

The mental diet: choosing beliefs to improve wellbeing

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Abstract-

Acknowledging the established link between beliefs and wellbeing, this paper explores the concept of voluntary belief acquisition and modification as a conscious and impactful process. This is contrasted with passive belief acceptance, underlining the potential for self-directed improvement in wellbeing through deliberate belief restructuring. The concept of beliefs is approached from a multi-dimensional perspective, recognizing cognitive, affective, and social factors. The paper further explores the potential to nudge societal norms towards healthier belief systems through education and other mechanisms. Drawing on empirical evidence, cognitive science, and philosophical argumentation, it proposes a reframing of beliefs as dynamic constructs open to conscious manipulation, with profound implications for individual and societal wellbeing. This research underscores the importance of fostering critical awareness of personal beliefs: in the same way that we are aware of how diet affects our health, we should be mindful of how our beliefs -our mental diet- impact our wellbeing.

Index Terms- Behavioural cognitive therapy; belief; positive psychology; religion; spirituality; wellbeing;

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