



# PSY268

# Contemporary Issues in Psychology

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- Format of the course
  - Lectures/ seminars (active participation)



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- Content
  - „Science of Happiness“ – little bit of biology, and whole lot of psychology
- Requirements



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- Requirements
  - preparations
  - 2 papers
  - 1 presentation
  - attendance



- Who am I?
- Who are you?
- What will the course be about (Block 1)?



- 2 ways to look at happiness:
- Hedonistic approach
- Eudaimonic approach



- *When I was a small child, I thought that success spelled happiness. I was wrong. Happiness is like a butterfly which appears and delights us for one brief moment, but soon flits away – **Anna Pavlova***
- *Finding happiness is like finding yourself. You don't find happiness, you make happiness. Self-actualisation is a process of discovering who you are, who you want to be and paving the way to happiness by doing what brings you the most meaning and contentment to your life over the long run. – **David Leonhardt***



- Hedonistic approach – positive affect
- Eudemonic approach – actualization of oneself, living well



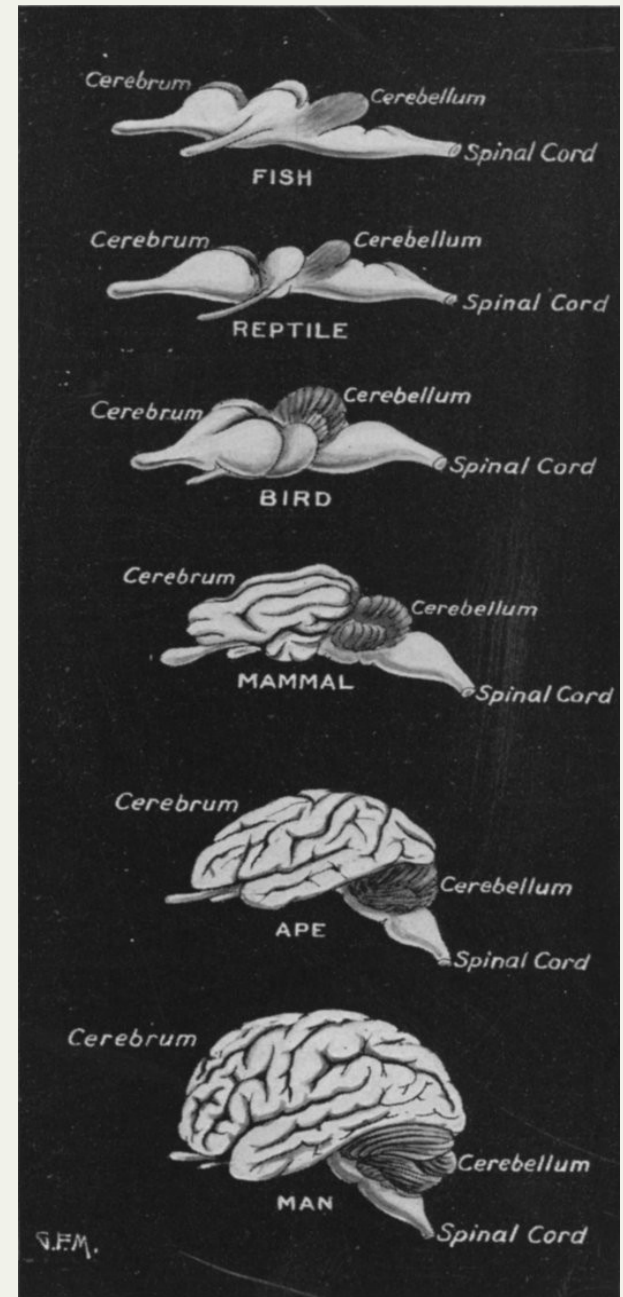


- **Happiness** – meaning, psychology, sociology,
- **Pleasure** - neurobiology



## ● Evolution

- Bigger
- Gain new structures



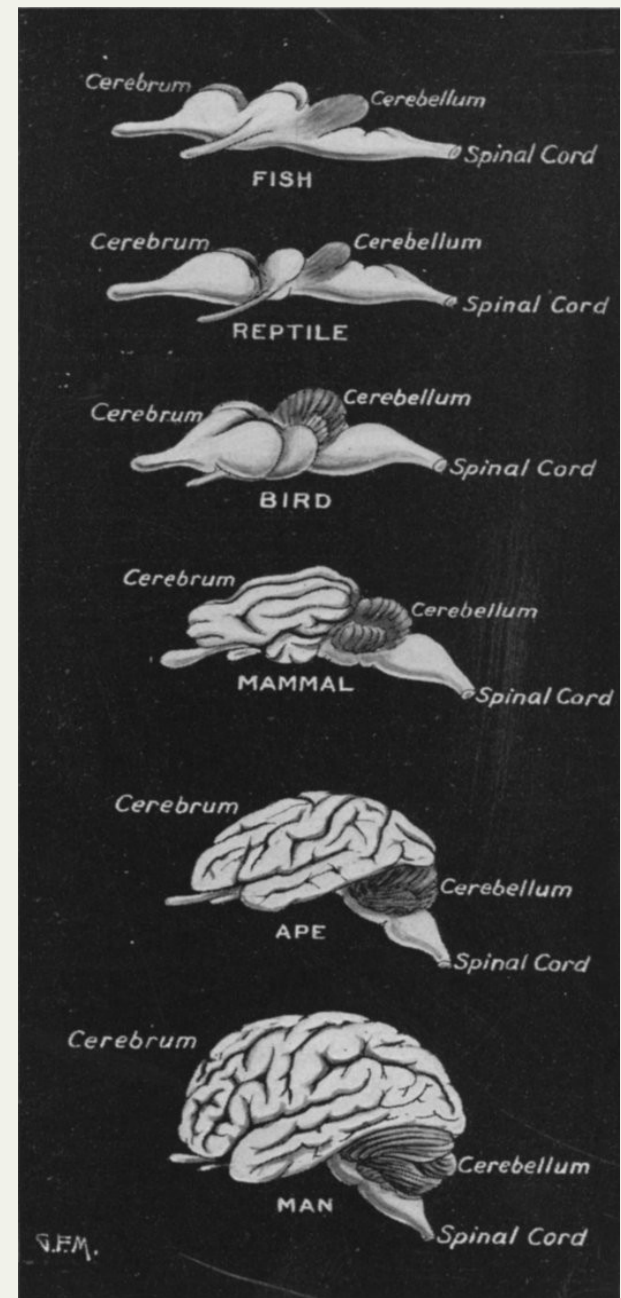


## ● Evolution

- Bigger
- Gain new structures



- Frontal lobe
  - Prefrontal cortex





- What does Prefrontal cortex do???
- Responsible for complex cognitive behavior, personality expression, decision making and moderating social behavior
- Simulate experience



# Example of Experience simulation

- Dan Gilbert

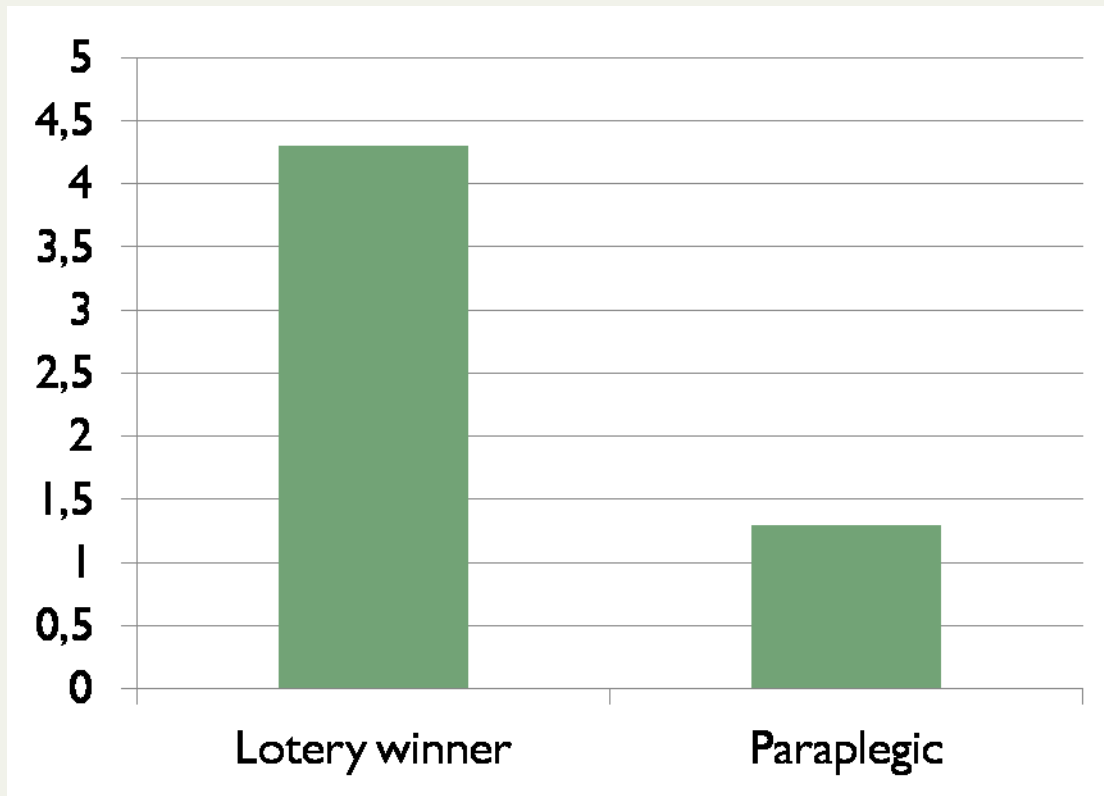
- Which one would you prefer/ How happy are these people?

:



# Results

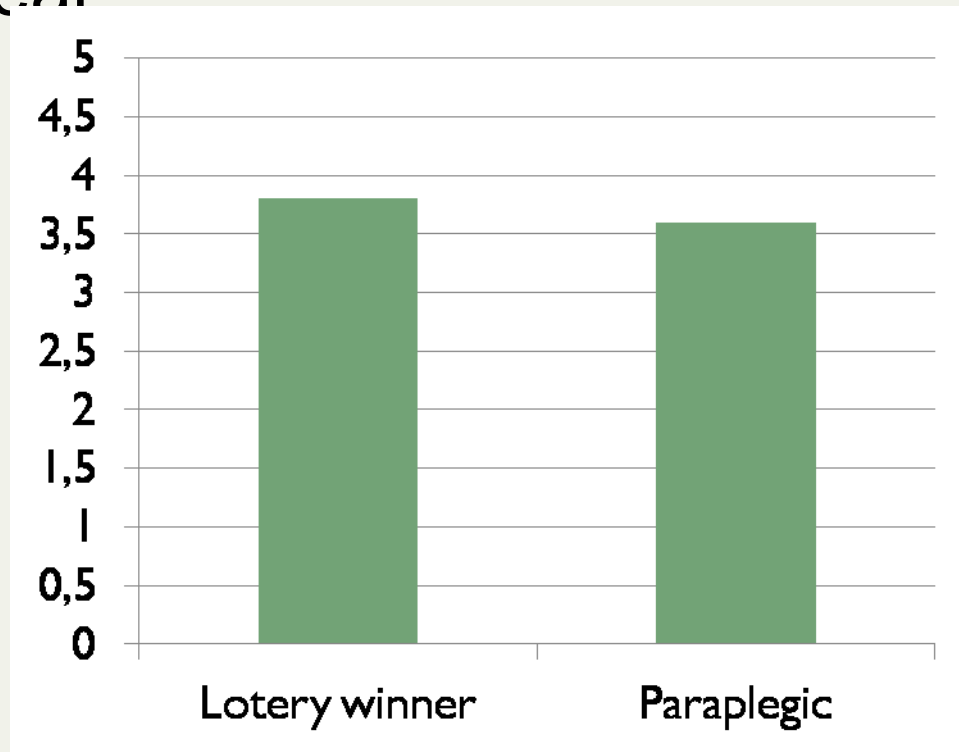
- What do you expect?





# Results

- Actual level of happiness measured after one year



# Impact bias

- People do this kind of mistakes all the time:
- Tendency to overestimate the hedonic impact of future events
  - Ending relationship, college acceptance, job interviews,...etc.
- Simulator (experience simulator) works badly...





# Brickman and Campbell

(1971)

## Hedonic Treadmill

- *“even though external forces are constantly changing our lives and our life goals, happiness is a relatively constant state”*
- idea of relative levels of happiness
- Situations may get better or worse, but we will usually report about the same levels of happiness or sadness. Humans are apt to adjust to external events on their life and, therefore, their needs will adapt as life changes. Demographic information only appears to account for a 20% variance of happiness. Although one might expect the income, attractiveness, and health conditions of the subject to affect overall well-being, studies show that their overall combined total correlation is not ultimately significant.



# Brickman and Campbell (1971)



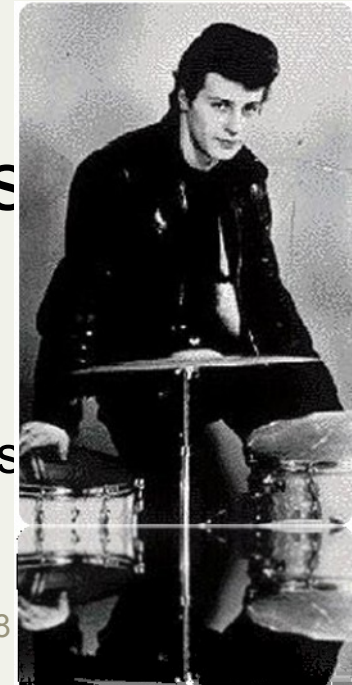
- Based on the concept of the hedonic treadmill, they suggest that there is little people can do to change their long-term levels of happiness.
- Lottery Winners are no more happy than non winners and paraplegic individuals are no less happy than those who can walk.

# Synthesized vs. Natural Happiness

- NH – is what we *have* when we *do* get what we wanted
- SH – is what we *make* when we *don't* get what we wanted

- E.g. ...quote by Pete Best  
(original Beatles drummer)

“I’m much more happy  
than I would have been with The Beatles”



# Synthesized vs. Natural Happiness

- NH perceived as superior to SH

- Is that right? Are we just lying to ourselves or is there more to it???
- To be continued ...

