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Happiness and Development
Greater happiness for a greater number
Did the promise of Enlightenment come true?

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Is life getting better?

• The issue

• Concepts of quality-of-life

• Measurement of final quality-of-life

• Trend Happy Life Years
The issue
The issue

- Promise of Enlightenment

  versus

- Notions of declining quality of life
Promise of Enlightenment

• Man not doomed to misery
  – Happiness not only in Heaven
  – If Heaven exists at all..

• Better life possible on earth
  – Society not God-given, but man-made
  – Progress possible using human reason
Ethics of Enlightenment

• Better life desirable
  – Earthly life not for suffering
  – Happiness is good

• Happiness is the ultimate good
  – Consequentionalis ethic
  – Morally best is what produces the greatest happiness for the greatest number
Robert Mauzi (1960)
The idea of happiness in French literature in the 18th century
Peter Buijs (2007)
The age of happiness: Views on happiness during the Enlightenment in The Netherlands, 1658-1855
Notion of declining quality-of-life among later society watchers

- Marx: ‘Verelendung’
- Freud: ‘Unbehagen in der Kultur’
- Spengler ‘Decline of the West’
- Riesman ‘Lonely crowd’
- Putman ‘Bowling alone’
- Easterlin ‘Paradox stagnant happiness’
Notion of declining quality-of-life

in current public opinion

Life was better in the ‘good old days’

• Widely believed

• Growing belief since 1970s

Hagerty *Was Life Better in the 'Good Old Days'?* JOHS 2003
Rejection of moral desirability

_In fiction:_
Huxley’s ‘Brave new World’

_In academic moral philosophy:_
Treated as history
Concept of Quality-of-Life
Four qualities of life

|        | external | internal |
|--------|----------|----------|
| chances|          |          |
| outcomes|          |          |
## Four qualities of life

|               | external | internal |
|---------------|----------|----------|
| chances       | Livability | Life-ability |
| outcomes      | Utility   | Satisfaction with life |

Source: Veenhoven, R. (2000) The four qualities of life. Ordering concepts and measures of the good life. Journal Of Happiness Studies, 1: 1-39
## Analogous concepts in biology

|              | external | internal |
|--------------|----------|----------|
| **chances**  | Biotope  | Fitness  |
| **outcomes** | Ecological function | Survival |
Analogous concepts in biology

| chances | external | internal |
|---------|----------|----------|
| Biotope |          | Fitness  |
| outcomes| Ecological function | Survival |

| outcomes | Ecological function | Survival |
|----------|---------------------|----------|
|          |                     |          |
### Four qualities of life

|          | external | internal |
|----------|----------|----------|
| chances  | Livability | Life-ability |
| outcomes | Utility | Long and happy life |
Measurement of Quality-of-Life
Measurement of Quality-of-Life

- Measurement of happiness
- Combination with longevity
Measurement of happiness

Example of a survey question

Taking all together, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Dissatisfied  Satisfied
Happiness in Denmark

COUNTRY/REGION: DENMARK

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR LIFE

Percent
0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0%
Dissatisfied Satisfied
Happiness in Zimbabwe

COUNTRY/REGION: ZIMBABWE

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR LIFE

Percent

0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0%

DISSATISFIED

SATISFIED

Percent

0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0%

DISSATISFIED

SATISFIED

Happiness in Zimbabwe
AVERAGE HAPPINESS IN 148 NATIONS 2000-2009

How much people enjoy their life-as-a-whole on scale 0 to 10
| Country     | Happiness (2000-2009) |
|------------|-----------------------|
| Denmark    | 8.3                   |
| Netherlands| 7.6                   |
| USA        | 7.4                   |
| Germany    | 7.1                   |
| Japan      | 6.5                   |
| South Korea| 6.0                   |
| Russia     | 5.5                   |
| Iraq       | 4.7                   |
| Zimbabwe   | 3.0                   |
## Happy Life Years in nations 2000-2009

| Country  | Average happiness | Life expectancy | HLY  |
|----------|-------------------|-----------------|------|
| Denmark  | 8,3               | 81,3            | 65,2 |
| Netherlands | 7,6               | 79,2            | 59,9 |
| USA      | 7,4               | 77,9            | 57,9 |
| Japan    | 6,5               | 82,3            | 53,5 |
| Russia   | 5,5               | 65,0            | 36,1 |
| Iraq     | 4,7               | 66,5            | 31,1 |
| Zimbabwe | 3,0               | 40,9            | 12,5 |
Average happiness in 148 nations 2000-2009

How much people enjoy their life-as-a-whole on scale 0 to 10
Trend Happy-Life-Years
Trend Happy-Life-Years

*Short-term*
• Change in modern nations 1973-2005

*Long-term*
• Development over human history
Change average happiness in nations
1973-2000, scale 0-10

Source: World Database of Happiness: Trends in nations
### Change average happiness in nations

1973-2000, scale 0-10

| Country               | Change |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Italy                 | + 0.63 |
| France                | + 0.55 |
| Denmark               | + 0.55 |
| USA                   | + 0.29 |
| UK                    | + 0.26 |
| Japan                 | + 0.20 |
| Germany (west)        | + 0.00 |
| Belgium               | − 0.33 |
Change average happiness in nations
199 time series >10 years 1945-2010

• Rise 133

• Decline 66

Ratio 2.1 p<01
Average yearly rise: 0.012

Veenhoven & Vergunst, *The Easterlin illusion*, International J of Happiness and Development (in press)
Trend Happy Life Years 1948-2010
## Gains Happy Life Years 1973-2010

| Country              | Gains |
|----------------------|-------|
| Italy                | +10,5 |
| France               | +10,0 |
| Denmark              | +8,0  |
| UK                   | +6,7  |
| Japan                | +6,6  |
| USA                  | +6,1  |
| Germany (west)       | +5,8  |
| Belgium              | +3,4  |

Source: World Database of Happiness: Trends in nations
Trend Happy Life Years
Development over human history
Societal evolution and quality of life

Figure 2.3
Long-term trend in quality of life

Source: Veenhoven, R (2010) *Life is getting better: Societal evolution and fit with human nature*, Social Indicators Research 97:105-122
Conclusions
Conclusions

• We live longer and happier than ever

• The promise of Enlightenment came true

• Trend likely to continue
World Database of Happiness

http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl
More about happiness

• World Database of Happiness
  http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl

• Journal of Happiness Studies
  http://springerlink.com