

HAPPINESS





### PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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Magis Center:

Catholic Answers to Science, Faith and Reason

The Four Levels of Happiness

Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D.

<http://www.magiscenter.com/>

# HAPPINESS

- What does it mean to you?
- Have you ever wondered why you or others sometimes feel unhappy?
- Why do some people who seem to have everything also seem to be unhappy?
- What is it that makes us happy?

Virtually every philosopher from Plato and Aristotle (@ 400 B.C.) to great contemporary scientists such as Albert Einstein believed the key to a good life included 4 things:

1. Happiness
2. Suffering
3. Love
4. God



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All the great thinkers throughout the ages agree that happiness is one of the most important ideas we can reflect on in our lives.

**Happiness is the  
meaning and the  
purpose of life,  
the whole aim and  
end of human  
existence.**

**-Aristotle**

*Pure Love Quotes.com*

If Aristotle is correct, this one concept, “happiness” is at the root of every decision we make and every action we perform and therefore it determines whether we think our lives have meaning, whether we are going somewhere, whether we are successful, whether we are worth something (to ourselves), whether life is lived to the full, and whether life is worth living.

Inasmuch as this concept can influence our whole identity and purpose in life, it will probably influence the kind of friends we make, the person we want to marry, the career we pursue, the clubs to which we belong, and just about everything else of relevance.

- Perhaps the most general definition of happiness is, “the fulfillment of desire” (whether that desire be superficial or sublime).
- Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to discover what our major desires are – what drives us; what we yearn for; what we seek for satisfaction and fulfillment.
- Aristotle noticed that what you make as your dominant definition of happiness, will in fact become your purpose in life. If you live your life according to how you understand “happiness” this then will become your identity ..... who you are, your self definition.
- Throughout the centuries philosophers (and later psychologists) have elucidated four major kinds of desire (and therefore four major kinds of happiness).



In the Latin language, Happiness is expressed in four different terms that represent four different types of “Happiness”:

1. **Laetus** – The most superficial happiness that comes from some kind of stimulus outside of ourselves ... a big bowl of ice cream (external and material).
2. **Felix** – Happiness that comes from Ego gratification (Comparative).
3. **Beatus** – Happiness that comes from making a positive difference in the world around me (Contributive).
4. **Sublimitas** – Happiness that comes from satisfying our ultimate desires. (Spiritual).



## Ultimate Good

4

- Objective:* Participate in giving and receiving ultimate meaning, goodness, ideals, and love.  
*Characteristics:* Good is ultimatized. Principles include ultimate Truth, Love, Justice, and Beauty.  
*Gratification:* Enduring / Eternal

## Contributive

3

- Objective:* Do good beyond self. Make an optimal positive difference for others.  
*Characteristics:* Principles include Love, Community, Justice. Intrinsic goodness is an end in itself. Decisions are focused on the greater good.  
*Gratification:* Long-term

## Comparative / Personal Achievement

2

- Objective:* Ego Centeredness, better than, gain advantage.  
*Characteristics:* Promotion of self is primary. Personal power and control are key. Jealousy, fear of failure, contempt, isolation, loneliness, and cynicism.  
*Gratification:* Short-term

## Immediate Gratification

1

- Objective:* Pleasure and minimize pain.  
*Characteristics:* Obligation is to self alone. No desire for common, intrinsic, or ultimate good. Lack of self-worth, fear of tangible loss/harm, boredom.  
*Gratification:* Immediate

# The Effects of Happiness

As you move up the levels of happiness from level 1 to level 4, the effects of happiness become more pervasive, enduring and deep.

- **Pervasive** – The effects are going beyond yourself....instead of the good effect lodging inside of you, it manifests itself outside to other people; family, friends and community.
- **Enduring** – The effects last longer. Level 1 doesn't last very long...level 2 lasts longer than level 1 etc. Moving up the levels of happiness, the effects last longer, they are spiritualized.
- **Deep** -- Moving up the levels of happiness, the depth of your experience of happiness increases. You begin to use the highest powers of your intelligence, creativity and spirituality. The emphasis will be on principles, ideals, moral reasoning, empathy and love.

# Why Not Just Live in Level 4?

## Levels 1 and 2

- Immediate Gratification -- you get satisfied right away.
- More Intensity – physical and ego satisfaction are intense.
- Surface Apparent – Superficial, doesn't require intelligence or reflective thought.

## Levels 3 and 4

Need Discipline, Patience and Virtue ... have to give up Immediate gratification, intensity and surface appearance in order to attain things that are pervasive, enduring and deep.

# Level 1

## Physical Material Happiness

- The most surface apparent happiness you can get.
- Immediately gratifying, very intense, very surface apparent.
- Big bowl of ice cream....its physical, it comes from the outside, it stimulates, it gratifies, it is a form of euphoria.
- Could be sex, food, drink, etc..... a steak dinner, good wine, or riding in a Mercedes 500 E class, with a sunroof and leather upholstery and feeling the German engineering as you take the curve at high speed.

**Problem:** Superficial and material feeling that doesn't last long.



## Level 2

# Ego-Comparative Happiness

- A vast majority of our contemporary culture (70%) makes Ego Comparative Happiness their dominant level, their primary meaning and purpose in life.
- Ego – the Latin for “I”. Ego Comparative happiness seeks to experience happiness by shifting the locus of control from the outside objective world to the subjective world (myself).
- I anoint myself as King and seek to establish a comparative advantage over everyone else.

# The EGO Comparative Game

- Winning and Losing
  - Achievement
  - Popularity
  - Status
  - Beauty
  - Intelligence
  - Power and Control
  - Honor and Prestige
- I'm physically stronger, faster and better than you.
  - I have more awards and degrees than you.
  - I have more friends than you.
  - I live in a better neighborhood, drive a nicer car.
  - I'm physically more attractive than you.
  - I'm more intelligent than you. You're stupid.
  - I have more power and control than you. Influencer.
  - I have more honor and esteem than you.



# The **COMPARISON** Game



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## Options of the Comparison Game

- **Win** – Emptiness  
Upping the Stakes  
Contempt (Isolation and Resentment)
- **Draw** – Fear of Losing  
Suspicion of others
- **Lose** -- Depression  
Jealousy, anger  
Inferiority

# Level 3 -- Empathetic Contributive - Happiness

- Moving from Ego in, to Ego Out (Contributive Happiness).
- Focus is on the world outside myself.
- We want to make the most out of our lives, leave a positive legacy on the world.
- Achieve Level 3 Happiness by doing something or being with people (empathy).
- Contributing through actions and empathy to family, friends, organization, community, church, kingdom of God, culture and society.

**Problem:** Does not deal with the five transcendental desires and the yearning for the sacred.





- Empathy – The radical openness to the good of the other.
- Which leads to the care about the other.
- Which leads to the care for the other.
- This care for the other produces a unity with the other whereby doing the good for the other is just as easy, if not easier, than doing the good for oneself.

# Level 4

## Transcendent Happiness

- Everyone of us is a transcendent being with a spiritual soul. We are naturally religious and seek God. We are destined for something greater than this world alone.

We have 5 Transcendental desires for perfect and unconditional:

- Truth
- Love
- Justice-Goodness
- Beauty
- Being-Home

# Old Covenant Revelation

- God as a person makes Himself known to the Israelites (Revelation).
- He reveals Himself for 2,000 years .... Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets.
- The Israelites know that God is Truth, Love, and Just.
- But the full knowledge of God is given with the final Revelation of God through the person of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.

# New Covenant Revelation

Jesus Christ fully reveals man to himself.

Through this Revelation we better understand:

- God as perfect Truth
- God as perfect Love...Suffering
- God as perfect Justice and Mercy
- God as Perfect Beauty....Beatific Vision
- God as Perfect Home....Heaven

# How Do We Get To Level 4?

1. Faith in Christ and His Church
2. Enter into the Sacramental Life of the Church
3. Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving
4. Move from Ego Drama to Theo Drama