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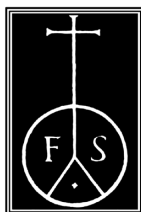
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Titos Flavios Demetrios (Ipswich Museum).

A HAPPINESS INDEX FOR ANTIQUITY? HELLENISTIC EGYPT AS A CASE-STUDY¹

KATELIJN VANDORPE

1. INTRODUCTION

«Nike to Berenike her lady sister, many greetings. Before all I pray that you are well, and I constantly perform your obeisance before the gods here, praying that you may have life's good things». ²

THE introduction of this private letter from Roman Egypt highlights a simple but telling paraphrase of happiness: 'life's good things (τὰ ἐν βίῳ ἀγαθὰ)'.

How happy were people in Antiquity? Can such a question be answered? For Greco-Roman Egypt we have exceptional material at our disposal. Papyri are like instantaneous photographs, which allow us to take an honest glance at people's private lives, but there is more: people's private archives present a coherent film of a person's or family's lives over a longer period. ³ Papyrologists discuss in great detail their names, habits, professions, taxes, the contents of their archives, but they hardly ask themselves: were these people happy? ⁴

To discover whether people were happy is not an easy task, but we hope to reach some conclusions by making use of the current happiness index. The first World Happiness Report, counting almost 200 pages and launched at the United Nations Conference on Happiness in 2012, is most instructive. It has been published by the Earth Institute of the Columbia University in collaboration with scholars of the London School of economics. ⁵ It describes the causes of happiness and misery and discusses, as case studies, happiness in Bhutan and the United Kingdom. The findings are based on the most recent scientific research: since the

¹ I should like to thank W. Clarysse and S. Waebens for their helpful comments.

² *P. Mert.* II 82, translation in R. S. BAGNALL, R. CRIBIORE, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt: 300 BC -AD 800*, Ann Arbor, 2006, p. 266.

³ On archival research in papyrology, see most recently K. VANDORPE, *Archives and Dossiers*, in R. S. Bagnall (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, Oxford, 2009, chapter 10, pp. 216-255, and the archives website <<http://www.trismegistos.org/arch/index.php>>.

⁴ For an exception, we refer to the archive of Saturnila and her sons, called the 'Happy family archive' because of the 'civilized and affectionate relationship between mother and adult sons' (H. I. BELL, *A Happy Family*, in *Aus Antike und Orient. Festschrift Wilhelm Schubart zum 75. Geburtstag*, Leipzig, 1950, pp. 38-47). But this happy family also had its moments of unhappiness, notably when a next of kin deceased, see P. J. SJPSTEIJN, *A Happy Family?*, «ZPE», 21 (1976), pp. 169-181. For a recent description of the archive, see <<http://www.trismegistos.org/arch/detail.php?tm=212&ti=1>>.

⁵ J. Helliwell, R. Layard, J. Sachs (edd.), *World Happiness Report*, The Earth Institute, Columbia University, 2012, with bibliography pp. 149-158. The report is downloadable at <<http://www.earth.columbia.edu/sitefiles/file/Sachs%20Writing/2012/World%20Happiness%20Report.pdf>>.

late 20th century, happiness has become a popular subject in a range of fields⁶ and has evolved into independent subdisciplines like the ‘economics of happiness’, combining economics with fields such as psychology and sociology. The quest for happiness is intimately linked to the quest for ‘sustainable development’,⁷ a term referring to the combination of human well-being and environmental sustainability. Hence, the happiness index is in some countries an organizing principle for governance and policy and will undoubtedly become so in other countries.

According to the current generation of psychologists, economists, sociologists, pollsters and other scholars, happiness, though a subjective experience, can be objectively measured through questionnaires. A distinction should be made between:

– Affective Happiness, determined by the ups and downs of daily emotions: ‘how happy were you yesterday’?

– Evaluative Happiness, which measures the overall evaluation of life: ‘Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are’?

These two types of happiness have predictable causes.

2. AFFECTIVE HAPPINESS

Affective Happiness (‘how happy were you yesterday’?) is connected to the day-to-day joys of friendship, time with family, etc., and the causes of Affective Happiness are the same across the world. Wherever they live, people dislike bad weather or like good food. So the causes of Affective happiness are not regional, they are universal in space and maybe also in time. We may therefore find the same causes of Affective Happiness in ancient Egypt.

How to measure Affective Happiness in ancient Egypt? Polls are not possible, but fortunately we have numerous private letters, where emotions are shown in an outspoken, honest way and testify to (un)happiness. Demotic letters only casually display emotions,⁸ contrary to the Greek and Coptic⁹ letters of Greco-Roman Egypt. Apparently, women show their emotions more easily than men: the prominence of women’s emotions is «no doubt due to the role of mothers and wives as persons of trust within the family».¹⁰ A provisional exploration of

⁶ E.g., M. FLEURBAEY, E. SCHOKKAERT, K. DECANCO, *What Good is Happiness?*, in *CORE Discussion Papers 2009017*, Université catholique de Louvain, Center for Operations Research and Econometrics (CORE), 2009, discussing whether and how welfare economics should incorporate the insights from happiness and satisfaction studies.

⁷ E.g., T. RUNGWITOO, *Sufficiency Economy and Gross National Happiness: Integrated Value for Sustainable Development*, in *The Meaning of Sufficiency Economy International Conference. Proceedings*, Bangkok, 2012, pp. 114-133.

⁸ In Demotic letters, emotions are implied rather than stated and are displayed in a controlled way, see J. TAIT, in C. Kotsifou (ed.), *Emotional Display, Persuasion and Rhetoric in Papyri* (forthcoming). For expressions of emotions such as pain, sorrow, irritation, joy and pleasure in Demotic letters, see M. DEPAUW, *The Demotic Letter: A Study of Epistolographic Scribal Traditions against their Intra- and Intercultural Background* («Demotische Studien», 14), Sommerhausen, 2006, pp. 281-284.

⁹ On Coptic letters of daily life, see e.g., A. BOUD’HORS, in C. Kotsifou (ed.), *Emotional Display*, cit.

¹⁰ See W. CLARYSSE, *Emotions in private papyrus letters*, in C. Kotsifou (ed.), *Emotional Display*, cit.; for women’s letters, see R. S. BAGNALL, R. CRIBIORE, *Women’s letters*, cit.

the Greek letters¹¹ shows that indeed the same things of life lead to a feeling of happiness or unhappiness. The first cause of happiness that comes to mind is love. But love letters are rare, which may seem strange; many women, however, were not able to write or read, so their love letters had to be written down or read by someone else. This privacy problem may explain the lack of love letters.¹² Other causes of happiness or deep grief were, among others, friendship, parental and filial love, the death of a next of kin or friend,¹³ seriously ill children,¹⁴ or the proverbial mother-in-law.¹⁵

These letters are like instantaneous photographs, but if we bring together all these photographs, we have a broad range of causes that lead to strong emotions, witnessing happiness or unhappiness, and the causes are quite similar to the causes of happiness in our 21st century society.

The search for Affective Happiness is closely related to the research into emotions, which has become popular in papyrology over the last decade. The 2010 Papyrological Congress of Geneva had a session on emotions¹⁶ and a large project on emotions in Antiquity has a subsection on emotions in the papyri.¹⁷ Like research on Affective Happiness, studies on emotions¹⁸ discuss the causes of emotions, but emotion research is broader, discussing also what kind of emotions are possible (anger, ...), which emotions are linked to which causes, which words are used to express emotions (lexicographical aspects). Another dimension is emotion-as-a-strategy: people can manipulate other people by using emotions.

¹¹ The Trismegistos database contains about 6500 Greek private letters. For an exploration of Greek letters, see the anthologies of B. OLSSON, *Papyrusbriefe aus der frühesten Römerzeit*, Uppsala, 1925, dissertation, *Select Papyri I* and R. S. BAGNALL, R. CRIBIORE, *Women's letters*, cit.; for an analysis of letters of condolence, see J. CHAPA, *Letters of Condolence in Greek Papyri* («Papyrologica Florentina», 29), Florence, 1998.

¹² See W. CLARYSSE, *Emotions in private papyrus letters*, in C. Kotsifou (ed.), *Emotional Display*, cit.; for examples of love letters, see e.g., *P. Oxy. XLII 3059* (translation in R. S. BAGNALL, R. CRIBIORE, *Women's letters*, cit., p. 275) and *P. Oxy. III 528 = Select Papyri I*, 125.

¹³ E.g., *P. Oxy. I 115*, translation in R. S. BAGNALL, R. CRIBIORE, *Women's letters*, cit., p. 172.

¹⁴ E.g., *PSI III 177*, translation in R. S. BAGNALL, R. CRIBIORE, *Women's letters*, cit., p. 280.

¹⁵ E.g., *P. Petaus 29*, translation in R. S. BAGNALL, R. CRIBIORE, *Women's letters*, cit., p. 276.

¹⁶ The panel 'Emotions and Papyri' in the 26th International Congress of Papyrology, Geneva, 16-21 August 2010 was organised by C. Kotsifou, see <http://emotions.classics.ox.ac.uk/project/news/panel.html>. The papers will be published in C. Kotsifou (ed.), *Emotional Display*, cit.

¹⁷ The project «The Social and Cultural Construction of Emotions: The Greek Paradigm» is funded by the European Research Council with an Advanced Investigator Grant (2009-2013) and is affiliated with the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents and the Classics Faculty of the University of Oxford.

¹⁸ See e.g., C. KOTSIFOY, *Papyrological Perspectives on Orphans in the World of Late Ancient Christianity*, in C. Horn, R. R. Phenix (edd.), *Children in Late Ancient Christianity*, Tübingen, 2009, pp. 339-373; ID., *Emotions and Papyri: Insights into the Theatre of Human Experience in Antiquity*, in A. Chaniotis (ed.), *Unveiling Emotions: Sources and Methods for the Study of Emotions in the Greek World*, Stuttgart, 2012, pp. 39-90; ID., *A Glimpse into the World of Petitions: The Case of Aurelia Artemis and her Orphaned Children*, in A. Chaniotis (ed.), *Unveiling Emotions*, cit., pp. 317-327; ID., 'Being Unable to Come to You and Lament and Weep with You': *Grief and Condolence Letters on Papyrus*, in A. Chaniotis (ed.), *Unveiling Emotions*, cit., pp. 389-411; ID., *Appealing for Justice, Praying for Revenge: The Papyrological Evidence*, in A. Chaniotis, P. Ducrey (edd.), *Emotions in Greece and Rome: Texts, Images, Material Culture*, Stuttgart, forthcoming; ID. (ed.), *Emotional Display*, cit.

This aspect is clearly present in numerous petitions, where the petitioner tries to arouse pity by putting the accused in a bad light, like: «he detests me because I am old and have a bad sight», or «because I am minor». Finally, some researchers approach emotions in an anthropological way and assess whether ancient people lived in a shame- or a guilt-culture.

With this short overview of real and manipulated emotions and their causes, we can end the first section on Affective Happiness with the conclusion that Affective Happiness is dealt with in papyrological research thanks to the recent interest into emotions.

3. EVALUATIVE HAPPINESS

3. 1. *The indicators of Evaluative Happiness*

The second section on Evaluative Happiness («Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?») is still unexplored in papyrological research and is the actual subject we are interested in. Here too, the causes of Evaluative Happiness have been detected and contrary to Affective happiness, the results are very different according to the region where one lives. The least happy countries are to be found in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Togo, Benin), while the happiest countries nowadays are in northern Europe. In recent years, Denmark has been topping the list. The four happiest countries have incomes that are 40 times higher than the four unhappiest countries and people can expect to live 28 years longer. Freedom, strong social networks and trust in government are also crucial factors in happiness. At the individual level, mental and physical health, job security and a stable family life are important.

Economic growth does not necessarily drive up happiness: «the world's economic superpower, the United States», for instance, «has achieved striking economic and technological progress over the past half century», yet average happiness has not changed. Instead, «uncertainties and anxieties are high, social and economic inequalities have widened considerably, social trust is in decline, and confidence in government is at an all-time low. Perhaps for these reasons, life satisfaction has remained nearly constant during decades of rising Gross National Product (GNP) per capita». ¹⁹ Hence the indicators for the happiness index or GNH (Gross National Happiness) are much more than economic parameters, which are at the core of the GNP (Gross National Product) and more varied than those of the HDI (Human Development Index), which focuses on health, education and living standards.

The happiness index categorizes 33 indicators of happiness under nine domains, which are equally weighted.²⁰ Respecting the limitation of the material available

¹⁹ *The World Happiness Report*, cit., p. 4.

²⁰ The nine domains are: Health, Psychological well-being, Education, Cultural diversity and resilience, Community vitality, Living standards, Ecological diversity and resilience, Good governance, Time use.

for Greco-Roman Egypt, we have classified the indicators into the following pillars or domains (see also below):

- the physical and mental pillar with parameters such as physical and mental health, the possibility to show emotions;
- the social and cultural pillar with parameters such as the absence or presence of familial or social networks to which one can turn, education and literacy;
- the economic pillar, including income, employment;
- the environmental pillar, with ecological parameters; for Antiquity these may be ‘damage by animals’, the consequences of urbanisation, and for Egypt the Nile inundations;
- the governmental pillar, that is, good governance largely contributes to people’s happiness.

3. 2. Significant indicators of Evaluative Happiness for People of Greco-Roman Egypt

For Antiquity we cannot evaluate the happiness indicators through questionnaires. But a voice can be given to the people of Greco-Roman Egypt by turning to their oracle questions, letters and complaints to the government. These types of texts may, to some degree, help us to retrieve which parameters were significant for the Evaluative Happiness of people in Greco-Roman Egypt.

It is inherent to petitions that they deal with criminal facts and hence most complaints mention problems with assets, safety or corruption issues. But also oracle questions and letters pay much attention to rather materialistic matters, like people’s assets and problems concerning these assets, and only to a lesser degree to, for instance, health.²¹ Here you find the top 5²² of topics dealt with in the Egyptian and Greek oracle questions (‘Ticket-Orakel’)²³ and in the do-it-yourself oracle of Astrampsychus:²⁴

²¹ For the topics dealt with in Demotic letters, see M. DEPAUW, *The Demotic Letter*, cit., pp. 7-63.

²² The top 5 is based on W. CLARYSSE, *Als het mij niet gegeven is te huwen, geef me dan dit briefje*, and *Doe-het-zelforakels. Van Astrampsychus tot Napoleon*, in K. Vandorpe, H. Verreth (edd.), *Grieken en Romeinen bewegen hemel en aarde. Voorspellen in de Oudheid* («Aulos»), Leuven, 1996, pp. 56-57 (oracle questions) and p. 67 (oracle of Astrampsychus), and on F. NAETHER, *Die Sortes Astrampsychi. Problemlösungsstrategien durch Orakel im römischen Ägypten* («Orientalische Religionen in der Antike», 3), Tübingen, 2010, pp. 405-406 (oracle questions) and pp. 406-408 (oracle of Astrampsychus).

²³ Egypt’s oracle questions have a particular characteristic: two alternatives were formulated, a positive and a negative, of which the god had to choose the right answer. The Greeks in Egypt continued this Egyptian custom of oracle questions, see D. VALBELLE, G. HUSSON, *Les questions oraculaires d’Égypte: histoire de la recherche, nouveautés et perspectives*, in W. Clarysse, A. Schoors, H. Willems (edd.), *Egyptian Religion. The Last Thousand Years. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur* («Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta», 85), Leuven, 1998, II, pp. 1055-1071; F. NAETHER, *Sortes Astrampsychi*, cit.

²⁴ F. A. J. HOOGENDIJK, W. CLARYSSE, *De Sortes van Astrampsychus. Een orakelboek uit de Oudheid bewerkt voor het Middelbaar Onderwijs*, «Kleio», 11.2 (1981); G. M. BROWNE, *Sortes Astrampsychi* («Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana»), Leipzig, 1983; G. M. BROWNE, *The Sortes Astrampsychi and the Egyptian Oracle*, in J. Dummer (ed.), *Texte und Textkritik. Eine Aufsatzsammlung* («Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur», 133), Berlin, 1987, pp. 67-71; F. NAETHER, *Sortes Astrampsychi*, cit.

TICKET-ORAKEL (GRECO-ROMAN PERIOD)	ORACLE OF ASTRAMPSYCHUS (ROMAN PERIOD)
1. questions about assets (sale, loan, inheritance, theft, ...) and profession,	1. questions about assets (sale, loan, inheritance, ...) and profession,
2. travel or stay home,	2. love and marital issues,
3. health and illness,	3. politics or office,
4. love and marital issues,	4. travel or stay home,
5. cult.	5. health and illness.

People are mainly concerned about their assets and profession, which is part of the economic pillar, but also about their health (physical pillar), safety when they travel (government pillar) and family life (social pillar). These are significant indicators, contrary to the situation of slaves, which is hardly present in oracle texts:²⁵ in Antiquity, fundamental human rights (part of the government pillar) were not an issue.

At the same time, the fact that these people write about their problems shows that they have a social safety net (indicator: social network, part of the social and cultural pillar): according to the happiness index, it is important that people can turn to someone with whatever problem they have. In Egypt, people could write about their little or big problems to family or friends, or they could turn to the gods through their oracle questions, and in case of irregularities or criminal facts, they could hand in petitions to the government. People could easily turn to the government with all kinds of problems and their case was quickly dealt with. This is a sign of good governance, also one of the pillars of the happiness index, dealt with below.²⁶

3. 3. *The Evaluative Happiness indicators applied to Hellenistic Egypt*

Another approach to discover whether people in Antiquity were happy or not, complementary to the one discussed in 3.2., is to evaluate the happiness indicators one by one, a life time project, but a provisional evaluation may show the possibilities and advantages of this approach. The evaluation will be confined to Hellenistic Egypt. Papyri are suitable to study the private life of people in Antiquity, but if you put the happiness index alongside the papyrological research in general, several topics appear to be subject of papyrological research, but there is sometimes a discrepancy: modern papyrological research still departs too often from institutions or abstract topics, and not always from the people themselves. For instance, when employment, one of the economic parameters, is discussed in papyrological research, questions such as 'which professions are there, what is

²⁵ F. NAETHER, *Sortes Astrampsychi*, cit., p. 406: «Sklaventhemen kommen so gut wie gar nicht vor»; see also J.A. STRAUS, *L'achat et la vente des esclaves dans l'Égypte romaine. Contribution papyrologique à l'étude de l'esclavage dans une province orientale de l'Empire romain* («ArchPF. Beiheft», 14), München-Leipzig, 2004, pp. 21-22.

²⁶ The Hellenistic period is dealt with below, for the Roman period, see B. KELLY, *Petitions, Litigation, and Social Control in Roman Egypt*, Oxford, 2011, who takes a new approach to reading the evidence: he discusses the social role of petitioning and litigation in Roman Egypt, rather than merely examining how the legal system was used to resolve particular disputes.

the average income of these professions, which taxes were linked to these professions, etc.', are answered, but we do not ask ourselves, like the happiness index does: 'did people always have a job, were they happy with their jobs, etc.' Such questions depart from the people and not from abstract topics or institutions.

Here follows an overview of the happiness indicators which may be applied to the sources of Hellenistic Egypt; gender, age and occupational categories affect several parameters. The indicators are partly covered in the current papyrological research, as shown in the second column. Those indicators which may be evaluated in a positive way for Hellenistic Egypt are marked by an asterisk. Indicators which were probably not significant in Antiquity are marked by //.

The physical and mental pillar and its indicators:²⁷

INDICATORS HAPPINESS INDEX	CURRENT PAPYROLOGICAL RESEARCH
– physical health (including life expectancy and disability)	– average life expectancy; illnesses
– psychological well-being:	
– *possibility to express emotions, negative and positive	– emotion-research
– *Access to spirituality and/or religious experience	– religion (gods and temples); religious festivals; magical texts

The social and cultural pillar and its indicators:²⁸

INDICATORS HAPPINESS INDEX	CURRENT PAPYROLOGICAL RESEARCH
– *familial and social networks to which people can turn (e.g. in case of pregnancy, financial problems, ...). How do these networks work?	– composition of families, types of associations, social network analysis, ...
– social support (time and money, volunteer work, pro-social behaviour, donations to a community, ...)	– donations to temples
– *social and cultural freedom (to have the possibility to continue own habits, native language, ...)	– ethnic groups and tolerance towards these groups
– level of education, literacy, knowledge of local myths, traditions, ...	– education, literacy
– artisan skills	– art products and artists
– *notion of values (distinction good - bad...), cf. petitions and letters	

²⁷ Compare the domains and indicators of the GNH: domain 'Health' (indicators: Mental health, Self reported health, healthy days, disability), domain 'Psychological well-being' (indicators: life satisfaction, Positive emotions, Negative emotions, Spirituality) and domain 'Time use' (indicators: Work, Sleep).

²⁸ Compare the domains and indicators of the GNH: domain 'Community Vitality' (indicators: Donations (time & money), Community relationship, Family, Safety), domain 'Cultural diversity and resilience' (indicators: Native language, Cultural participation, Artisan skills, Conduct), domain 'Education' (indicators: Literacy, Educational level, Knowledge, Values).

The environmental pillar and its indicators:²⁹

INDICATORS HAPPINESS INDEX	CURRENT POPYROLOGICAL RESEARCH
– ecological issues (aspects of climate: sun, heat, ..., nowadays: pollution, ...)	
– *urbanization issues (nowadays: traffic congestion, inadequate green spaces, ...)	– social consequences of urbanization
– *wildlife damage to crops (rural-specific)	

The governmental pillar and its indicators ('good governance'):³⁰

INDICATORS HAPPINESS INDEX	CURRENT POPYROLOGICAL RESEARCH
– *government performance	– law, institutions and administration
– *services and infrastructure (water supply, health services, roads, ...)	
– political participation	– social mobility, status
– // fundamental human rights	– situation of slaves
– *(perceived) safety	– army and police

The economic pillar and its indicators:³¹

INDICATORS HAPPINESS INDEX	CURRENT POPYROLOGICAL RESEARCH
– *housing (room-ratio, roofing)	– types of houses, fragmentation of houses, roofing
– *assets (land, housing, livestock, nowadays also: mobile phone, TV, computer ...)	– types of land or houses, landowners
– income per capita & tax burden	– average income, tax system, types of taxes
– *(un)employment (did people have a job?)	– types of professions

By way of example, we focus here on the economic and government pillar. Assets are one of the parameters within the economic pillar: which assets are important in a society? Nowadays, for instance, it is important for young people to have a mobile phone. Within the economic pillar the comparing aspect is crucial: people always compare to what other people in their family or neighbourhood have. So, when we deal with assets in a society, we have to take account of the classes

²⁹ Compare the domain and indicators of the GNH: domain 'Ecological diversity and resilience (indicators: Ecological issues, Responsibility towards environment, Wildlife damage (rural), Urbanization issues).

³⁰ Compare the domain and indicators of the GNH: domain 'Good governance' (indicators: Government performance, Fundamental rights, Services, Political participation).

³¹ Compare the domain and indicators of the GNH: domain 'Living standards' (indicators: Assets, Housing, Household per capita income).

to which people belong. For Hellenistic Egypt, land and houses are well studied in relation to social classes,³² but other assets are not. For women, it is easier to study their usual assets because we dispose of women's lists in marriage contracts, for instance. These show that for the Egyptian middle class, the bridal veil was the most important asset, followed by gold or silver ornaments.³³

Also for men, assets which were important to them and on which they spent their money may be retrieved: inventories of goods (e.g., *P. Dryton* 38) or lists of stolen objects, often part of petitions (e.g., *P. Cair. Zen.* IV 59659), usually mention in case of more precious objects the value in money or the weight. *P. Dryton* 38, an inventory of a Greek cavalryman, lists a woolen mattress made of 35 fleeces (*pokoi*, l. 15). One *pokos* is the fleece provided by one sheep every eight months, thus a mattress of 35 fleeces weighs almost 25 kilogram, which is a heavy and expensive mattress. In the same list (ll. 30-31) we find turned bed legs (*podes klinas torneutoi*) with a value of 1,000 drachmas, a quite expensive bed frame for the woolen mattress.³⁴ A study of assets on which people spent money other than land and houses should be possible.

Another parameter within the economic pillar is employment. A lot of research has been done about all kinds of professions and their income, taxes or status.³⁵ But did people always have a job? A notable difference with the situation nowadays is that people often had more than one job, because professions were not as specialized as they are nowadays, and people were more enterprising, probably out of necessity. The Egyptian Horos son of Nechouthes,³⁶ for instance, who lived in the south of Egypt, served part-time as a military or was a reservist. He owned a lot of land, grain bearing land and vineyards, which he cultivated himself or leased out, sold or purchased. He was able to lend out money or consumables at high rates, fixed by law. He owned pigeon houses; pigeons were considered a delicacy. In politically unstable times, he was employed by the local temple as a herdsman. The role played here by the local temple is significant. Another, well-known example of a Greek with different sources of income is Zenon, who left us a large archive of almost 2000 texts.³⁷ But there are many more examples, which should

³² See, e.g., most recently A. MONSON, *From the Ptolemies to the Romans: political and economic change in Egypt*, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 75-79 and 114-122; S. SCHEUBLE-REITER, *Die Katökenreiter im ptolemäischen Ägypten* («Vestigia. Beiträge zur alten Geschichte», 64), München, 2012, pp. 142-233.

³³ P. EHEVERTRÄGE, pp. 288-315; P.W. PESTMAN, *Marriage and Matrimonial Property in Ancient Egypt. A contribution to establishing the legal position of the woman* («Pap. Lugd. Bat.», 9), Leiden, 1961, pp. 91-102; K. VANDORPE, *Inventories and Private Archives in Greco-Roman Egypt*, in K. Vandorpe, W. Clarysse (edd.), *Archives and Inventories in the Eastern Mediterranean (23-24 January 2004)*, Brussels, 2006, pp. 71-71; for examples of Greek women's assets, see e.g., U. YIFTACH-FIRANKO, *Marriage and Marital Arrangements: a History of the Greek Marriage Document in Egypt, 4th century BCE-4th century CE* («Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und Antiken Rechtsgeschichte», 93), München, 2003, pp. 139-140; K. VANDORPE, *Inventories*, cit., pp. 70-71.

³⁴ *P. Dryton*, pp. 296-298.

³⁵ E.g., W. CLARYSSE, D.J. THOMPSON, *Counting the people in Hellenistic Egypt*, Cambridge, 2006.

³⁶ P. ADLER; J. HERRMANN, *Sachteilung und Wertteilung bei Grundstücken. Zu den griechischen Kaufurkunden des Horus-Archivs*, in H. Hübner e.a. (edd.), *Festschrift für Erwin Seidl. Zum 70. Geburtstag*, Cologne, 1975, pp. 53-60; K. VANDORPE, S. WAEBENS, *Reconstructing Pathyris' Archives. A Multicultural Community in Hellenistic Egypt* («Collectanea Hellenistica», 3), Brussels, 2009, pp. 127-141, §40.

³⁷ CL. ORRIEUX, *Zénon de Caunos, parépidèmos, et le destin grec* («Centre de Recherches d'Histoire Ancienne», 64 = «Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon», 320), Paris, 1985.

be discussed in our search of employment strategies in Hellenistic Egypt. Apparently, a combination of jobs, a spirit of enterprise, part-time employment by the government in the army or administration and the role of the temple were key factors in the employment of people in Hellenistic Egypt,³⁸ at least for healthy men.

The tax burden is another important aspect of the economic pillar. Taxes in Hellenistic Egypt received much attention, although one usually focuses on the taxes themselves or on the lengthy list of taxes and we too easily conclude that people in Hellenistic Egypt had to bear a heavy tax burden.³⁹ But the happiness index allows a more nuanced view. If we want to measure the tax burden, we should not only depart from the taxes themselves, but from the people who paid them. How many taxes did someone actually have to pay? 1. People paid fixed taxes on their person and on their animals:⁴⁰ these were low-level taxes; 2. they paid fixed taxes per *aroura* or per cubit on some assets like pigeon-houses, on vineyards, the cleruchs on their land:⁴¹ these were also rather low taxes; 3. the higher taxes were percentage-taxes, levied on the yield of grain-bearing land and of vineyards,⁴² or on the profit of other types of income, like on the earnings of a bathhouse.⁴³ The taxes levied in these cases varies between 1/10 to half of the profit. But the taxes were always in balance with the profit, which was estimated every year in case of land on the basis of a survey. 4. A large number of small, again very low-level taxes was to be paid but in exchange for services, like the guard and dike tax or the *naubion* tax/corvée for people who gained profit from land and had to pay for the protection and maintenance of the irrigation system,⁴⁴ or the herald tax (*kerukeion*) for people who bought land at a public auction.⁴⁵ When in politically unstable times people had a smaller income or no income, royal ordinances often acquitted the debt of their subjects.⁴⁶

Hence, the tax burden should be nuanced, although one cannot deny that people in Hellenistic Egypt paid a lot of taxes. But let us compare this situation to that

³⁸ For herdsmen in Ptolemaic Upper Egypt, partly employed in the Ptolemaic army, see J. G. MANNING, *Land and Status in Ptolemaic Egypt: the Status Designation "Occupation title + bzk + Divine Name"*, in S. Allam (ed.), *Grund und Boden in Altägypten (rechtliche und sozio-ökonomische Verhältnisse)* (Akten des internationalen Symposions, Tübingen, 18.-10. Juni 1990), Tübingen, 1994, pp. 147-175; K. VANDORPE, *Persian Soldiers and Persians of the Epigone. Social Mobility of Soldiers-herdsmen in Upper Egypt*, «AfP», 54 (2008), pp. 87-108.

³⁹ E.g., the monumental study by CL. PRÉAUX, *L'économie royale des Lagides*, Bruxelles, 1939: «l'impression du lecteur est sans doute dominée par le souvenir du nombre comme de la variété des prélèvements royaux et par la complication des méthodes de perception» (p. 426); «l'économie royale des Lagides était tout entière coordonnée en vue d'enrichir le roi» (p. 569).

⁴⁰ W. CLARYSSE, D. J. THOMPSON, *P. Count*, cit., pp. 36-89, on the salt tax (a poll tax) levied on adult men, women and on livestock.

⁴¹ A. MONSON, *From the Ptolemies*, cit., pp. 172-184.

⁴² K. VANDORPE, *The Ptolemaic Epigraphe or Harvest tax (shemu)*, «AfP», 46 (2000), pp. 165-228; A. MONSON, *From the Ptolemies*, cit., pp. 162-172.

⁴³ B. REDON, *Statut, revenus et fiscalité des édifices de bain en Égypte. 1. Époque ptolémaïque*, «BIFAO», 111 (2011), pp. 301-321: the Ptolemies taxed the bath house business in two ways: by taxing owners with the 'tax of the third' (on their revenues) and by taxing bath house managers with a special charge (*balaneiou* or *balaneion*), proportional to their income.

⁴⁴ CL. PRÉAUX, *L'économie royale*, cit., pp. 395-403; for these taxes on cleruchic land, see S. SCHEUBLE, *Katökenreiter*, cit., see index s.v. ναύβιον, φυλακτικόν, χωματικόν.

⁴⁵ CL. PRÉAUX, *L'économie royale*, cit., p. 334.

⁴⁶ E.g., the *prostagma* of 118 BC: *P. Tebt. I 5 = C. Ord. Ptol.*² 53.

in modern Europe. No-one pays more taxes than people in Denmark and they appear to be the happiest people in the world. The taxes are fair and people get something in return that is: good governance. And this may be, to a certain degree at least, also the case in Hellenistic Egypt. This brings us to the last pillar: the government pillar, of which the most important parameter is that of good governance.

Good governance invests in the other pillars: were the Ptolemaic kings concerned about the other pillars? The government largely invested in religion, even in the second century BC, that is in the restoration and building of temples, in existing and new cults, as a result of the good relationship they had – on the whole – with the Egyptian priestly elite.⁴⁷ The king was part of the religious life of Greeks and Egyptians⁴⁸ and the highest officials took part not only in Greek, but also in Egyptian religious festivals.⁴⁹

The investment in health may have been more limited, but doctors were paid at public expense and a doctor's tax may have been imposed on the Greek part of the population. Doctors had a privileged tax status,⁵⁰ which shows that the government stimulated the profession.

The government largely invested in social and cultural well-being of the people: Greek and Egyptian people could continue their own religion and their own habits, but boundaries between Greek and Egyptian groups became blurred and numerous customs were fused or were integrated in one system.⁵¹ The importance of intellectual and physical education are shown by the privileged position of teachers, athletic coaches and victors in Alexandrian games.⁵² The Ptolemies were also interested in Egyptian culture and in Egypt's past.⁵³

Within the economic pillar, the government protected the assets of private people by controlling the private transactions in a high degree. Lending, selling, inheriting, all these private affairs were well guarded by law: for instance, fixed rates for interest in loans (50% for consumables, 24 % for money loans) were established, Greek and Egyptian transactions were registered⁵⁴ and people could easily hand in their (even small) complaints to the government and were heard within short notice.

⁴⁷ J.G. MANNING, *The last Pharaohs. Egypt under the Ptolemies, 305-30 BC*, Princeton, 2010, *passim*.

⁴⁸ The Ptolemaic king was successfully worshipped in a Greek and an Egyptian version of the dynastic cult, see S. PFEIFFER, *Herrscher- und Dynastiekulte im Ptolemäerreich: Systematik und Einordnung der Kultformen* («Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte», 98), München, 2008.

⁴⁹ The *epistrategos* (as the king's representative) and the *strategos* of the Thebaid, for instance, were present at the festival of the Valley in the Theban area, see P. W. PESTMAN, in P. Tor. Choach., p. xxvi.

⁵⁰ W. CLARYSSE, D.J. THOMPSON, *P. Count*, cit., pp. 88 and 162-164.

⁵¹ For several examples, see K. VANDORPE, *History. Ptolemaic period*, in A. B. Lloyd (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Ancient Egypt. 1. State and Society*, Oxford, 2010, chapter 9, pp. 159-179.

⁵² W. CLARYSSE, D. J. THOMPSON, *P. Count*, cit., pp. 88 and 125-133.

⁵³ J. G. MANNING, *The last Pharaohs*, cit., p. 93.

⁵⁴ U. YIFTACH-FIRANKO, *Who killed the Double Document in Ptolemaic Egypt?*, «AfP», 54 (2008), pp. 203-218; K. VANDORPE, *Greek and Demotic loan agreements in epistolary style. Formalisation and registration in the later Ptolemaic period*, in U. Yiftach (ed.), *Legal Documents in Ancient Societies (LDAS) I. The Letter: Law, State, Society and the Epistolary Format in the Ancient World* («Philippika: Marburger Altertumskundliche Abhandlungen», 55, 1), Wiesbaden, 2012, pp. 171-185.

One of the first possibilities to settle a dispute in Hellenistic Egypt, an Egyptian practice integrated in the Ptolemaic juridical system, was an amicable settlement proposed by the village *epistates*, who acted as a kind of justice of the peace; when it was not clear who was right, a temple oath sworn by the accused had to end the quarrel.⁵⁵ Such a temple oath had to be sworn at a chapel, such as the chapel of the bull of Montu in Medinet Habu. Here oaths about smaller, often material problems like the following one were sworn: «I swear that this cow (...) is my farmer's cow, the one that was born in my (house)». If Phatres swears the oath, he can take his cow home, if not, he has to give the cow to Pachnum»,⁵⁶ or this oath about a maltreated cow: «I swear that I do not know who maltreated the cow».⁵⁷ Probably the cow could no longer be used as a draught animal and the responsible person should pay for it. Other oaths deal with marital problems, e.g.: «Since my marriage with you, I have not robbed you (...). I have not gone to another man, as long as I was married to you».⁵⁸ The majority of the temple oaths have to end quarrels about similar marital problems, inheritance discussions and exchange of goods.⁵⁹

When people did not agree, they could appeal to a higher court. The Erbstreit archive, dealing with a dispute on inheritance in the second century BC, shows the possibilities of the juridical apparatus in the *chora*.⁶⁰ after the Erbstreit case was dealt with by the village *epistates* of Pathyris and the amicable settlement was not accepted by the complaining party, an appeal was lodged with the *strategos*, subsequently with the *epistrategos* who was also *strategos* of the Thebaid, and finally with the *chrematistai*-judges, whose decision was final.⁶¹

The government furthermore invested in employment: people, including Egyptians, could work in the army or administration. People who owned or leased land could profit from an irrigation system which was organised by the government. The taxes were numerous, but they were linked to production, thus took into account the actual income and were acquitted in difficult periods (see above). Although several taxes were levied with a tax farming system, the tax collection

⁵⁵ See E. SEIDL, *Der Eid im ptolemäischen Recht*, München, 1929, and the introduction to *O. Tempeleide*.

⁵⁶ *O. Tempeleide* 45.

⁵⁷ *O. Tempeleide* 50.

⁵⁸ *O. Tempeleide* 5.

⁵⁹ See *O. Tempeleide*, pp. 26-29 ('Der Inhalt der Tempeleide').

⁶⁰ For the juridical apparatus in the Hellenistic *chora*, see G. SEMEKA, *Ptolemäisches Prozessrecht. Studien zur Ptolemäischen Gerichtsverfassung und zum Gerichtsverfahren*, München, 1913; E. SEIDL, *Ptolemäische Rechtsgeschichte* («Ägyptologische Forschungen», 22), Glückstadt, 1962²; H.-J. WOLFF, *Das Justizwesen der Ptolemäer* («Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und Antiken Rechtsgeschichte», 44), Wien, 1970²; J. MODRZEJEWSKI, *Chrematistes et laocrites*, in J. Bingen, G. Cambier, G. Nachtgael (éds.), *Le monde grec: pensée, littérature, histoire, documents: hommages à Claire Préaux*, Bruxelles, 1975, pp. 699-708; H.-A. RUPPRECHT, *Griechen und Ägypter - Vielfalt des Rechtslebens nach den Papyri*, in G. Thür (ed.), *Antike Rechtsgeschichte. Einheit und Vielfalt* («Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Sitzungsberichte», 726 = «Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für antike Rechtsgeschichte», 11), Wien, 2005, pp. 17-25; ID., *Recht und Rechtsleben im ptolemäischen und römischen Ägypten. An der Schnittstelle griechischen und ägyptischen Rechts 332 a.C. - 212 p.C.* («Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse (AM-GS)», 2011 Nr. 8), Stuttgart, 2011, p. 63.

⁶¹ For the Erbstreit archive, see K. VANDORPE, S. WAEBENS, *Reconstructing Pathyris' Archives*, cit., pp. 114-122, §37.

was closely controlled by state officials,⁶² to avoid corruption or abuse.⁶³ Good governance also allows people to take part in the government of the country. The Ptolemaic kings not only worked with the Greek elite, but also bargained with the local elites about privileges,⁶⁴ and for the middle and lower classes social mobility gradually became an option.

One may raise objections to our positive approach, because later Ptolemaic rule knew several troublesome periods.⁶⁵ Only one inland revolt, however, was, with the assistance of Nubian troops, initiated by the people of Upper Egypt (206-186 BC), but that happened in a period when the Thebaid was not yet well organised by the government. In the second century BC, the kings reorganised the Thebaid and the region no longer initiated revolts: the troubles of the 160's were due to the invasion of Antiochos IV of which a confidant of the king took advantage and carried out a putsch; the civil war of 132-124 BC and the revolt of c. 88-86 BC were due to dynastic strife and the subsequent unstable situation. Hence, revolts originated in these short periods of bad governance, but most of these «intervals of crisis functioned at the same time as driving forces of increasing state intervention» and were followed by periods of good governance.⁶⁶

In conclusion, the happiness index opens new perspectives on three levels: it helps us to answer the question whether people in Hellenistic Egypt were happy; secondly, it opens a new range of questions to the old papyrological material, questions which bring us closer to the ancient people, not only into their living room, but also into their head and heart. We should not only discuss all types of professions, but we should also try to answer a question like: what do we know about the employment of people, did they always have work? We do not only have to deal with the numerous types of taxes, but we should ask ourselves whether people had a problem with the tax burden: were they able to pay their taxes and how come? Maybe they were happy anyway, because they received in turn good governance. And that is the third new perspective: the government of the Ptolemies is according to the happiness index to be considered an example of rather good governance, and in my view the idea of the Ptolemaic government of being a bureaucratic one, which only wanted to levy as many taxes as possible, should, if not adjusted, be at least nuanced. The Ptolemaic government invested in several indicators of the happiness index and deserves a higher appreciation.

⁶² J. BINGEN, *Le Papyrus Revenue Laws - Tradition grecque et adaptation hellénistique* («Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Geisteswissenschaften», 231), Opladen, 1978.

⁶³ It has long been acknowledged that corruption may have been problematic among officials in Ptolemaic (and Roman) Egypt, as the petitions in particular seem to suggest, but the scale of corruption is still much debated, see J. BAUSCHATZ, *The Strong Arm of the Law?*, «CJ», 103 (2007), pp. 13-39; ID., *Law and Enforcement in Ptolemaic Egypt*, Cambridge, forthcoming.

⁶⁴ J. G. MANNING, *The last Pharaohs*, cit., *passim*.

⁶⁵ A.-E. VEÏSSE, *Les "révoltes égyptiennes"*. *Recherches sur les troubles intérieurs en Égypte du règne de Ptolémée III à la conquête romaine* («Studia Hellenistica», 41), Leuven-Paris-Dudley Mass., 2004.

⁶⁶ K. VANDORPE, *History*, cit., p. 161 and pp. 164-167.

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