

Preface

Human happiness as a research topic in social sciences has a long history and has been in constant growth in the last four decades. Why another volume on happiness then? I am strongly convinced that the answer this time is in the things, it is in the various contributions offered in this volume where a number of scholars in sociology and economics met together in a Conference in a Department of Torino University, originated and inspired by the *International Day of Happiness* on 20 March 2012, promoted by the United Nations. The initiative was first to take this date as a point of reference to develop an interdisciplinary discussion, considering various scientific points of view, within the large domain of social sciences and paying attention to other scientific fields such as neuro-sciences.

And we have in fact a recall to happiness as an everlasting question, where ancient wisdom could give some help in current times, even though differences are to be taken into consideration when considering empirical data and results from social research, as presented in the field survey on happiness, satisfaction and well-being.

Another inspiring and suggestive outlook stems from the consideration of happiness as a constructed reality, where current scientific paradigms are put in question by a kind of renewed capacity of ancient traditions to propose social practices useful to develop new tools of inquiry more adequate to human feelings and *humana conditio*.

The volume aims at signing a conspicuous point of reference for a new awareness of what and how social and economic research could contribute to ameliorate the human condition, trying to supersede the separation too often present between the researcher (the *scientist*!) and its object, the *humans*, considered in their singular, different and self-constructing arts of living.

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