

Abstract English

Happiness is all around us. We are permanently surrounded by it, whether as an advertisement in the media, as a subject at school or in form of a book in the store. Everybody focuses on the pursuit of happiness and that leads to the question: What is happiness? And: How can it be reached? Lots of different sciences like education, philosophy as well as politics and economy are dealing with the phenomenon of happiness. In Bhutan there is even a ministry of happiness that measures the satisfaction of its inhabitants in order to improve its Gross National Happiness, a key figure that combines happiness with economy. Although there have been a lot who studied happiness, there is still no generally accepted definition of the term happiness yet. An analysis of the word happiness according to its etymology and an examination of different kinds of happiness should lead to a better understanding of this matter.

Aristotle was the first who paid close attention to the phenomenon of happiness. His theory of happiness is the most important one. It plays an important role as a great example for many philosophers and schools which followed after him. In his book, the *Nicomachean Ethic*, he writes about the pursuit of happiness and he describes it as the highest good, as a final destination, an ultimate goal which is self-sufficient. Aristotle calls it eudaimonia, the bliss, and he characterizes it as a virtuous activity in accordance with the rationality of the soul. The best of these activities for Aristotle is the (philosophical) thinking. Sanity is a characteristic of human beings; this special capability is called ergon. According to Aristotle everybody should always give his best and try to find the right middle in each situation, in the mean of virtue (theory of Mesotes) – all life long.

The meaning of happiness changes during the period of time and it is quite influenced by the society. After a time where people believed to become happy by consuming and owning a lot of goods, there is now a changing and a process started, where lots of people think about sustainability and remember the real matter of happiness again, grounded in a personal responsibility, a moral behavior, meaning operating in a virtuous way.