

Manufacturing of Unhappiness

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Top 20

Country	Satisfaction with life	Number of surveys	Rank
Denmark	8.2	3	1
Colombia (5)	8.1	2	2
Switzerland	8.1	3	2
Austria	8.0	5	3
Iceland	7.8	1	4
Australia	7.7	14	5
Finland	7.7	4	5
Sweden	7.7	6	5
Canada	7.6	1	6
Guatemala (4)	7.6	1	6
Ireland	7.6	3	6
Luxembourg	7.6	3	6
Mexico	7.6	2	6
Norway	7.6	2	6
Malta	7.5	2	7
Netherlands	7.5	3	7
USA	7.4	2	8
Belgium	7.3	3	9
El Salvador	7.2	1	10
Germany	7.2	7	10

<http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl>

Bottom 20

Country	Satisfaction with life	Number of surveys	Rank
Azerbaijan	4.9	1	32
Macedonia	4.9	2	32
Mali (4)	4.9	1	32
Egypt	4.8	1	33
Ghana (4)	4.8	1	33
Iraq	4.7	1	34
Latvia	4.7	3	34
Lithuania	4.6	3	35
Albania	4.4	2	36
Angola (4)	4.4	1	36
Russia	4.4	13	36
Pakistan	4.3	1	37
Bulgaria	4.2	3	38
Georgia	4.1	1	39
Belarus	4.0	2	40
Armenia	3.7	1	41
Ukraine	3.6	2	42
Moldova	3.5	2	43
Zimbabwe	3.3	1	44
Tanzania	3.2	1	45

Answer:

- A capitalist (free market) society that does not have the threat of hunger needs to manufacture unhappiness in order to sustain existence of the system

The key elements of the argument

- capitalist / free market economy
- hunger
- consumption

Capitalism

- Needs workers (motivated)
- Needs consumption
- Needs to expand (to avoid stagnation, recession or collapse)

Motivation

- 18th and 19th century answer:
 - Hunger motivates
 - It is renewable
 - Makes people very unhappy
 - Possibility to avoid hunger makes people much more happy

Townsend on hunger:

- “Hunger will tame the fiercest animals, it will teach decency and civility, obedience and subjection, to the most perverse. In general it is only hunger which can spur and goad them [the poor] on to labor; yet our laws have said they shall never hunger.”

- A Dissertation on the Poor Laws, William Townsend 1786

20th century answer (and today)

- Efficiency of production has increased dramatically
- Hunger is not a real threat to workers
- Overproduction is the threat to industries
- Motivation is being sustained by promise of consumption
- Consumption and motivation is being sustained by stimulating needs beyond physiological ones

Consumption

- Beyond physiological needs consumption is not renewable
 - (example: peasant behaviour according to Chayanov)
- has to be stimulated
- is being stimulated by upholding the feeling of unhappiness

Stimulation of unhappiness

- Edward Bernays (1891-1995)
 - Society is dangerous
 - Must be manipulated
 - Combined psychology of 'herd' and Freud's ideas of subconscious
- Birth of PR

Feeling of unhappiness

- Stimulated through
 - role models (that we are not)
 - products that we do not have (but should have)
 - the idea of perpetual competition

In this society

- A happy consumer is not a good consumer
- A happy capitalist?
- A happy worker?

Unhappy people

- Are ready to work more
- earn more
- dispose of things they have in pursuit of happiness
- BUT
- once achieved anything, are presented with new 'challenges'

Conclusion

- The contemporary (capitalist) society has switched from relying on hunger to relying on unhappiness

For further interest

- Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformations*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Dutt, K. A. Consumption and Happiness: Alternative Approaches. Rough draft prepared for the conference of New Direction in the Study of Happiness.
- Adam Curtis, documentary *The Century of the Self*, available on YouTube