Happiness- A Topic in Political Philosophy and The infinite Value of Libraries in the philosophical pursuit of true Happiness as intellectual bliss: one of many responses in Platonic political philosophy by DBL

Most all religions see their mission as a prescription for the attainment of happiness, some attributing eschatological rewards of perpetual happiness to eternal bliss in the afterlife (see: http://libguides.tourolib.org/afterlife ) whereby the souls of the righteous bask in the splendor of the shekhinah. For Rambam, reward “there” (olam ha-bah, or world to come) is directly proportional to the wisdom-understanding-knowledge gained in this world (Hilkot Teshuvah) via torah lishmah (see: http://libguides.tourolib.org/philosophyeducation ).

In the Platonic dialogue the Lysis, Socrates engages with others raising the question what is true happiness. Some opinions are voiced that most people believe gold will buy them happiness. Rashi comments that one serve G-d with all one’s might (modekhah) that means using ones monterary assets to pursue learning. However that is not the opinion of most people according to Socrates whose dialogue with others gives rise to the many, ad captum vulgi, feeling that happiness is gained via Hedonism, i.e. pleasures in eating and other pleasures. The next group according to Socrates are politicians and entertainers, who sometimes seek “fame” which Socrates notes is fleeting. As the Rabbis hold in an agadata, Alexander the great was shown an eyeball, and then sand was placed on the eyeball suggesting that his desire to conquer the world and his accomplishments in erecting steles in each place he conquered would be “forgotten” eventually in all its details by history represented by sand covering the eyeball etc. The next group Socrates mentions is those who feel sports events brings happiness. Socrates cites pigeon flyers, but Ramban in the medieval ages sights people who take pleasure in watching roosters or pit bools fight Ramban calls this a pagan sensibility. The next group is those who find happiness in gambling. This category is cited in the Mishnah as those who “semakh bi-Kuba” and they are according to Talmudic law disqualified from testifying along with those who deal in sabbatical produce. This is not to underestimate Dostoivesky’s great literary short story the “gambler” which describes a grandmother who loves to gamble. The next group Socrates cites is very rare and if you ever meet any of this type it is extremely lucky. Those are the philosophers who find the highest happiness in quest for wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. They find a hedonei (pleasure) in learning and cognitive attainment. They view intellectual virtue as the supreme virtue. In fact Maimonides holds that the reward in the next life is directly proportional to the intellectual virtue gained in this world and in that next world, the righteous sit with crowns on their heads. There is not eating, drinking, or anything physical according to rabbam who also describes this rare group who finds the highest happiness in intellectual life of the mind and cognitive bliss. Ramban notes that the crowns on the heads of the righteous are directly proportional to the level of their intellectual attainment in olam ha-zeh (this world, see Hilchot teshuvah).

At: http://www.ajlnyma.org/news/20_2.pdf ( pp. 2,7) DBL shows that libraries play a crucial role in pursuit of happiness and have infinite value, more precious than rubies, for all religions conceive of a summum bonum, in monotheistic religions i.e. an infinite Deity, whose revelation is of supernal truths whose echoes remain cached in certain texts librarians can show how to access to hear.

Librarians can serve as gatekeepers, who show how to construct keys by which to open gates to palaces of wisdom into which souls will be delighted and refreshed, listening to “angelic” communications uncovered in great texts. Like deep sea divers librarians bring up treasures, pearls of
wisdom, hidden on the ocean floor, creating sea changes in epistemological understanding. Librarians give students the decoding skills necessary to decipher new “Rosetta Stones. Librarians help to see interdisciplinary connections “that fall through the web.” Librarians allow students to emerge upon “clearings” after journeys in intellectual forests. Librarians trail blaze the path for patrons to ascend the mountain of wisdom, seeing the forest from trees, expanding the knowledge horizon, enabling cognitive sunrises.

Librarians transmit memories of reliable traditions that can echo timeless, ethical-spiritual-and intellectual truths. Libraries as the heart of any University, play a vital role, in striving for truth to benefit others. This mission is a higher calling, what the Rambam notes is the purpose for which the human being’s completeness (shelemuth) in the image of G-d (bitzelem elokim) was created to affirm the link (kesher) with Hashem via the active intellect (sekel hapoel) that draws one closer to being with and clinging to (devukut) G-d. For Rambam the pilgrim soul in pursuit of truth is beautiful in balancing intellectual with ethical virtues [see chart: http://libguides.tourolib.org/content.php?pid=521618&sid=4292126 ]

In Zohar HaRakiah alluding to Daniel 12:3, “some will shine like the “brightness of the firmament” the Tashbaz notes, “when a wise man lies down with his fathers, he leaves behind him a treasured and organized blessing: books that enlighten like the brilliance of the firmament and that extend peace like a river (Isa. 66:12). Four rivers surround Paradise (Gen. 2:10), and the few like Rabbi Akiva in this world enter and exit this PaRDeS in peace (see Arba sheniknasu biPardes, Hagigah 12b-14b). Borges remarked 'I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of [celestial] library.’

Libraries are the center of any academic setting. Libraries play a key, vital, and essential role not only preserving the noble memories, traditions, insights, wisdom, and truths found in great texts, but also transmitting these teachings to expand consciousness (mogen gedolot).

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