



Critical Perspectives in Happiness Research: The Birth of Modern Happiness

Luka Zevnik

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This book presents an interdisciplinary exploration of the origins of happiness in the modern Western culture and makes the argument that happiness is not universal but is instead a culturally and historically specific experience, characteristic only to the Western world. It begins with an overview of the main research approaches to happiness and then studies the important but elusive theme in the context of culture and relations of power. The second part of the book analyses the social, religious, ethical and political processes that lead to the emergence of the experience of happiness, including consumer culture in contemporary societies. It presents an analysis of the medieval Christian experience which concludes that the modern experience of happiness only emerged in the 17th and 18th century, when the ideal of human existence increasingly started to be pursued in the present life. In its conclusion, this book explores the concept of modernization as the collective pursuit of happiness.

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