policies aiming at promoting happiness cannot be ruled out in principle. Of course, this paves the way for the above-mentioned dilemma between paternalism and the right to pursue unhappiness. Yet I believe that Haybron misleads his readers on this point. He may reject the liberal

view that state paternalism, by lightening the burden of the exercise of Millian faculties, hinders people from learning from experience (which, as I argued before, is possible, at least up to a point). However, he should not reject liberal worries about the damage caused by state intervention on local communities. If the state vouches for values such as solidarity, fairness and well-being, individuals are no longer responsible for their implementation. Freedom without responsibility leads to opportunistic behaviour and weakens the commitment to communities, which Haybron is rightly worried about. Interestingly enough, this danger has been clearly foreseen by the scholar who has more than anyone else emphasized the importance of local associations and communities, Alexis de Tocqueville. As he writes: "The tasks of government will [...] constantly increase and its very exertions must daily extend its scope. The more it replaces associations, the more individuals will need government to help as they lose the idea of association" (1835–40, 598). Admittedly these are only plausible conjectures. Issues like these are difficult to settle through empirical investigation. But if communities are so important for happiness and well-being then we should be against anything that could put them in danger. After all Haybron himself complains about a civilization that requires "a Byzantine apparatus of laws and government and corporate bureaucracies to administer" (p. 254). Consequently, Haybron should coherently reject state paternalism.

Yet, one more remark is in order, since it appears to be crucial for Haybron. Granted that local communities are an important source of happiness, shouldn't we protect them not only from the state, but also from the "fundamentalists" of option freedom? Haybron mentions Joel Feinberg and his fight against Amish communities in the name of the opportunities that should be given to their children. We could add some libertarians like Robert Nozick, who believe individuals should freely choose which community to belong to, as if communities were a consumption good. Maybe we should also include some passages of Mill's *On Liberty*. Maybe the list is even longer. But the answer should now be clear. The idea of an unencumbered self, who is able to choose whatever he/she wants to become is paradoxical. It reduces our identity to the idea of a rational chooser, where all our "contingent" or "local" characteristics could in principle be stripped away without changing our identity. By reducing ourselves to the idea of a rational chooser, this kind of individualism makes us all extraordinarily similar, and I maintain it is paradoxical to defend a kind of individualism which does away with what makes our personal identities different. This individualism is false, because what we are is partially shaped by our families and communities. Thus to enlarge option freedom to the point where people risk losing their personal identity is to attack communities and individuals at the same time (On this issue classical liberals and some communitarians agree to a wider extent than

one may expect. See Barrotta 2005.) Of course, traditions and communities sometimes become oppressive and in this case we should enlarge option freedom (along with Millian faculties) in order to allow people to pursue their own idea of happiness. There is no easy way of distinguishing when option freedom favours or goes against true individualism. But this is not in itself an argument against liberalism.

Haybron's book is an excellent introduction to the problems of happiness and well-being. Though it is written in a rigorous analytic style, behind it there is a praiseworthy moral concern, which I tend to agree with. Haybron is worried that the demise of local communities could lead to a decrease in happiness and well-being. So am I. Yet classical liberalism is not an enemy of communities. On the contrary, properly understood it proves to be an ally of theirs.

Pierluigi Barrotta
University of Pisa

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Discretionary time: A new measure of freedom, Robert Goodin, James Mahmud Rice, Antti Parpo, and Lina Eriksson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 484 pages.

Discretionary time casts new light upon time as a candidate for the “appropriate currency of egalitarian justice”. Time – the authors claim – has “some very special properties” that make its candidature particularly palatable: it is inherently egalitarian, it is inherently scarce and it is a necessary input to any human activity. Whoever is interested in egalitarian justice, then, should also be interested in making time the *equalisandum*.

Goodin *et al.* are not the first advocates of time, the tradition going back – as the authors themselves admit – at least to Marxian economics. The originality of *Discretionary time* must then lay elsewhere. Traditional