CHAPTER 9
LIMITATIONS OF EMPIRIC INSIGHT

Common existential needs, their apparent purpose, the requirements of mutuality, and fundamental rights impose basic general parameters and rules for the pursuit of happiness. These are joined and greatly influenced by the requirements posed by other common conditions for the pursuit and maintenance of fulfillment of our needs. These common principles by which all humans are bound in the creation of happiness should be detectable in pursuits that produce happiness even if they are modulated by idiosyncrasies. It appears possible to observe, describe, collect, and correlate occurrences of happiness and to derive a catalog of practical guidelines, of wishes and strategies that describe how to best satisfy existential needs and how to keep them satisfied. We might even derive some general guidance regarding the pursuit of idiosyncratic desires. The detection of commonalities that apply without any contradiction to a representative sampling group would indicate the existence of general principles for the pursuit of happiness.

To undertake such a substantiation, we would have to engage in sizeable empiric studies. The subjects of our inquiry may not have already come upon and employed the strategies that we are looking to identify. We might have to engage subjects in experimentation. Such mass studies multiply the practical problems that threaten individual trials. To assess relative happiness for different grounds would require us to observe and to record the effects of all alternative pursuits that hold potential on a broad variety of individuals. To the extent happiness can or must be generated by cooperative pursuits and such ventures are not spontaneously occurring, the experimental comportment of subjects would have to be coordinated. Although a comprehensive trial approach might be the most direct manner of gaining broad empiric knowledge, it can also be risk-laden, cumbersome, and costly. It may congest and scatter the pursuits of subjects and thereby frustrate the efficiency, effectiveness, and purpose of experimentation. We may hope that disruptions arising from experimentation might only last for a unique phase until scientific results are derived. We might make experimentation more bearable by distributing trials over several representative groups or generations. Alternatively, we might minimize intrusion by sampling nonexperimental settings. But such less systematic coverage may delay conclusions until we find sufficient information. Further, it may result in a less comprehensive data assemblage. Some manners of pursuit with potential might never be tried, causing us to draw conclusions without a sufficient basis and exposing us to error.

In our experiments and field observations, we would search for causes that make subjects similarly happy, happier, or happiest. Such commonalities might be of great importance and their existence must be explored. However, empiric research into the phenomenon of happiness may be severely hampered regardless of whether we choose observation of events that occur independently of us or experimentation. The recording and evaluation of the resulting information are exposed to error if we cannot measure happiness in numerical quantifications. The behavior of individuals gives only vague indications about their state of happiness. Reading expressions is further complicated because the type and amplitude of behavioral expression seem to vary considerably among individuals. We may therefore perceive that we can obtain more detailed and correct information about causes and effects of happiness if we ask individuals to describe their emotional state in relation to certain objects and events. Yet, when we try to measure happiness as a function of verbal expression, we quickly recognize that we encounter problems similar to those with behavioral expressions. We possess no reliable manner to conceptualize and express exact or near exact measures of happiness. We have merely crude absolute quantifications at our disposal. We can describe humans, including ourselves, only in terms of feeling unhappy, fairly unhappy, somewhat unhappy, not happy or unhappy, somewhat happy, fairly happy, and very happy, or some combinations thereof. But not much more nuance can be expressed about an individual's happiness in absolute terms. In spite of word choices and details, descriptions are bound to remain so general that they can give rise to different interpretations. The understanding of these terms is subject to interpretation according to an individual's emotional capacity, experiences, imagination, and expectations.

Our inability to articulate our happiness in scalable, numerical terms carries through into a united account of our happiness and unhappiness. The rudimentary quantifiers we can muster for every incident make it difficult to gauge how they relate to one another and our overall happiness. But there appear to be further difficulties. We may consider gains in happiness positive deposits in an account. Conversely, disappointments about failing to achieve happiness and the loss of happiness might seem to be withdrawals from this account. However, the concept of an account may not be a suitable parallel. The status of happiness and unhappiness does not seem to move simply by addition and subtraction. We do not know by what formula or method experiences of happiness or unhappiness accumulate or whether they accumulate at all in constructing our happiness or unhappiness. Our experiences tell us that happiness and unhappiness are largely ephemeral.

Their initial intensity soon dissipates. We cannot keep account of how events of happiness or unhappiness figure into our overall emotional state. That problem is exacerbated by our inability to quantify happiness. When we are prompted to describe our combined state of happiness, we do not appear to have more exactitude at our disposal than in quantifying particular incidents. We can express somewhat higher complexity when we compare incidents of happiness. We can express that one cause makes us happier than another. We can determine this by considering which we would rather give up if we had to choose between them. Because we cannot undertake detailed quantifications of our happiness, we may use this method of relative valuation to create a hierarchy among our sensations of happiness for each need. We may assign a ranking to causes depending on whether they make us comparatively happier, as happy, or less happy. We might preselect candidates for such general comparative determinations by filtering out and dismissing less likely grounds by rudimentary noncomparative judgment. We might extend a listing of our preferences into the region of unhappy events if we were to research how to prevent or contain pain in application of common principles. We could have other individuals apply the same method to the same causes and derive a general impression of how causes fare in generating happiness or unhappiness.

These methods only permit us to provide rough descriptions of absolute and relative effectiveness of causes, but they do not help us much to understand the mechanisms of happiness. That lack of understanding may not only be attributable to technical shortcomings. It may also be caused by our disability to define the emotional quality of happiness or of unhappiness in rational terms. It appears that our rational mind and our emotions do not speak a common language. More than that, they do not appear to relate to the same subject matters. In applying scientific treatment to emotions, we are trying to describe in rational, substantive terms a phenomenon that we perceive to happen beyond these parameters. The seemingly nonsubstantive character of emotions renders them inaccessible to our rational concepts. It omits them from our vocabulary that appears to describe obviously physical objects and events and their rational abstractions. Because needs and wishes can often be described in terms of their obviously physical and rational objectives, pursuits, and results, our inability to describe their emotional dimension may be overlooked. We can describe the span of unhappiness and happiness in rational or obviously physical terms by recounting the circumstances of deprivation, what we wanted, how we went about attaining it, and to what extent we succeeded. Still, these observations cannot describe the emotions we experienced. A descrip-

tion of the emotional substance of happiness and unhappiness proves strangely elusive. We may describe happiness as pleasure, elation, joy, delight, pride of accomplishment, and unhappiness as sadness, sorrow, depression, or melancholy. But such descriptions are mere synonyms or antonyms and do not describe the essence of happiness and unhappiness. We may try to describe how we feel by focusing more on the consequences of that feeling. We may try to describe how happiness renders us optimistic, self-confident, forward-looking, and hopeful, how it energizes us and motivates us to work on the fulfillment of other wishes. We may express how it motivates and helps us to transcend melancholy, open up to the world, become lighthearted, friendly, and contented. We may ascribe opposing conditions to unhappiness. Only, such references refer again to feelings whose content is not directly represented or to occasions that follow from but do not embody happiness or unhappiness. We encounter these problems as well when we try to describe unhappiness. This inability of words to carry emotional content makes communication of emotional concepts very difficult if not impossible. Whichever way we attempt to explain the feeling of happiness or unhappiness, we lack the ability to concisely express emotional content in words. Our emotions leave us speechless.

Such a claim may appear counterintuitive because we can refer to experiences where emotional concepts were successfully communicated to us or by us. Yet our inability to communicate emotional concepts through words becomes self-evident if we envisage employing language to represent an emotion to a person who has not sensed that emotion before. It seems impossible to describe happiness or unhappiness regarding a need to someone who has not already sensed these emotions. This might not be a problem for us because we regularly use preexisting knowledge in other individuals to bridge our incapacity regarding a direct conveyance of emotional content. We relate emotional information to other individuals by having them refer to their own experiences. We attempt to trigger their emotional references by factual representations and count on emotional reactions to these causes in recipients to prompt the desired emotional effect. Factual representations may consist of words and other symbols or descriptions, direct perceptive impressions of circumstances, or behavioral indications of emotion. These ways of communicating emotional concepts might not seem to differ from a communication of representational factual concepts. Unless we desire to communicate a perceptive phenomenon itself, we rely in factual communications that recipients correlate communications to a preexisting understanding as well. Such communications are often the foundations for emotional communication. What is

different when emotions are communicated is that emotions are of a character that does not allow us to easily access their constituents and to compare and calibrate individual understanding. Because emotions are internal states or processes, there are regularly no external criteria that readily show their existence, properties, or amplitude. They cannot be reconciled by referring to a materialization or rationalization of concepts, and there is no standard by which emotions relate to a factual setting. This makes it difficult for the person communicating and the recipient to determine whether elicited and communicated emotions match. Emotional communication is therefore less interchangeable than representational factual or perceptive communication.

Using rational representations or direct sensory impressions to evoke emotions can be an effective tool. We may use such techniques to convey experienced emotions to other persons. They may also be used to elicit emotions in others that we do not share. The creation of an emotional impression by making the recipient generate the emotional content may be an efficient way to communicate emotions or to manipulate others emotionally because it may prevent having to place them into actual experiences that lead to such emotions. While emotional communication may be inadvertent, the requirements to create particular emotions are demanding. To prompt a precise response, it may be necessary to customize a communication to the particularities of the recipient's profile. The sender has to determine the information that induces an intended reaction in a particular recipient and has to create or find and communicate such triggering information. The efforts and complications of open or clandestine observation and experimentation, the characteristic difficulties in recognizing emotions, and the construction of information to correspond to research results can render accurate communication of existing emotional states and emotional manipulation complicated undertakings. In time, we might be able to gauge reactions of certain individuals to allow such customization by employing our knowledge of recipients' emotional triggers and mechanisms in reaction to other occurrences. But the requirement for customization encumbers the scope of emotional communications. It may only allow us to elicit a certain emotion in persons with the same information if they have the same emotional response profile. A wider distribution of an emotion would necessitate multiple, separately customized communications. Short of that, we are relegated to provoking general types of emotional responses that are common to an extended spectrum of individuals or to eliciting a variety of emotional responses. This might be sufficient or even desirable for some purposes. Yet it is inadequate if we seek to effect accurate emotions and responses.

The desired emotional effect of communications may in certain incidents be realized through a conveyance of factual impressions that remain truthful or by the generation of facts that can be truthfully reported. However, eliciting particular emotions can be problematic because obtaining the intended emotional response may require misrepresentations of fact. Such misrepresentations may be difficult to maintain and may destroy the intended effect once they are revealed. The manipulation of emotions through the manipulation of facts or of impressions can only succeed if the emotional effects remain sufficiently strong upon the recipients' discovery of manipulation or if it remains hidden. Manipulation might be acceptable if the learning of emotional lessons is beneficial for recipients in their considered judgment. However, unless they know of a simulation for purposes they approve, they might object to factual manipulation even if it is intended to truthfully communicate an original emotion because it would misdirect their rational mind. Separate messages might appear to be required to convey rational and emotional content. Then again, such a partition appears impossible because it relies on inconsistent communications that a recipient would scrutinize both under rational as well as emotional criteria, thus causing irreconcilable interference between messages. The complications in communicating emotional concepts through factual communication therefore frequently seem insurmountable.

Apart from abuses for emotional manipulation, emotional communication may only succeed if the relevant emotional conditions of the sender and the recipient are sufficiently similar. Individual differences may cause interference and may wholly prevent such communication. The rarity of sufficient correspondence may severely limit our choices for maintaining relationships that include complex emotional communication. It may dramatically encumber our capacity to satisfy needs that rely on the existence and functioning of close emotional relationships. To find fulfillment for these needs, we may be relegated to pursuing them in less particularized, less profound, and consequently less satisfying emotional relationships that can be built on the basis of more common parallels in emotional processing. In addition, the difficulties in the communication of emotional concepts hinder the comprehension and scientific categorization of emotional phenomena and thus the discovery of how we can produce happiness. Even if emotions could be reliably shared by certain persons, not much would be gained because emotional impressions would be limited to them. A compatible recipient could describe emotions in the same inexact terms as the individual who originally sensed the communicated emotion. But this does not render that emotion more accessible to scientific insight.

We may then determine that the communication of emotional concepts does not lend itself much to the scientific assemblage of information about the happiness or unhappiness that circumstances inflict on individuals. We may attempt to overcome these difficulties of articulating emotional concepts by describing and measuring them as physiological phenomena. We may grow capabilities to measure physiological changes that occur with happiness and unhappiness, and we may increasingly succeed in tracing their physiological causes and effects. However, before we can assuredly attribute physiological measurements to happiness and unhappiness, we must consider that physiological occurrences may be mistaken for indicators unless they can be shown to be direct causes for triggering these emotions. If the type and intensity of happiness or unhappiness can be shown to be related to the type and quantity of a particular substance or substances or the type and quantity of physiological events, we may imply a causal relationship. But such correlations may be indicators of precursors, tools, parallel, collateral, or consequential phenomena that are not qualitative or quantitative representations of happiness or unhappiness. If we can identify physiological causes for happiness, we will likely become capable of sensing differences that define discrete needs either in substance or location. Yet, even with such knowledge, we might have difficulties relating physical measurements to a precise emotional effect. We might not be able to determine reliably whether the quantity of a physiological indicator translates into a corresponding intensity of an emotion in a linear or other function. We might be unable to map a functional relationship with adequate precision unless we can measure an emotional experience separately from the factors that cause it. A lack of experiential measurement may have us look for possibly less precise and hence possibly misleading physiological aspects.

If we can overcome these potential complications, a physiological understanding of happiness might give us the ability to better express absolute and relative happiness that alternative strategies might produce than the unrefined measures and comparisons we can verbally express. The detection of the physiological foundations for our experiences of happiness may encourage the concept that these foundations can afford us with generally applicable guidance regarding causes of happiness. The attendance of physiological indicators of happiness and physiological causes may enable us to prove that the fundamental physiological structures and processes pertaining to happiness are the same for every human. The possibility of a revelation of physiological commonalities that might instill us with generally applicable guidance on finding happiness cannot be excluded and might be sig-

nificant. It would not be proper to prejudge the results of research into the physiology of happiness and their utility. Yet the existence of an objective method for measuring happiness and a common physiology of how happiness is generated does not imply that all causes for happiness would have to be universally shared the same way. There might be physiological variances among individuals that cause them to react differently to external and internal stimulants. While we may be able to discern general substances and rules of happiness, these general aspects may not suffice to competently guide our understanding regarding the requirements of individual happiness. Common physiological substances and laws by which happiness is created may be applicable. Still, the mechanisms that perceive and process causes and generate the substances of happiness may be differently developed and articulated in individuals because of genetic and environmental differences. Overt physical attributes of our body might participate in the fabrication of happiness and of unhappiness as well. But the susceptibility of our mind to variation by genetic, sensory, or more obviously physical influences and their processing may lead to a greater individual differentiation. The resulting physiological dispositions of our mind dispose our perception and subsequent processing of information. These dispositions for the processing of impressions and the formulation of our motivations appear to be complex constructs that can carry a great variety of differentiations. They may direct sensory phenomena into different avenues of mental processing. They may give rise to different thoughts, emotions, and activities. They may cause individuals to have distinctive views, fears, and ideals and to select a variety of objectives and pursuits with more particularized preferences than the underlying existential needs might suggest. They might even exceed the range of what would seem conducive under existential criteria. The diversity of individual processing structures renders it improbable that one could empirically determine common principles of happiness in addition to general fundamentals. The variety of individual differences may cause large aspects of our happiness to remain unexplored. It may also make general principles of happiness appear distant and impractical.

It therefore seems to be necessary that we move beyond establishing general principles of happiness and engage in the scientific exploration of individualities. The considerable durability of idiosyncratic features of happiness offers us a stable target for research. But that durability also makes it difficult to put derived knowledge to decisive use. Some dispositions of our mind may be more permanent than others. Genetic conditions and their consequences may be impossible or comparatively difficult to transform. Other direct physiological influ-

ences and their consequences may be more accessible to change. Even if our mind suffers from physiological burdens or injuries, it may overcome these under its own power or recuperate after these are removed with external assistance. Experiential influences seem to be most flexible. The forming influence of experiences may be counteracted or reversed by new experiences. Nevertheless, the sum and interrelation of genetic, other direct physiological, and experiential influences seem to generate a relatively stable mental physiology. Its ingrained structures and processes are likely to lead to a lasting rational impression of our world and its aspects as well as of our existence in this setting. Our physiology further tends to yield a related emotional disposition that acts and reacts in characteristic ways. Our rational and emotional dispositions form baselines from which we begin our thoughts and emotions, with which we are likely to keep, and that we are likely to confirm. Because of such rational and emotional dispositions, some individuals may exhibit a more optimistic or pessimistic, a happier or unhappier outlook than others generally or in particular areas. They may not only shape expectations of happiness but lead us in creating or at least contributing to our happiness or unhappiness with our attitudes because they may have us seek impressions and interpret impressions in conformance with their baseline. They constitute self-reinforcing or at least gravitational mechanisms that regulate our understanding of, our emotional approach toward, and our interaction with the world. With direct or experiential nonconforming events of or related to deprivation and fulfillment, we may display temporary departures from our rational and emotional baselines. However, these events may have only momentary or no power to overcome the weight of our accumulated mental dispositions. Single occurrences generally do not leave deep and lasting effects on our rational outlook or emotional setting. Such an impact is reserved for events that radically transform us, our environment, our placement in it, or our perceptions of such circumstances. Less dramatic occurrences consolidate with preexisting dispositions to form a pooled result. The product is often close to the previous state because of the great weight of prior experiences and the entrenchment and impermeability of nonexperiential dispositions.

Besides absorption into the background of previous causes, our awareness of events and their effects is subject to sublimation and supersession by coexisting, new, or revived causes. As other events and their effects arise, continue to occur, or are recalled, the resulting coexistence and interaction may affect our ability to keep causes and effects for each incident distinct in our mind. While our mind seems to be relatively astute in recording and keeping rational events separate,

our emotional experiences appear to have a higher tendency to merge with other emotional impressions. That propensity may be irresistible unless we bind emotional experiences to the distinct rational episodes that are responsible for them. In blending together, our experiences of happiness and unhappiness appear to compensate each other to some extent even if they originated in different needs. In addition, emotional experiences seem to lose their emotional intensity on their own. We might thus only be able to trace emotions as short-term phenomena, restraining us to short glimpses of their causality. With increasing distance from a cause, emotions tend to wither away and become drawn into an undercurrent of preexisting, concurrent, and subsequent emotions. The passing nature of our emotions may tempt us to conclude that the relevance of single events might not warrant our inquiry and measurement. Potential confusion about the causes of emotions may further dissuade us. Yet the largely momentary and fleeting nature of our emotional impressions does not make them less important. They pertain to the present in which all our registrations of happiness and unhappiness occur. Moreover, the melding of momentary impressions into the background of prior impressions might, through its confirming or modifying influence, affect our long-term state of happiness by itself or in convergence with other experiences. For these reasons, the ephemeral character of emotional impressions and difficulties in tracing their causes do not relieve us from trying to understand them.

Our mental dispositions and the overwhelming profusion in the nature and assortment of their contributing factors and of coinciding and overtaking factors threaten to frustrate our derivation of scientific insight into general and individual causes of happiness. The problems in isolating causal relations do not vary greatly when we make use of experimentation. Arguably, it should be easier to detect principles of happiness when we can create controlled circumstances. Some of that control appears achievable by inoculating participants with the same potentially happiness-inducing or happiness-reducing cause. We may also be able to isolate subjects sufficiently to suppress external interference. Still, even if we were to assume control of all environmental settings, subjects would carry their acquired and genetic dispositions with them. Relative to the gravity of preexisting variances, controlled settings might be abridged in their equalizing significance. Unless we equalize preexisting dispositions, we may not succeed in creating sufficiently level conditions to isolate a common causal link. Further, unless we equalize circumstances other than those responsible for an idiosyncrasy, we may not be able to prove an individual causal link. This leaves our research for general and individual happiness challenged.

We may therefore question how useful empiric efforts can be to ascertain principles of happiness. Not all our empiric research may be fruitless. We may apply empiric research to gain insights into the particular causal correlations that stimulate individuals to select one path over another. Comparing particularities among individuals may offer a foundation from which we can explore these mechanisms. Physiological readings of events of happiness and unhappiness that stop short of complete explanations may afford us indications of processing differences among individuals. We may locate factors that generate certain types of individualizations, whose presence or absence produces, contributes to, or detracts from individual happiness or unhappiness. An inquiry into how individuals find satisfaction may also help us to derive or more comprehensively define general common denominators. It may assist us in defining parameters we must observe to satisfy existential needs. It may further help us to designate the scope of protected activities under fundamental laws in a social context and to build competent derivative laws. However, such empiric research might only point to requirements that are already sufficiently known or knowable by considerations of obvious common requirements and their social implications. They might already be implied in the designations of our existential needs and pronounced in the instinctive demands they pose. It is in the nature of our needs to provide us with emergent concepts of what will satisfy them. Where our awareness of our instincts is blocked or suppressed, insight into the nature of such needs in others may assist us to find access to them. A comparison may illuminate our difficulties in granting some of our needs articulation. It may also indicate that some of our needs are overassertive or distorted and may impair other pursuits. A collection of what others uniformly or mostly determine to be inadequate to fulfill a common need may afford us a foundation for dismissing pursuits as incapable or unlikely to fulfill a common need. In addition, assembling the pursuits they all or some of them consider to be acceptable may show us a spectrum of strategies that might fulfill our needs if we were to resort to them. It may give us choices whose consideration may facilitate finding our preferences. It may serve the function of listing potentially viable alternatives that we might consider and try and from which we might garner pursuits that are more technically conducive or more satisfying than others.

As useful as such research might be as an orientation tool, it is limited to pointing out possibilities. It cannot advise us on what matters we should pursue if we have a choice. The potential differences of dispositions and in circumstances that other persons carry prevent us from assuming any of their choices as ours without our corroboration

by consideration or possibly by trial. In determining which manners of pursuit we should adopt, the group of generally capable means may be narrowed by a subjective filter of individual preferences and aversions. We might derive less or more satisfaction from one selection than another. Picking random means and strategies from the spectrum of apparently functional means may therefore not be sufficient to maintain, let alone improve or maximize an individual's happiness. Humans often require conditions that cater to their individual wishes in excess of generic functionality and fulfillment capacity. A functional fulfillment may only convey a minimum of happiness. We all yearn for better and ideal satisfaction. Yet permanent and temporary dissimilarities in individuals' conditions may lead them to rate the capacity of a cause to convey happiness differently. The same cause or category of cause can have markedly diverse effects on different individuals and on the same individual in different circumstances. The reason may be a mere matter of varying and at times opposing functionality aspects of an object or event. That specific functionality depends on the manner in which it is used and the context of established, coexisting, and overriding internal and external circumstances into which it is inserted. Moreover, the amalgamation of our genetic mental dispositions, direct environmental conditioning, and our experiential rational and emotional conditioning may react differently than the dispositions of other individuals with a particular object or event. This may generate practical and emotional variances of effects over the entire spectrum of possibilities. These settings do not only affect the parameters of whether happiness or unhappiness is produced but also how much happiness is produced and how long it will endure. Hence, common principles of happiness appear to frequently be obscured, modified, or specified by a seemingly impenetrable clutter of individualization. What will or will not satisfy the needs of a person and what will satisfy them better or best are then matters that cannot be well determined by a survey of the preferences of other persons or a more scientific research into them. To discard inapplicable pursuits and identify the ranking of satisfying wishes for an individual, we must investigate that individual specifically.

The individualization of happiness might be too diffuse to allow the general standardization of happiness-inducing strategies beyond a rudimentary level of universal commonality. Although we can identify certain principles of happiness with regard to common needs, such insights are likely to be of reduced practical relevance because of the individualization of needs. Nevertheless, we may be able to bring scientific explanation and simplification to what we observe in individuals. We may be able to identify patterns of conducive pursuits by catego-

rizing individuals according to type based on their similarities and by confirming certain correlations of causes and effects for such types of persons. We could describe these patterns by applying statistical assessments to display approximate causal relationships between certain factors. Modeling of this type may give us increased probabilities concerning the grounds and effects of happiness for certain types of individuals. We may become adept in predicting how certain types of persons might feel, what they might think, how they might regularly behave in relation to their dispositions or when they are exposed to certain circumstances. This information might be useful in matters that focus on larger societal circumstances, on a tendential or quantitative compliance by a multitude of individuals with a model. However, the results can only be of limited individual guidance because they would be subject to the same individuality and variability problems that have plagued our investigation all along. Even within a typical group, individual variations may frustrate the creation of happiness profiles with any certainty of accuracy. Although we might be able to calculate the chances of compliance, we cannot assure that members of a group will react predictably to the introduction of a considered cause. Remaining individual discrepancies might limit us to only derive probability patterns for some personality features and environmental circumstances with at times sizeable margins for error. It is doubtful that we could determine models of what makes individuals happy in excess of typological generalities. The best we can hope to derive from statistical assessments is a strategy for our consideration aggregated according to likelihood. We might abbreviate our deliberations and trials by focusing them on possibilities that are statistically more likely for us. Yet, if statistically recommended choices do not deliver us the happiness we forecast, we have to continue our search. The categorization of statistical information then appears to fall short significantly. It cannot deliver generally applicable principles of happiness as a matter of empiric science by which we can competently fulfill our needs nor provide us adequate specificity to securely guide our individualized search.

These considerations lead us to conclude that empiric studies of how other humans pursue and meet the fulfillment of their needs are limited in helping us find happiness. Because important aspects of our happiness are founded on individual particularities, we are limited in drawing on similarities with other humans. This may be a distressing insight because we deem ourselves left alone to find large expanses of our happiness. Our insistence on having things our way places a responsibility on us to know what we want. The following chapter explores this condition, its reasons, and its consequences in more detail.