

A little unhappiness isn't so bad

The Art of Being Unhappy

DIRK DE WACHTER

Today's society is all about more, better, further – about an obsessive individual pursuit of happiness and a stringing together of Instagram-worthy experiences. We aim for the highest peaks and hardly ever stop to consider that those peaks do not fill up the troughs in between. We strive for happiness as a goal in life and assume that the happiness we achieve makes our lives worthwhile. In doing so we lose sight of the fact that all too often what makes us briefly happy is not what truly gives meaning to life.

In 'The Art of Being Unhappy', Dirk De Wachter examines the major social issues that govern, guide or change our lives. He appeals for more honest dealings with life's ups and downs, for more real contact and sincere solidarity: a look; a touch; meaning something to someone for a little while – the things philosopher Emmanuel Levinas calls 'small acts of kindness'. Away from the pressure of the digital and back in the here and now, we can let go of our struggles, stop comparing ourselves with others and instead enjoy the small and the ordinary. With its sustained sense of astonishment, this book teaches us to think about what happiness can really mean.

What De Wachter says is not new. But with his delightful and rich writing style, his moving personal reflections and his beautiful poetic quotations, he is unmatched in his ability to express it all in ways that convince and inspire.

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Dirk De Wachter (b. 1960) is a psychiatrist and therapist. He is the head of system and family therapies at the Psychiatric Centre of the Catholic University of Louvain, Campus Kortenberg. He also supervises and teaches family therapy in different centres at home and abroad. In 2012, he published his first book for a large audience, *Borderline Times*. This book was in the bestseller list for 47 weeks, of which 6 weeks on number one in the category 'Informative Nonfiction'.

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