

Article

## The Governance of Well-being: Towards a “Brave New World”?

Alex Romani Rivera<sup>1,2</sup> , Sergi Parellada Guillamón<sup>1</sup>  & Francisco Tirado Serrano<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

<sup>2</sup> Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain

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### ABSTRACT

This article describes the phenomenon of the “governance of well-being,” which includes the use of happiness as a tool of power used by governmental, non-governmental, and public and private organizations around the world. Based on a chronological exploration of contemporary global policies and through the happiness practices that we can find in the different areas of daily life, it is explained that happiness is becoming a device of social control and that it is being institutionalized through its 1) universalization, 2) privatization, 3) scientification, and 4) blackboxing. Finally, the consequences of all this are exposed in order to prevent the imperative of happiness from governing us towards a Huxleyan “brave new world,” in which a “welfare regime” could prevail that seems less and less utopian.

## El Gobierno del Bienestar: ¿Hacia un “Mundo Feliz”?

### RESUMEN

En este artículo se describe el fenómeno del “gobierno del bienestar”, que comprende el uso de la felicidad como herramienta de poder utilizada por organismos gubernamentales, no gubernamentales, y organizaciones públicas y privadas de todo el planeta. A partir de una exploración cronológica de las políticas globales contemporáneas y a través de las prácticas felicistas que podemos encontrar en los diferentes ámbitos de nuestra vida cotidiana se explica que la felicidad se está convirtiendo en un dispositivo de control social y que se está institucionalizando mediante su 1) Universalización, 2) Privatización, 3) Cientificación, y 4) Cajanegrización. Finalmente, se exponen las consecuencias de todo ello con el objetivo de evitar que el imperativo de felicidad nos gobierne hacia un “mundo feliz” huxleyano en el que podría imperar un “régimen del bienestar” que cada vez parece menos utópico.

#### Palabras clave

Felicidad  
Gubernamentalidad  
Psicología positiva  
Psicopolítica  
Poder

The 21st century has seen the emergence of a concept called "happiness" whose main function is to govern societies. We understand "happiness" as an indicator of the development of nations and we promote it from its most applied aspect, as we turn it into an endeavor that prioritizes the maximization of both productivity and profitability. Furthermore, we have turned its research into an academic field that shapes the knowledge society and has submerged various areas of daily life in a scientific turn. In short: "happiness" is our atmosphere. We find it everywhere but it is nowhere to be found. We are turning it into an institution, so today it is already acting as a control device that serves to manage societies, relationships between people, and ways of being and showing up in the world.

As Franco Berardi (2003, p. 29) states, "a promise of happiness runs through mass culture, advertising, and economic ideology itself. In the common discourse, happiness is no longer an option, but an obligation; it is the essential value of the merchandise we produce, buy, and consume". Our present time is characterized by a regime called neoliberalism, which instead of hindering or subduing, seeks to activate, motivate, and optimize. Instead of repressing, it allows, and instead of repelling, it seduces through a new form of intelligent (smart) power that stands out for its positivity and focuses on generating positive emotions so that we submit to it voluntarily. Michel Foucault used the term "governmentality" to refer to the process by which the state molds the subjectivities of its citizens in order for them to develop practices that favor its programs (Ortiz, 2017). But the public "state" is no longer the only one that holds power; now power is also exercised by private institutions, non-governmental organizations, and large multinationals. In this new paradigm we are governed by devices that not only control people's lives through their bodies, but also through the management of the psyche. In the words of the philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2014), we are faced with a "technique of domination that stabilizes and reproduces the dominant system through psychological programming and control". And along the same lines, Edgar Cabanas (2020) qualifies the type of culture that is being imposed as an ideology of "happyism", as a business, as a type of imperative discourse that produces adverse effects at the psychological and social level. There are even proposals that argue that the current suffering is due to the very pursuit of happiness as an imperative (Fagundes et al., 2018).

This article is framed in the previous debate, and its objective is to make explicit how public and private, governmental, and non-governmental institutions use "happiness" to exert power over the populations of different countries through an evaluation of their emerging trends. Through a critical analysis of their discourses and practices in the daily lives of citizens, the aim is to analyze what the devices of the institutionalization of happiness have in common and to verify whether a political discourse that forces us to be happy is spreading. Therefore, we examine the types of mechanisms used by global organizations to (re)produce a happiness imperative that is (re)shaping the new social imaginary of well-being. This analysis ultimately aims to achieve an ethical purpose that would involve promoting a scientific, political, and social reflexivity in the face of an exercise of governmentality (governance of mentality) mainly promoted by the positive discipline of neoliberal society.

## The Governance of Happiness

Let us begin this text with several historical vignettes. In 1972, in response to criticism of his country's economic poverty (Otalvaro, 2014), the king of Bhutan created the Gross Domestic Happiness (GDH) index in order to be able to explain the human development of societies beyond economic terms such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In 2011, the UN unanimously adopted General Assembly resolution A/65/L.86, submitted by Bhutan, calling for a "holistic approach to development" aimed at promoting sustainable happiness and well-being (UN, 2011). This was followed the next year by a meeting of world experts, spiritual leaders, and leaders of civil society to develop a new economic paradigm based on sustainability and well-being (Rizvi, 2012). In this way, the pioneering work of the Government of Bhutan to develop a development index that had happiness as a priority was disseminated globally.

Although certainly the objectives of Bhutan and the Buddhist worldview of happiness are much broader than those of Western literature and understanding, in 2013 happiness already became a matter of State in Venezuela with the creation of the "Vice-Ministry of the supreme social happiness of the people". Paraphrasing Venezuelan economist and public policy expert Ángel Alayón, no longer does happiness only belong to the academic sphere relating to self-help and self-improvement, but it has also become a branch of political science and economics (Pardo, 2013). Despite having obtained the recognition of the Guinness World Record in 2008 as the 'happiest' country in the world, Venezuela was included in 2019 in the list of countries with the highest number of suicides, and in 2023 it is the least happy in the Americas, ranking 88th out of a possible 137 according to the World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al., 2023).

In 2016, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) created the "Ministry of Happiness" with the aim of generating "social good and satisfaction as core values" in the country. Concrete steps were taken, such as developing a survey to determine how employees felt, the degree of satisfaction in public offices through emoticons, and even the creation of a "happiness patrol" formed by policemen who, instead of issuing fines, handed out gifts to drivers who did not violate the rules (RT, 2017). However, the initiative had opponents who advised that its authorities should also take care to respect human rights. In the end, with the changes announced in 2020, the "Ministry of Happiness" that was originally created to make the country one of the five happiest in the world, was renamed and became the "State Ministry for Government Development and the Future" (El Diario, 2020). Also in 2016, India's second most populous state—with 70 million inhabitants—created its own happiness index promising social programs that included yoga, meditation, and religious pilgrimages, as well as the proportion of psychologists to advise people how to be "always happy" (Marszal, 2016). Despite being one of the poorest states in the country and having the highest suicide figures among farmers, and although it is a state affected by high rates of malnutrition, maternal and infant mortality, as well as a high number of rapes, the state minister and author of the initiative Shivraj Singh Chouhan appointed Lal Singh Arya as "Minister of Happiness" to ensure "contentment in the lives of common people". But Arya had a shaky start in his new position,

as soon after his appointment he was arrested on charges of murdering a Congress leader. In 2018, Arya stated that his department had prepared a report to increase the happiness quotient of people with inputs from experts from the United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, Mauritius, and Bhutan, who would have helped officials structure the department. He also said that "we were planning to implement it this time" (Venugopal, 2018), but he was not reelected in the elections that same year, and the idea promoted by Minister Chouhan faded away (Tiwari, 2018). As of today, the happiness program in India is run by volunteers, who are calling for more support and resources to reach all districts in the central state.

Meanwhile, in Copenhagen you can already visit the "Museum of Happiness", paying to learn how world governments are adapting well-being as a goal for society. The fee to enter the museum is paid by the Happiness Research Institute, an independent think tank that explores why some societies are happier than others with the aim of "informing decision-makers about the causes and effects of human happiness, making subjective well-being part of the public policy debate and improving the overall quality of life for citizens around the world". Just as Nordic culture has adapted to the physical context, its happiness is at the same time an adaptation to its culture; a happiness embedded in the capitalist system.

Similarly, France convened a panel of experts led by two Nobel Prize winners in Economics to create a system to measure the level of happiness of the population in order to design public policies based on indicators such as being able to pay for a vacation or having eaten whatever you wanted during the last two weeks, which was copied by the United Kingdom (Pardo, 2013).

Spain has been the latest country to join the concern for happiness: in April 2017, the forum organized by *Nueva Economía e Innovación Social* [New Economy and Social Innovation] opened the first center for measuring the GDH. According to the director of the "NESI Forum" Diego Isabel La Moneda; the economy must contribute to improve happiness and be at the service of people, not the other way around (Servimedia, 2017). On the other hand, Felipe Viveros, European coordinator of the Bhutanese Center for Gross Domestic Happiness, commented that current systems such as GDP were created at the beginning of the century and therefore need to be updated to be at the service of people and the planet.

### Towards a "Brave new World"<sup>1</sup>

As can be seen, "happiness" is rapidly becoming institutionalized all over the world, even though it is obvious that many human rights issues have yet to be resolved. Therefore, the following question becomes pertinent: Why is happiness currently being talked about in areas such as economics or politics? The answer lies in the establishment of a new type of governmentality or regime of governance.

Any social science dictionary tells us that to institutionalize is to create norms that can be repeated in time and space. And this is precisely what the happiness discourse does; using an extensive and articulated body of knowledge, it structures how we understand and experience the great new phenomenon of having

to be happy, now in an institutionalized way. Through marketing and propaganda, the new concept of "happiness" is distilled into every corner of everyday life to do business, to increase performance, and to gain power.

### Self-Help: The (Self-)Cure of the 21st Century

In the above context, known as the "happiness turn" (Ahmed, 2010), the practices and discourses of positive psychology, coaching, and self-help have proliferated. By resorting to them we self-administer well-being, we try to temporarily calm a malaise that we have not yet clearly identified, and we weave a *modus vivendi* that gradually makes the pursuit of happiness its central axis, the selling of which has created a multimillion-dollar market of its own. In this sense, Brito et al. (2020) insist on the normalizing effect that "self-help" has on the subjectivities of neoliberal citizens. As Cabanas and Huertas (2014) explain, both positive psychology and self-help defend the search for happiness as something inherent to the human condition.

And that's precisely what self-help bestsellers do, like the one by Neil Pasricha (2016), in which he proclaims that he aims to "find the exact equation of happiness," and attempts to do so with the following proposition: BEING HAPPY → GREAT WORK → GREAT SUCCESS. "What is the first thing you must do before you can be happy? Be happy. Be happy first." In short, he sells us a lie based on a fallacy: happiness is achieved with... happiness. The rigorous reflection of Pérez-Álvarez (2016) showed that indeed "felicitous is fallacious"<sup>2</sup>, and that the theoretical weakness of positive psychology is just as present in the "happyist" commodification of self-help. Mo Gawdat, former commercial director of Google, explains in his book that "the simplest way for an engineer to express the definition of happiness is a mathematical expression: the happiness algorithm" (Gawdat, 2018).  $Happiness \geq Your\ perception\ of\ events - Expectations$ . "Meaning that if you perceive something equivalent to or better than your expectations, you are happy; or, at least, you are not unhappy." Victor Küppers, a speaker who masterfully imparts the dogma of positive psychology, also has his own formula:  $V = (K + S) \times A$ . Where K is Knowledge, S is Skills, and A is Attitude. V is a person's Value. The founder of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, proposed in his book "Authentic Happiness" an equation that attempted to solve the conundrum "Can you be happier in a lasting way?" It went like this:  $H = S + C + V$ . "In which H is your enduring level of happiness, S your set point, C the circumstances of your life, and V voluntary variables" (Seligman, 2002, p. 79). Interestingly, years later he changed his own formula.

### How to be Happy: An Overly Positive Education

Obviously, education is a very important area for the institutionalization of happiness. Thus, we have gradually entered a new form of "immaterial production" in which not only technical knowledge (hard skills) and the possession of information are valued, but also emotional competencies (soft skills). What is most valued, today—because of their capacity for development, their inimitability, and their "competitive advantage" (Luthans et

<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: The title of "Brave New World" by Aldous Huxley is translated as "Un mundo feliz" [A happy world] in Spanish.

<sup>2</sup> The original words here in Spanish are "Feliz es falaz", which translates as "happy is fallacious".

al., 2007)—are the psychological (or personal) resources of individuals, such as attitude, emotional intelligence, personal strengths, and psychological capital. For some authors, all this shows that we have entered a new type of capitalism that, beyond information (Zuboff, 2015), focuses and operates on the emotions (Illouz, 2019).

The Master of Applied Positive Psychology program at the University of Pennsylvania was the first in the world to offer a degree in this field of study under the supervision of Dr. Martin Seligman, founder of the discipline of positive psychology and creator of the program. Since then, a multitude of similar master's degrees have proliferated in different parts of the world such as England, South Africa, Australia, and Europe. Interestingly, all of them opt for an online model that allows lifelong learning in positive psychology anywhere in the world without leaving home, as long as you can pay the university fees that range from 2,650 euros to 71,944 U.S. dollars.

The same academic institutions are behind the creation and commoditization of more affordable options for the general public such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on happiness. The University of California created the first eight-week online course, called The Science of Happiness, which is currently offered through the EdX platform. Yale University offers its course, The Science of Well-Being, through Coursera. The prestigious Harvard University did not take long to consolidate positive psychology classes with Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar, founder of the Happiness Studies Academy through which he sells the Certificate in Happiness Studies and the Master of Arts in Happiness Studies at Centenary University.

In addition to all this, the obsession with the study of happiness has already filtered into primary and secondary education with proposals such as The Happier School Program in the United States, the Happy School Program in Australia and New Zealand, or the *Aulas Felices* [Happy Classrooms] program (Arguís et al., 2010) and the *Programa de Felicidad en las Escuelas* [Happiness in Schools Program] in Spain.

### A Happy Worker is a Productive Worker

Happiness, well-being, and the emotional are the new playing field for capitalization and wealth generation: large corporations and institutions invest in emotions, seek their profitability, accumulate them, and sell them. They use them as a product to generate a surplus value in addition to that generated by information and the circulation of goods. In line with neoliberal capitalism, psychological capital is located in positive organizational psychology, that is, in the world of work and organizations, which is where the most money moves. Under the Happy-Productive Worker theory (Lucas & Diener, 2003), it is proposed to work happily to improve productivity and "gain a competitive advantage" (Luthans et al., 2007). This translates into the emergence of a new work ethic in which the employee is the one who should consider work as a space for self-realization and development of personal skills (Cabanas & Sánchez-González, 2012). Entrusting the individual with the entire management of his or her internal world benefits the company because it involves less investment in external control and supervision, while the autonomy of the worker is presented as related to his or her well-being and personal satisfaction (Pérez-Álvarez et al., 2018).

In fact, positive psychology establishes a link between mental health and success (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) and explains that health is closely linked to capital, justifying in literally economic terms what is called an Operational Return on Investment, that is, an amount of monetary resources that is saved in the use of health services or that returns in other ways, as in the case of increased productivity in companies. According to the World Economic Forum, the value of this return is calculated at 2.97 euros per euro invested in Happiness Programs in companies. In this new paradigm, Maslow's Pyramid has been inverted (Cabanas & Sánchez-González, 2016), since being happy is today a necessary basic requirement that every worker must show in order to be hired and to achieve success. Unfortunately, this logic is part of an economic, social, and cultural phenomenon that extends far beyond business.

### The Leisure Business: The Happy-ism of Privacy

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) anticipated decades ago that the characteristic of modern societies would be an excess of communication, generating, paradoxically, with this activity an absence of creativity and a widespread normalization of socially accepted behaviors, such as giving the appearance of well-being and happiness. It is evident that constant communication facilitates the continuous (re)construction of symbols and meanings, but what is more relevant is that it also creates the permanent need for the very exercise of such communication (*communicatio*; to put in common). This leads to what Han (2013) calls the "dictatorship of transparency", which is the essential characteristic of our present time. In it, we voluntarily make ourselves visible and all the information we produce through each of our daily actions through the technological devices that accompany us (cell phones, smart watches, biometric bracelets, etc.) is collected and segmented to build global psychographies that are projected into the future. This Big Data promotes that our health is constantly measured and that everything becomes some kind of data through reminders, publications, advertisements, and apps. For example, an app like *Happify* installed on your smartphone can launch a pop-up that tells you that you have to perform some daily well-being practice, and after that, it allows you to publish (*publicus*; make public) the fact that you have done it. The movement called *Quantified Self*, which aims to increase physical, mental, and spiritual performance through self-measurement is a good example of this (Lupton, 2016; Nafus & Sherman, 2014). Knowing oneself, self-help, and self-care are precisely the things that generate material and elements to continuously communicate and exhibit oneself to others. From the point of view of some authors (Illouz, 2019; Lazzarato, 2012), this need involves nothing more than the implementation of a new mechanism of self-exploitation that has in the generation of information the main vehicle and in our own subjectivity the beginning and end of the horizon of that process. This permanent generation of information about ourselves that is expressed in computer applications that we use every day such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, etc., and that opens a space for total communication is like the panopticon (the all-seeing eye) described by Foucault (2007) as a mechanism of control. The only difference is that

now the gaze of a physical eye does not operate, but rather the constant production and circulation of information among very broad communities of individuals and institutions. An integral commodification of existence is taking place through campaigns such as those of Nocilla with its "happiness of the good kind" or Coca-Cola with its "uncover happiness" that use "happiness" to promote their products. In addition, we also see that cinema, art, series, and travel offers have joined this positive trend as the discourse of well-being (or "being well") is booming more than ever. As we have observed, leisure has become business, and our private life has also become controlled by "happiness".

### **Happiness as a Device of Governmentality**

The examples point to the fact that happiness has taken root in all areas of contemporary daily life. And those roots are becoming a true device of governmentality through the 1) universalization, 2) privatization, 3) scientification, and 4) blackboxing of happiness.

### **The Universalization of Happiness**

As the previous historical vignettes show, public and private organizations have been making happiness a universal standard and goal for years. However, happiness is not understood in the same way in different parts of the world, and not all people seek it, nor do they all do so in the same way. We have been led to believe that the pursuit of happiness is a universal imperative, so solutions have been created to satisfy this generated need.

Because of this (self-)imposed obligation by governments, by institutions, and by "happiness scientists", mechanisms are being deployed on a global scale that promote the generation and massive collection of data on the emotional states of countries and individuals in order to create even more tools for social control.

The simple and obvious observation that while first world countries seek and sell happy experiences, developing countries still struggle for survival practically anchored in medieval situations, shows that this is a concept that is difficult to universalize.

### **The Privatization of Happiness**

Paradoxically, this universalization falls into the hands of a few: large corporations and private institutions. Happiness "for all" is opening an important economic niche in the 21st century, and for this reason it is essential to universalize it, while keeping the product privatized and under the control of large corporations.

As we have seen, all kinds of institutions do this. Governments use "happiness" as a populist policy to positively unmark their proposals and give them a touch of added value with the excuse of trying to make their citizens happier. That is the governance of happiness: it deprives the people of it in order to then grant it from a position of power. Obviously, private institutions have also realized how profitable it is to capitalize on intangible products such as the emotions, and they are privatizing "happiness". With the excuse of researching it, self-styled "Happiness Institutes" are being created, which are nothing more than groups of self-proclaimed independent "experts" whose self-imposed mission is to inform decision-makers about the causes and effects of human happiness,

to make subjective well-being part of the debate on public policies and to improve the general quality of life of citizens around the world.

In academia, the implicit logic is to be trained in happiness in order to be able to teach other people how to be happy. Therefore, the following question should come as no surprise: What do all happiness training courses have in common? The answer is that they are all endorsed by the institutions themselves (i.e., they are unofficial courses) and mostly supported by private universities. Having to pay exorbitant tuition to study how to be happy is the same as having to buy happiness, a privatization that not everyone is able or willing to accept.

### **The Scientification of Happiness**

If anything characterizes our present time, it is that science has become an endeavor that prioritizes the maximization of profitability. The thirst for research has shaped a new knowledge society that has submerged essential areas of life in a scientific turn, and it can exercise power over these areas to manage societies, relationships between people, and ways of being in the world. Specifically, as the study and dissemination of happiness is left to a mere few, the science of happyism must recognize that the constructs it creates and promotes may cause undesirable effects. To mitigate these effects, it is necessary that the way of producing, conceiving, and transmitting knowledge be done within an ethical and political prism.

Undoubtedly, positive psychology is prescriptive since with its scientific study of happiness it anticipates needs and tells us how we should live. But as has been shown, this so-called "science of happiness" suffers from important theoretical weaknesses [Pérez-Álvarez \(2016\)](#). To begin with, happiness is a syncategorematic concept, i.e., its meaning depends on other terms, and this is the gap that positive psychology is attempting to fill with its scientific experiments. Moreover, happiness is not a static object of study of natural science, it is something human that should be observed at least under the gaze of the social sciences. In short, there is no need for a "science of happiness" for the common sense advice that it "discovers", but its proponents insist on scientifying it so that we buy their results.

In fact, Barbara Fredrickson herself, one of the most renowned researchers in positive psychology, recognized the failure of mathematical equations misapplied to her field ([Fredrickson, 2013](#)). The question we should ask ourselves is not whether there is a happiness algorithm or not, but whether the mere act of formulating it this way could be a mechanism to sell the aforementioned happiness imperative. The great miscalculation of self-help is to try to give mathematical solutions to problems that are not mathematical, because it falls into a generalism that instead of clearing up unknowns, multiplies doubts. Besides, what are the consequences of trying to calculate the value of people? What is clear is that positive psychology makes a strong commitment to and promotion of the importance of psychological capital and its scientification.

### **The Blackboxing of Happiness**

[Bruno Latour \(2021\)](#) uses the term "blackboxing" to describe the process by which something becomes invisible because of its

own success. That is to say, when a fact is culturally consensual and well established, as is the case of "happiness" rooted to the core of today's society, we focus only on the benefits it generates and not on the mechanisms that make it work. Thus, paradoxically, any concept studied under the umbrella of "science" becomes more opaque the more successful it is.

And since the triumph of the governance of happiness has become more than evident (literally, government models are being patented to create happier societies) in all areas of everyday life, and since everyday life is not problematized because it is intrinsically taken for granted by the fact of being common and ordinary; "happiness" has become clearly blackboxed. This process of automation of successful mechanisms must be studied within sociology or, preferably, within the social psychology of science and technology to understand how "the human" and the "non-human" establish the boundaries between "the social" and "the natural", interactions that day by day build and maintain the categories to which we are subjected and from which it is difficult for us to escape.

We should try to unblackbox happiness by posing complex hypotheses about its operating systems and being more reflective about its modes of application and implications. In the case of "happiness", it is legitimate and necessary to ask whether the results obtained by the institutions that promote it are "constructed" or "real", since there always has been and there always will be a connection between politics and natural science.

### Conclusions

Universalization, privatization, scientification, and blackboxing constitute four mechanisms that close the process of institutionalizing happiness and turn it into a new device of governmentality. This "governance of mentality" is a positive prison without walls, which reigns over our minds to inoculate a self-slavery of performance and self-improvement through consumerism and entertainment. The current mechanisms used to make us pursue "happiness" are too much like the "soma" of the "brave new world" predicted by [Aldous Huxley \(1932\)](#) in his dystopian novel. The governance of happiness is the perfect covert dictatorship because everyone wants it and because it can be used—and it is used—to justify oppression ([Ahmed, 2010](#)) and to maintain social control without opposition. But the happyist discourse is not presented equally across the international political map, but rather it is molded to meet the objectives of each nation, which is precisely the argument used to dodge democratic debate in the name of well-being, even if human rights are violated. Taking into account all of the above, we can fear with some certainty that the virulent devices to control our physical health, such as the "Covid Certificate", will expand and mutate into a "Happiness Certificate" that will also control the mental health of the individual on a global scale: towards a world where we are only allowed to be happy.

But who would want such a world, and for what purpose? People and organizations that promote happiness approach it from a privileged, rather comfortable position, which makes them understand it in a certain way that is neither relevant nor applicable to everyone. We have reached this point because these discourses are underpinned by certain interests that serve to obtain something that human beings have longed for since time immemorial and that

comes from our anthropological origins: to have power and maintain control, in other words, to govern. And it has not been until today that we have realized that the best form of governance is through happiness. The whole market of self-help, coaches, and wellness products pursues economic profit by profiting from the thirst for happiness that they themselves have created. There are also social status interests that use the supposed "science of happiness" to give institutional renown to their companies or educational centers. And also political interests such as the deactivation of unions and revolt, which facilitates the manipulation of a population focused on its permanent emotional evaluation. As has been demonstrated, the happyist discourse provokes, in psychosocial terms, power relations that not only affect the politics and economy of certain countries, but have also modified the ethical standards of the current period throughout the world.

Even so, the collapse of the myth of happiness should not lead to a destructive nihilism but should serve to create a more sensible and serene individuality and society, setting aside the tiresome search for something that we ourselves have created to govern ourselves. Precisely, the aim of this research has been to describe and explain the power relations of this new "brave world" for the sake of the community, so that individuals can make their own decisions with the maximum information available. These conclusions can lead us to a deeper understanding of the discourses and practices of a great variety of fields, but the truth is that the very way of analyzing them goes beyond psychology, it even goes beyond a single specific field; governmental psychopolitics is everywhere, that is precisely its aim; it has made happiness its slave and master simultaneously, promoting and perpetuating itself for the sustainability of the system in which it—governmentality, not happiness—has self-constituted itself.

Future lines of research will have to learn to cross borders—both cultural and disciplinary—in order to cover as fully as possible such a complex subject as happiness. The diffractions and reflections of this study could be applied mainly to the daily lives of all those people who—directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously—are affected by the *modus operandi* of the "governance of happiness". The application of the proposed solutions would help to achieve a true liberation from the individual responsibility imposed on us, ultimately achieving a "depsychologization" and a "de-subjectivization" of the guilt of not meeting the standards of neoliberal society, of the weariness of the society of transparency, and of the unhappiness of the endless pursuit of happiness.

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