

SPRINGER BRIEFS IN WELL-BEING AND  
QUALITY OF LIFE RESEARCH

Vincenzo Giorgino

# The Pursuit of Happiness and the Traditions of Wisdom

 Springer

# **SpringerBriefs in Well-Being and Quality of Life Research**

For further volumes:

<http://www.springer.com/series/10150>

Vincenzo Giorgino

# The Pursuit of Happiness and the Traditions of Wisdom

 Springer

Vincenzo Giorgino  
University of Torino  
Turin  
Italy

ISSN 2211-7644                      ISSN 2211-7652 (electronic)  
ISBN 978-3-319-04743-0            ISBN 978-3-319-04744-7 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-04744-7  
Springer Cham Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014933273

© The Author(s) 2014

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed. Exempted from this legal reservation are brief excerpts in connection with reviews or scholarly analysis or material supplied specifically for the purpose of being entered and executed on a computer system, for exclusive use by the purchaser of the work. Duplication of this publication or parts thereof is permitted only under the provisions of the Copyright Law of the Publisher's location, in its current version, and permission for use must always be obtained from Springer. Permissions for use may be obtained through RightsLink at the Copyright Clearance Center. Violations are liable to prosecution under the respective Copyright Law.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

While the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication, neither the authors nor the editors nor the publisher can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions that may be made. The publisher makes no warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein.

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer is part of Springer Science+Business Media ([www.springer.com](http://www.springer.com))

# Preface

Human happiness as a research topic in social sciences has a long history and has been in constant growth in the last four decades. Why another volume on happiness then? I am strongly convinced that the answer this time is in the things, it is in the various contributions offered in this volume where a number of scholars in sociology and economics met together in a Conference in a Department of Torino University, originated and inspired by the *International Day of Happiness* on 20 March 2012, promoted by the United Nations. The initiative was first to take this date as a point of reference to develop an interdisciplinary discussion, considering various scientific points of view, within the large domain of social sciences and paying attention to other scientific fields such as neuro-sciences.

And we have in fact a recall to happiness as an everlasting question, where ancient wisdom could give some help in current times, even though differences are to be taken into consideration when considering empirical data and results from social research, as presented in the field survey on happiness, satisfaction and well-being.

Another inspiring and suggestive outlook stems from the consideration of happiness as a constructed reality, where current scientific paradigms are put in question by a kind of renewed capacity of ancient traditions to propose social practices useful to develop new tools of inquiry more adequate to human feelings and *humana conditio*.

The volume aims at signing a conspicuous point of reference for a new awareness of what and how social and economic research could contribute to ameliorate the human condition, trying to supersede the separation too often present between the researcher (the *scientist*!) and its object, the *humans*, considered in their singular, different and self-constructing arts of living.

October 2013

Marina Nuciari

# Acknowledgments

My sincere gratitude to Prof. Pietro Terna who greatly contributed towards making possible the Conference from which this book has its origin. I wish also to remind the encouragement and support received from Prof. Marina Nuciari.

Vincenzo Giorgino

# Contents

<b>1 Classic Wisdom About Ways to Happiness: How Does It Apply Today?</b> . . . . .	1
1.1 Introduction . . . . .	1
1.2 Classic Views on Ways to Happiness . . . . .	3
1.3 How to Assess Applicability Today? . . . . .	5
1.4 Results of Applicability Checks . . . . .	8
1.4.1 Way of the Warrior . . . . .	8
1.4.2 Way of the Merchant . . . . .	9
1.4.3 Way of the Philosopher . . . . .	9
1.4.4 Way of the Peasant . . . . .	9
1.4.5 Way of the Monk . . . . .	10
1.4.6 In Sum . . . . .	10
1.5 More Appropriate in the Past? . . . . .	11
1.6 Conclusion . . . . .	11
References . . . . .	12
<b>2 More Terminological and Methodological Problems in Measuring Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Well-Being: Some First Empirical Results.</b> . . . . .	13
2.1 Introduction . . . . .	13
2.2 Terminological Problems . . . . .	13
2.3 Methodological Problems . . . . .	14
2.4 A Research on Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Well-Being in Piedmont . . . . .	17
2.5 Some First Results . . . . .	18
2.6 Conclusions . . . . .	20
References . . . . .	20
<b>3 Happiness-Freedom: Who Suffers? From <i>Dukkha</i> to <i>Samadhi</i>.</b> . . . .	23
Reference . . . . .	31

**4 Happiness, Dharma and Economics . . . . . 33**

4.1 Introduction . . . . . 33

4.2 Sanatana Dharma and Swadharma . . . . . 35

4.3 Dharma and Mainstream Economics . . . . . 38

4.4 Happiness, Dharma and Economic Policies. . . . . 40

References . . . . . 44

**5 Happiness Is an Art of Living: Towards a Contemplative  
Perspective on Economy as Relational Work . . . . . 51**

5.1 Introduction . . . . . 51

5.2 Traditions of Wisdom and Contemplative  
Knowledge/Practices Today . . . . . 52

5.2.1 On Methods and Methodologies . . . . . 55

5.2.2 The Affective Base of Choice and the Function of Attention . . . 56

5.3 Economy as Relational Work . . . . . 59

5.3.1 Sharing Meanings . . . . . 62

5.4 Towards the Homo Sentiens Model: Greater Wisdom  
for a Greater Number . . . . . 62

5.4.1 It’s Not All About ‘Character’: Opening the Black Box . . . . 65

5.4.2 Contemplative Work: The Art of Dealing with Suffering . . . 67

References . . . . . 70

**About the Authors . . . . . 73**



# Introduction

The astonishing increase in research on happiness and well-being since the 1970s (Veenhoven, in this book) is a sign of scholars' growing sensibility toward a goal that is incessantly positioned at the centre of any sentient human being's life.

There is a general agreement that in handling issues such as happiness and well-being, sooner or later, one encounters the traditions of wisdom and their various interpretations of the matter. Whatever the scholars' point of view, this seems to be an appointment that cannot be missed. The contemporary formulations of these traditions and the discussion about their effectiveness is the captivating issue of this book.<sup>1</sup> Being more specific, its aim is to answer one main question: are they helpful in understanding well-being and its pursuit at an individual and societal level?

Luckily, as we live in a doubt-driven, scientifically laden world, this question implies a number of sub-questions, to make those traditions, their language and methods, understandable for us and available to scientific inquiry. This is also why all the contributors, more or less, deal with some methodological issues.

However, due to the same limits of the current dominant paradigm in science, the debate shows the emergence of these traditions in an almost unexpected light, achieving what 30 years ago was unthinkable or non-predictable: the legitimation and diffusion of secular practices originally born in a religious background. In other words, they are designed for the lay sentient being, whatever the medium they wear in the interactional situation—marketed services (the Yoga centre around the corner), state service provisions (a health promotion mindfulness-based programme in the secondary school) and voluntary organized services (a non-profit association offering an intensive meditation retreat for inmates).<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> This book is a re-elaboration of the presentations to the First VIS Conference “Economic and Social Suffering: From Awareness to Human Flourishing” for the *International Day of Happiness* held in Torino on 20 March 2013 at the *Department of Economic and Social Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics*, University of Torino.

<sup>2</sup> It is worthy of note that in the past, some traditions regulated the economic relationship between practitioner and contemplative teacher through the *dana* (gift)—a term (Pali and Sanskrit) indicating generosity as intention and act; in Mahayana Buddhism it is one of the six paramitas, the precious qualities cultivated in the pathway to *enlightenment*.