Pursuits of Happiness

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Pursuits of Happiness: A Tentative Map

In the much-quoted incipit of Lectures IV and V in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), William James wrote: "If we were to ask the question: 'What is human life's chief concern?' one of the answers we should receive would be: 'It is happiness.' How to gain, how to keep, how to recover happiness, is in fact for most men at all times the secret motive of all they do, and of all they are willing to endure" (78).

This rather large claim seems to find confirmation both in common sense – after all, who would wish to be *un*happy? – and in the historical record. From Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* to Michel Foucault's *Technologies of the Self*, moral philosophers and thinkers have inevitably dwelled on happiness, which Aristotle first established as the *telos* – both the end and the purpose – of human life. How to achieve this *telos* has been, of course, a much-debated question, along with the related one: how to define this highly desirable but inherently elusive condition. From the very onset of western thought, the notion of happiness – in ancient Greek, *eudaimonia* or *eutychia* – inscribed within its etymology a connection with fate, fortune, chance (*daimon*, *tyche*). Happiness was thus conceived as something that takes place outside of our control, something that, quite literally, *happens* to us – an implication that is still very visible in English, where "happiness" and "happen" share the same root. A gift from the gods, happiness affords humans an experience of the transcendent and the absolute. Such an experience – as attested by Goethe's Faust, followed by a whole Romantic tradition – could only take place in the fleeting moment: the transitory, enchanted instant that, in its irrecoverable otherworldly perfection, borders on death. To be aware of happiness, in this sense, is always already to be aware of its loss. At the end of the historical and cultural arc opened by Goethe's Faust, Theodor Adorno states it with poignant clarity in a fragment of aphorism 72 of his *Minima Moralia*: "To happiness the same applies as to truth: one does not have it, but is in it.… But for this reason no-one who is happy can know that he is so. To see happiness, he would have to pass out of it.… He who says he is happy lies, and in invok-

ing happiness, sins against it. He alone keeps faith who says: I was happy. The only relation of consciousness to happiness is gratitude: in which lies its incomparable dignity" (112).

In such a view, happiness could only be experienced passively: as something to be received, savored, and treasured, rather than sought, gained, and possessed. In proposing it as a *telos*, though, Aristotle was in fact inaugurating a different and more active tradition, defining happiness as an end to which human means can be applied. The very notion of a "pursuit of happiness" would have made no sense without this reconceptualization of happiness within the domain of moral philosophy, as an object susceptible of being methodically achieved through the exercise of virtue.

A *telos*, but certainly not a given of human life, happiness, even when defined as the possible object of an active pursuit, still keeps all the pathos of its transience and elusiveness. William James bears witness to this tension in the succession of verbs in the passage I quoted, where the active thrust of "gain," "keep," and "recover" does not quite manage to obfuscate the elision of a logically necessary "lose," the noticeable absence of which operates as a shadowy reminder of the action of fate that marks our experience of happiness as inherently impermanent. Happiness is no natural birthright, nor is it a lasting or unproblematic state; indeed, as the interesting association of "happiness" and "endure" at the end of the quotation reveals, it is often to be gained (or merely yearned for) only at the cost of hardship, effort, and even pain. This paradox is of course a foundational one for Christian thought, based as it is on the promise of future and delayed happiness, in the form of beatitude or blessedness, to all who suffer in this world – what Augustine would call the "happiness of hope," locating it in the promise of everlasting life, mortality being in itself a condition of unhappiness: *vita beata non est, nisi aeterna*. But even in Aristotle, the notion of happiness was no less demanding. Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is the result of a life well lived, that is, a "good" life, a virtuous life, a life lived according to reason, which includes all that is valuable in the ethical, intellectual, political, and emotional sphere: as a "good" life, it is not merely a life of pleasure, but a life tuned to excellence in all fields, as amply shown by Aristotle's example of the happiness of a warrior who fulfills his calling by dying in battle. That warrior is happy, insofar as he has been able to lead his chosen life, and that life was one of virtue.[1]

Happiness – that most intimate and most subjective of conditions – is in other words a normative concept, entangled with moral, political, and economic notions revolving around the assessment of questions of virtue, power, and self-interest. That is nowhere more clear than in John Locke's discussion of the "pursuit of happiness" in chapter XXI ("Of the Idea of Power") of Book II of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). Far from being just the mechanical operation of a gravitational pull towards pleasure and away from pain, ruling human life according to the principles of Newtonian physics, the pursuit of true happiness – as Locke repeatedly makes clear – can only be grounded in liberty. "[T]rue liberty," in turn, relies on the exercise of reason, that is, the ability to carefully examine our true and lasting interest, and to restrain the immediate fulfillment of any desire that threatens to determine and enslave the will. The "pursuit of true and solid happiness," therefore, depends on the balance and mutual reinforcement of liberty, self-interest, and reason: "The stronger ties we have to an unalterable pursuit of happiness in general, which is our greatest good, and which as such, our desires always follow, the more are we free from any necessary determination of our will to any particular action, and from a necessary compliance with our desire, so upon any particular, and then appearing preferable good, till we have duly examined whether it has a tendency to, or be inconsistent with, our real happiness" (2.xxi.51). And it is this same effort to contain the anarchy of individual desire through the exercise of enlightened self-interest, creating a balance between each individual's interest in self-preservation – the preservation of "his property, that is, his life, liberty, and estate" (Locke, *Second Treatise* vii.87) – and the identical interest of the rest of mankind, that provides the foundation of Locke's theory of civil government.[2]

As is well known, the wording of the Declaration of Independence of the United States was the result of Thomas Jefferson's momentous substitution of the "pursuit of happiness" as the last item in Locke's (and Adam Smith's) trinity of "life, liberty, and estate." On this substitution, possibly indebted to the political theory of Christian Wolff, and on its precise historical significance, philosophical implications, and political reasons much has of course been written. This appropriation to the sphere of politics of a notion that belonged first and foremost to the moral sphere was by no means an obvious one, and even less obvious was the idea that institutions should be expected to promote

the pursuit of happiness *in this life*. If one additionally considers that this statement was not merely included in a treatise of political theory, but performatively enunciated in the foundational document of a new state as realized political theory, its audacity becomes indeed staggering. What concerns us here, however, is not so much that decision *per se*, as its aftermath. Even granting the eighteenth-century sense of the word "happiness" as "well-being" and "experiencing pleasure," and even granting the necessary link in contemporary thought between liberty, well-being, and property, the fact remains that the shift from "estate" to "happiness" in the Declaration immensely widened the potential range, and hence the mythopoeic power, of the truths being claimed as self-evident. Simultaneously, though, the very magnitude of the claim raises a number of crucial questions. Is there a universal path towards happiness, or is its pursuit to be granted to each upon individual terms? Is there only one meaning of happiness, and is it a material or a spiritual condition? Is it fit for all, and is its achievement an inherent *right* or is it the end of and reward for *virtue*? In other words, the notion is from the very beginning cast both in universalistic – all men are created equal and have inalienable rights – and in exclusionary terms – happiness is the rightful desert of some, not all, and not all ways of pursuing it are equally legitimate. It is exactly this ambiguity that has accompanied the subsequent history of the term as both a cultural issue and an ever-renewable political project.

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According to the findings of a much-debated 1995 report by social psychologists David G. Meyers and Ed Diener, a higher percentage of individuals define themselves as happy in the United States than in any other country of the world: a third of Americans say that they are "very happy," the majority describe themselves as "pretty happy," and only 10% say that they are "not too happy." These data have of course been challenged; apart from the general unlikelihood of happiness being distributed on a national basis, linguists have noted that while the word "happiness" has a comparable semantic range in different languages (standing for bliss, joy, a state of utter contentment), the adjective "happy" in English has a weaker sense, including everyday experiences of satisfaction with a specific arrangement and limited state of affairs,

a sense of "being okay," rather than a stronger state of profound bliss regarding something deeply serious, momentous, and rare or unique, as implied in other languages. "Happy" is one of the most widely used emotion adjectives in English, and it is gradable, whereas in many other languages it is absolute.[3] That goes some way towards explaining why Americans turn out to be the happiest people in the world.

However, even though Meyers' and Diener's interviews do not provide us with truly reliable information on the actual state of bliss of American citizens, their results do tell us quite a bit about American cultural patterns, values, and expectations. Self-reported happiness is influenced not just by linguistic but also by cultural factors, that is, by the local norms defining happiness as an everyday rather than a transcendent experience, and endorsing happiness as a legitimate and, indeed, a valorized objective. If happiness is the reward of the virtuous, then declaring one's happiness is a self-attestation of worth. And more important than that, pursuing happiness is not just a legitimate individual aim, but a sort of sacred national duty. This is nowhere more evident than in the unequalled number of self-help and popular psychology books, as well as histories and scholarly studies of happiness, published in the United States every year.[4] In other words, what Foucault would have called the "technologies of the self" – those that "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (18) – inevitably interface with *social* technologies.[5]

But at the site where individual well-being intersects public policies, the constitutive rift between universalism and particularism that I mentioned before as implicit in the Declaration becomes crucial. Is the pursuit of happiness a universal right or is it predicated on criteria for inclusion and exclusion? If virtue is a prerequisite for true happiness, then who defines virtue? And according to which standard? Is there more virtue in conformity or in rebellion, in majority or in minority? Should the pursuit of happiness of a gay couple seeking marriage or an adolescent woman seeking abortion be constitutionally guaranteed, or is their "fall from virtue" so self-evident that the state has a right to impinge on their liberty? In other words, are there different paths to what Locke defined as a "true and solid happi-

ness," or is there only one – the mandatory path of hard work and positive thinking in the professional field and faithful dedication to (heteronormative) family values in the private sphere, which has pervaded countless autobiographies and underpinned the whole ideological formation of the so-called "model minority" myth, and which Gabriele Muccino's 2006 blockbuster *The Pursuit of Happyness* upholds with unwavering zeal?[6]

This is where that most subjective and personal of issues – happiness – also becomes the most political. And once the pursuit of happiness is moved onto the political plane, other and ever less manageable aspects of it are bound to surface. This accounts for the constant re-emergence, throughout U.S. history and culture, of the fateful triad spelled out in the Declaration of Independence. Probably no other political document in history, with the possible exception of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, has been equally branded as an unfulfilled promise or brandished as a weapon by emerging political subjects in countless struggles to enlarge the sphere of rights and reclaim political agency. From Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frederick Douglass to Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Panther Party, it has inspired momentous political rewritings and citations, as well as an impressive amount of satires and bitter denunciations in popular culture (recent examples of which would range from Ani DiFranco's "Self-Evident," written after September 11, 2001, to Aaron McGruder's and Kyle Baker's *Birth of a Nation*, 2004). The "pursuit of happiness," in other words, is a demanding standard: judged by that yardstick, both personal achievements and political actualities are constantly at risk of being deemed inadequate.

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From that perspective, it seems unquestionable that the "pursuit of happiness" formula, exactly by virtue of its semantic amplitude, has a lasting potential for affecting the imagination in ways that the mere "pursuit of property" could not have. Property is a definite, material, and measurable object, the very pursuit of which implicitly subscribes to a specific state of things in the social and political order; happiness is a state whose definitions, requirements, and implications must be constantly negotiated, and whose boundaries can endlessly shift. The use of the word "pursuit" – with the tension it establish-

es between the agency implied in the notion of "pursuit" and the quality of evasiveness it consequently lends its object, which always already resists efforts to capture it – revives the original complexity of the philosophical notion of happiness as not just the predictable result of a rational effort, but also the uncontrollable fruit of fate, the free gift from the gods.

In this latter sense, the very evocation of happiness marks the irruption of an extra-ordinary dimension in political as well as existential discourse: what Italian philosopher Luisa Muraro terms "l'impensato," the hitherto unthought and unthinkable, which ruptures the flow of ordinary experience with the force of a revelation. Building on Giorgio Agamben's analysis of the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, Muraro argues for the political as well as philosophical dimension of Paul's notion of revelation, which operates as the *kairós*, the intensification of time that suspends and empties out everyday chronology. This moment is quite literally revolutionary, in that it radically overthrows the existing order, opening up a further horizon that cannot be measured by the progressive, positivist standard of actualized reality and plausible achievement.[7] Hence, I would submit, the unsettling utopian potential of the "pursuit of happiness," which coexists with its historically determined invitation to economic individualism and the moderation of one's wants: inherent in the formula is a productive tension between the material and the immaterial, moderation and excess, the plausible and the visionary, the satisfaction of tangible needs and the unsaturable requirements of the imagination, producing a permanent thrust towards a futurity that is not determined and contained by the present. There is inscribed in the notion of the "pursuit of happiness" what I would like to term, with Deleuze and Guattari, a "desiring machine" – a disruptive radical potential that exceeds the boundaries of the self-made-man model of successful adaptation to, and thriving on, existing social circumstances. It is at this point that its more subversive implications can be made to surface: since, as thinkers such as Deleuze and Guattari, Lacan, and Žižek tell us, desire is by its nature both unruly and unsaturable – a process rather than a state, much closer to the *Streben* of Goethe's Faust than to the satisfaction of reasonable and virtuous needs envisaged by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century moral thinkers.

In its congenital oscillation between reproduction and revolution, the "pursuit of happiness" formula might thus be said to epitomize both polari-

ties of one of the most prophetic and poignant debates on happiness and human civilization in twentieth-century thought: the argument, straddling the Second World War, between Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* – written in 1929, published in 1930 and originally conceived as *Das Unglück in der Kultur*, that is, "Unhappiness in Culture" – and Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, of 1955. Both respond to the typical question of moral philosophy – what is happiness and how to achieve it –, the former reluctantly accepting the inescapable need for surplus-repression and the performance principle as the necessary foundation of civilization, but uncannily prefiguring the outbreak of the war and the death camps as their end result; the latter, from beyond the historical divide of Nazism and Auschwitz, recognizing the economic and social organization of 1950s United States as the fullest embodiment of a civilization built on repression and performance, denouncing such a construction as inherently antagonistic to human happiness and potentially catastrophic, and calling for an individual and social liberation "beyond the reality principle" – that is, beyond the primacy of production and the market, of surplus-repression and the enslavement to false needs.

From today's vantage point – when worldwide economic crisis, increasing global and local inequality, massive migration flows, ongoing wars, and impending ecological catastrophe seem to be fulfilling the darkest prophecies of both thinkers, highlighting the continuity between the social and economic arrangements that were the object of Marcuse's critique and our own – we are perhaps called to reconsider our current formulas for happiness and assess them anew. "Today, to be civilized, one has to be a market-driven species and to act as if human beings were only a bundle of economic needs and desires," writes Anthony Bogues; "Today, all values, including how we should think about profound issues like freedom, are reducible to the schema of material redemption" (155).[8] But if, as Bogues effectively argues, "The relationships between the imagination, ways of life, and desire are central to any consideration of the political" (151), then the question of happiness cannot be held at bay when discussing the political, and the question of the ways to pursue it acquires a new cogency (as well as a new cautionary value).

This goes some way towards explaining the ever-renewed appeal and potential currency of that fateful quotation, which is not just a fragment of a historically given brand of political thought, but is also, thanks to its res-

onant, and indeed impossibly wide formulation, a figment of the collective imagination. And as such, it is one that is always ready to be mobilized, as shown most wonderfully by then-presidential candidate Barack Obama's explicit reference to it in his speeches and books, as well as in his effective catchphrase "the audacity of hope," a powerful revival of the rhetoric of the American Dream of which he is himself such an extraordinary and self-aware embodiment.

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It was with a view to emphasizing not just the historical roots, the traditional actualizations, and the political uses of Jefferson's felicitous expression, but also its present-day relevance and its as yet untapped utopian potential, that Daniele Fiorentino and I, as organizers on behalf of AISNA of the 2007 edition of the Centro Studi Americani Seminar, decided to title it "*Pursuits* of Happiness," in the plural. Through our inevitable plagiarism of Stanley Cavell's book, we attempted to give voice to the plurality and diversity of hopes, dreams, and desires emerging from and within, but also inevitably *against* and *beside* that tradition. From May 21 to May 23, 2007, a number of lectures and workshops tackled that topic from different angles: historical, political, religious, theoretical, literary, and visual.

Our first speaker on that occasion was historian Alan Dawley, whose talk, "The end of global America," presented us with a rich synthesis of the rise of the United States as world power, bringing a transnational approach to the investigation of U.S. history, while highlighting the manifold connections of its foreign imperial engagement with questions of race and labor at home. He was to have sent his revised version of that paper for publication in this journal, and had actually promised to complete it within a couple of weeks, when he died unexpectedly of a heart attack, on March 12, 2008, as he was doing activist work in Mexico. A prominent historian, best known for his works on working class history (*Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn*, 1976), on social struggles (*Struggles for Justice: Social Responsibility and the Liberal State*, 1991), and on the interconnections of social conflicts at home with wars abroad (*Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution*, 2003), Alan Dawley was also a passionate opposer of the war in

Iraq and a militant advocate for peace and civil rights all over the world. During the Seminar, however, to all of us he was first and foremost a warm, smiling, and generous friend, and a universally alert and intellectually provoking interlocutor. Much as we miss his contribution to this issue, we miss his insightful and friendly presence even more.

This section of *RSA*, then, collects only two of the three keynote speeches originally delivered at the Seminar. Both take the disciplinary field of American Studies as their main field of inquiry, situating the question of the pursuit of happiness in the context of the field's superseding of American exceptionalism and its current turn towards various forms of international engagement.

In "Outside American Studies: On the Unhappy Pursuits of Non-Complicity," Robyn Wiegman situates the question of happiness simultaneously as a ubiquitous idiom of ordinary life and cultural industry in the United States, and as an affect that has become unviable to the present generations of U.S. Americanists through the operation of shame, ruling out identification with the progressive narrative of U.S. exceptionalism that the pursuit of happiness allegedly stands for. The "pursuit of happiness" issue thus becomes a touchstone for both the intellectual and the affective attitude of present-day U.S. American Studies: "the contemporary American Americanist, figured as the New Americanist, cannot approach the pursuits of happiness without finding herself at odds with the field imaginary in which her intellectual self recognition has taken shape.… Happiness, in short, is a casualty in the field's New Americanist transformation, too weighty an emblem of nationalist self obsession, too profoundly idealist for the grip of critique through which practitioners seek to defend themselves against the global power of their object of study." Offering a powerful and nuanced examination of the intellectual practices and assumptions of New American Studies, Wiegman analyzes its affective attitude, emphasizing the relevance of processes of identification and refused identification in the creation of the disciplinary identity of Americanists over the past couple of decades. If, as she argues, the New American Studies has adopted an attitude of refused identification *vis-à-vis* American exceptionalism and the American nation state, claiming for itself a position of externality, an "outside/in," in an attempt to pursue "the fantasy specter of non-complicity," the present call for an "international turn"

highlights some of the paradoxes emerging in its wake: "Read less as a cartography of new subject orientations in the field than as a remapping of its political desires, these trajectories demonstrate how familiar internationalization is *as an idiom* within the New Americanist field imaginary and thus prepare the way, or so I hope, for considering the paradox that internationalization's own turn to definitive self narration entails: being at once a discourse aimed at getting outside the Americanness of American Studies at a time when the dominant field imaginary in the U.S. understands itself to be committed to doing the same thing." Both the "American" and the "international" Americanist are thus rendered as unstable subject positions within a complex range of intellectual and affective – rather than geographical – positionings, making internationalization less a substantive methodology, practice or vantage point than a name for a critical aspiration: "This would mean approaching internationalization less as a solution to the problems that it named than as a critical *aspiration*, one that functioned – and continues to – as a resonant symptom of all the disparities it wishes to undo."

In his "American Studies Without Tears," Liam Kennedy similarly engages the question of the internationalization of American Studies by way of its affective implications. The pervasive unhappiness of Americanists with their object of knowledge, America, is the starting point that leads him to advocate an awareness of the "relations between pleasure and knowledge, and between sentiment and critique" in knowledge production. Positing the field imaginary as not just a regulatory field for knowledge, but also as a field where the desires, demands, and needs of the analysts towards their object are played out no less than their intellectual agendas and critical tools, Kennedy poses the question of the Americanists' ways of framing their object as one of libidinal investment, suggesting that "America often functions to condition our sense of the real (including our 'passion for the real') and so also functions as a vanishing mediator of our identities, ethical, political and critical." In an effort to define the range of such investments in connection with the different positionalities of the fields' practitioners, Kennedy offers an insightful analysis of the field imaginary of American Studies across the Atlantic, and of the prominence that notions of distance and vantage point have had in the recent debate about internationalization and globalization. Such notions, he argues, tend to disavow our investments in the object of study and to hinder our acknowledg-

ment of "our own positions in the circuits of power and knowledge"; recognizing America as a fantasy in the Lacanian sense, instead, would enable us to posit the question of America – and consequently, the epistemological and ethical question of our involvement in it – as "the question of what the Other wants," and the question of how "our identities and actions are shaped by the response to this question." "To ask the question 'What Does America Want?' is to foreground the field imaginary and shift the axis and focus of American Studies critique. It is to *not* ask 'What is the Meaning of America?,' an originating question of American Studies as a field. The question 'What Does America Want?' is a question of desire rather than meaning. It is also a strategic question that moves us away from the hermeneutics of suspicion and demystification towards forms of cultural and political critique that impel recognition of the limits of critique." By way of exemplifying such a shift, Kennedy proposes the visual dimension as one where "the role of affective relationality" and the way in which "we might integrate it into analysis and not simply subdue it through analysis" become particularly evident, offering a compelling reading of a haunting photograph by Jean-Marc Bouju, taken during the war in Iraq. The conflicting critical and emotional responses elicited by such a charged and ambiguous image point to the complexity of our involvements in American empire: "The image-world that is the surface of globalisation is also our shared world of affective human attachments. The critical task is not to get behind this surface but to give it definition through our critical work.… Our critical task is not iconoclastic, tearing away the veil of empire to reveal the truth of its horrors, rather it is to stretch the image surface and understand our own investments in its workings. It is to acknowledge the limits of our capacity to make sense of our object of study, even as we interrogate the emergence and the vanishing of America as a mediator of identities, including our own as critical intellectuals and as sensate citizens."

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Through their passionate engagement with the epistemologies of American Studies, both Wiegman and Kennedy are in fact engaging the field's object of study, the United States. And indeed, today no less than in the last century or so, the effort to understand the United States and where we stand in relation

to it – simultaneously as global scholars and global citizens, critical intellectuals and desiring subjects – might be said to amount to an effort to understand much that is urgent in the present-day world. In this sense, our relentless efforts to rethink our discipline are also inevitably, however inadequately, efforts to rethink the world 'outside the box.' "For us to engage in profound critical and radical acts of the political," Anthony Bogues writes in a final passage that I would like to borrow as my own conclusion, "we have to restore the imagination. Restoring the imagination allows us to begin to think about possibilities. It allows us to begin to think through other practices that are outside of our particular conceptual frames. In addition, it allows us to confront power and its current death drive to capture desire and the human. In the end, what I am arguing for is the restoration of utopia to political thinking, not as a way to create an elsewhere but as a way to confront critically the death drive of imperial power in its guise as an 'empire of liberty'" (159).

I would like to thank the whole former Board of AISNA, and particularly professor Giorgio Mariani, former AISNA secretary, for his constant and unceasing work for the Association, professor Igina Tattoni, for originally suggesting the topic of the 2007 Seminar, and professor Daniele Fiorentino, for joining me on the scientific and organizational committee of the Seminar. Special thanks to Dr. Karim Mezran, the Director of Centro Studi Americani, for his unfailing support of this and many other joint initiatives, the director of cultural programs, Dr. Giusy De Sio, Concetta Cennamo, and the whole staff of Centro Studi Americani for their invaluable, efficient, and cheerful contribution to the actual organization of the Seminar. Last but not least, let me thank all the colleagues who generously offered their time and scholarship in the Seminar's workshops and discussions, and the students who invested their time and money to attend, enriching it with their diverse competences, lively curiosity, and intellectual motivation.

Notes

[1] For a brief survey of the notion of happiness in the ancient world and the different ways it unfolds along the history of western thought, see McMahon, Natoli.

[2] In ch. II section 6 Locke phrases this as "life, health, liberty, or possessions."

[3] See Wierzbicka.

[4] A representative sample of the latest and most widely advertised titles would include McMahon, *Happiness: A History*; Gilbert; Hecht; Diener and Biswas-Diener, as well as the special issue *On Happiness* of the journal *Daedalus*. Of course, along with self-help books, one should also consider such other diverse phenomena as the huge business connected with what might be called the "pharmacological way to happiness," or the widespread consumption of alcohol, drugs, and other substances. On both sociologists and psychologists have commented profusely.

[5] One could think, for instance, of the work of social scientists and social psychologists on subjective well-being and successful adaptation, and on the way they are influenced by such factors as marriage, divorce, or disease, or of the economic theory approach to happiness as based on employment situation and income level, and hence on public policies aimed at improving the average income of society as a whole, in an effort to increase well-being and happiness.

[6] The movie was taken from Chris Gardner's autobiography bearing the same title. Interestingly, such a revamping of the American Dream was effected by way of a transatlantic detour involving an Italian director specializing in films that depict the coming of age of bourgeois adolescents or belated adolescents, like the emotional crises of married couples or single professionals in their thirties. In his hands, the path from rags to riches of an African American single father acquires the same basically romantic irrelevance displayed by his former stories.

[7] See especially chapter 5.

[8] It is hardly necessary to recall that material redemption is exactly the recipe for happiness endorsed by Muccino's film.

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