

The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies

By Robert E. Lane

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Despite the fact that citizens of advanced market democracies are satisfied with their material progress, many are haunted by a spirit of unhappiness. There is evidence of a rising tide of clinical depression in most advanced societies, and in the United States studies have documented a decline in the number of people who regard themselves as happy. Although our political and economic systems are based on the utilitarian philosophy of happiness—the greatest good for the greatest number—they seem to have contributed to our dissatisfaction with life. This book investigates why this is so.

Drawing on extensive research in such fields as quality of life, economics, politics, sociology, psychology, and biology, Robert E. Lane presents a challenging thesis. He shows that the main sources of well-being in advanced economies are friendships and a good family life and that, once one is beyond the poverty level, a larger income contributes almost nothing to happiness. In fact, as prosperity increases, there is a tragic erosion of family solidarity and community integration, and individuals become more and more distrustful of each other and their political institutions. Lane urges that we alter our priorities so that we increase our levels of companionship even at the risk of reducing our income.

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Review
"Well-written and -documented." -- *Amitai Etzioni, author of The New Golden Rule*

About the Author

Robert E. Lane is Eugene Meyer Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Yale University. He is the author of many books, including, most recently, *The Market Experience.*

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