



Perpetual Euphoria: On the Duty to Be Happy

Pascal Bruckner

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Happiness today is not just a possibility or an option but a requirement and a duty. To fail to be happy is to fail utterly. Happiness has become a religion--one whose smiley-faced god looks down in rebuke upon everyone who hasn't yet attained the blessed state of perpetual euphoria. How has a liberating principle of the Enlightenment--the right to pursue happiness--become the unavoidable and burdensome responsibility to be happy? How did we become unhappy about not being happy--and what might we do to escape this predicament? In *Perpetual Euphoria*, Pascal Bruckner takes up these questions with all his unconventional wit, force, and brilliance, arguing that we might be happier if we simply abandoned our mad pursuit of happiness.

Gripped by the twin illusions that we are responsible for being happy or unhappy and that happiness can be produced by effort, many of us are now martyring ourselves--sacrificing our time, fortunes, health, and peace of mind--in the hope of entering an earthly paradise. Much better, Bruckner argues, would be to accept that happiness is an unbidden and fragile gift that arrives only by grace and luck.

A stimulating and entertaining meditation on the unhappiness at the heart of the modern cult of happiness, *Perpetual Euphoria* is a book for everyone who has ever bristled at the command to "be happy."

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