

The Nature of Happiness- A Journey from Misery to Prosperity Peter Ujj

Peter Ujj has written a rather profound personal philosophy. It has the feel of 19th century work. He writes in a rather rococo style, employing a richer vocabulary, longer sentences and paragraphs that are customary to a contemporary reader.

The book is essentially a biography of his formative years. The first chapter, however, addresses the nature of happiness and the condition of mankind. He observes that modern man is beset by novelty almost every day of his life, and harried by the haste of modern existence in every phase of his existence. The conclusion is that we are a morose, unhappy bunch.

I will observe that at least in America opinion polls do not reveal such profound unhappiness. On the contrary, Americans are rather mindlessly hedonistic if anything. The observation that does strike home is that we are no longer bound together by ties of family, clan, community and nation the way we used to be. Each individual pursues his selfish interests, not frequently enough acceding to the interests of spouse, family, and others.

I find his conclusion to be quite satisfying. The following two paragraphs illustrate the book's depth, and also the strengths and weaknesses of the author's style. If you love beautiful writing, and have time to indulge in it, this is the book for you. If you are a typical modern, short on time and impatient, you may find it too much.

"One of our most widespread illusory mistakes is the assumption that others exist for us. That they live to please us. In fact, the one great truth we should faithfully profess and repeat several times every morning when we open our eyes is, it is we who are here for the benefit of others. To believe differently is a mendacious misperception, a dangerous trap. Nobody was born for us, but for themselves, their own life, their own mission. Nobody is here to alleviate your solitude and loneliness. If that were so, such a person couldn't possibly have their own personality, One of our most widespread illusory mistakes is the assumption that others exist for us. That they live to please us. In fact, the one great truth we should faithfully profess and repeat several times every morning when we open our eyes is, it is we who are here for the benefit of others. To believe differently is a mendacious misperception, a dangerous trap. Nobody was born for us, but for themselves, their own life, their own mission. Nobody is here to alleviate your solitude and loneliness. If that were so, such a person couldn't possibly have their own personality,

"Your child is not born into the world for your sake. From you and by you, but not for you. You don't own them; they have no call to serve you, or to realize your dreams. Your partner too is their own person. They share your life and bed, but isn't your chattel. Not even the most intimate sacred bond of marriage entitles you to own or possess them, nor to use them as a defenseless servant of your life, interests, and desires. Entertain no illusions of what their duties of marriage and love might be. They don't have any! "Till death do us part" does not imply complete and unconditional fusion and self-revelation, that is, an unconditional mutual ownership, but rather it is a pledge to a mutually unconditional acceptance and respect. This line of reasoning may have some painful and embarrassing implications, but it is more painful and embarrassing if we entertain illusory fantasies and misapprehensions of our relationships, then, when facing reality, we feel that we are at a loss, suffering and struggling to the point where we confront others over their natural behavior, implying they're doing something wrong by not binding themselves to our material-spiritual service. Respecting the sovereignty and freedom of others is painful and difficult, considering how selfish human instinct would most readily appropriate, devour, and bind all of humanity to our purposes. This is why we tend to put our weight on one another, why we demand and expect, why we hold each other accountable; this is the reason for our jealousies, indiscretions, suspicions and spying, and finally this is why we come to despise each other and why our relationships fail. Ultimately, this is the reason we are grievously lonesome."