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Well-being: subjective and objective aspects

Elena Alartartseva^{*}, Galina Barysheva*Tomsk Polytechnic University, 30 Lenin Ave., Tomsk, 634050, Russia*

Abstract

The subject of well-being has always excited human society. Various official and scientific research documents have sought to outline the design and content of well-being, but the specific definition depends on the conceptual approach employed: the process, system, or other aspect. The purpose of this research is to create an integrated, multi-component model that can ensure the continued well-being of modern man. The modern man can be defined with regard to two levels of well-being: internal (subjective) and external (objective). Inner well-being is seen as a human, spiritual well-being associated with one's personal characteristics and features. External well-being develops from the perspective of perception and one's evaluation of human society.

Each level consists of four key contextual attributes that together constitute well-being:

- 1) one's existence in accordance with their natural essence (in harmony with others and the environment);
 - 2) an innate understanding of what is good for oneself, and the presence of the ability and willingness to achieve it;
 - 3) one's the ability to realize their human potential and plan for life;
 - 4) the creation of a society and empowering people to fulfill the above stated positions 1, 2, 3, and increase activity and awareness.
- Such specification of the category "well-being" gives us an opportunity to distinguish between personal well-being of an individual and social well-being of member of society and state. Only discoursing in the framework of such conceptually comprehensive logic, it is possible to derive the "formula" of the well-being of human and society.

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1. Introduction

The main goal of the state, society, and human is to understand and accept that human well-being is the basis, foundation, basic premise, and an indispensable condition of a sound society and its successful development and prosperity. Unhappy people cannot create a society enjoying well-being, and, in its turn, such a society cannot provide conditions for creating and developing the well-being of people.

^{*} Elena Alartartseva. Tel.: +7-9138-50-66-51

E-mail address: alartartsevaea@bestracg.ru

Thus, well-being is becoming a popular topic for various socio-political, socio-economic, cultural, and historical theoretical research and applied programmes. However, there is no separate branch of science or area of social, political, and economic knowledge which would study the well-being of human and society. Perhaps, it is due to the subjective nature of this concept. There is no unanimously agreed definition of this category or a unanimously agreed approach to its research and evaluation of its value and importance to the human and the society. In turn, there are many interpretations of this category, depending on the aspect being considered. The objective of our investigation is to focus on the social-economic and moral-psychological Aspects of such a complex category as "well-being".

2. Well-being: the objective or socio-economic aspect and subjective or moral-psychological aspect

We consider the category of "human well-being" as an integral, multiaspected, and multifunctional notion, and it is described only with the help of the combination of four concepts: 1) a human has well-being if they exist in accord with their nature, their essence; 2) a human has well-being if they understand (are conscious of) what are good things of life for them and have an opportunity and intention to achieve these good things; 3) a human has well-being if they have an opportunity to realize their potential as human beings; 4) a human has well-being if the society constituting the grounds of the state creates conditions and provides opportunities for them to exist in accord with their nature, realize their potential as human beings, and achieve the good things of life that human strives to achieve. It is our subjective opinion that the absence of at least one of these concepts does not allow speaking of human well-being and the quality of their life as a measuring unit of that well-being. It would be possible to speak of material well-being, wealth, an acceptable or even decent standard of life, but not about well-being. However, defining the category of "human well-being" as a combination of these four concepts we face a lot of questions and uncertainties. The first question stems from the first characteristic of the "human well-being" category: what is the nature, the essence of human? Does the nature of man form the society or, on the contrary, does the society form the nature of man? Does the human nature change with the development of society or do its bases remain intact? All of these questions can be answered by philosophers, psychologists, teachers, and sociologists. The second question stems from the third characteristic of the "human well-being" category: what is a "good thing of life" for man, and is it universal for everybody? Can the pursuit of such a good thing by one particular person harm other people or a group of people? Is this good thing variable in space and in time? The third question logically follows from the first and second characteristics of the "human well-being" category: what is the potential of human as a human being? What can it be expressed with, and which categories can be used to describe it? Is this potential similar for all groups of people, or is it different for different people or groups? What is the scale of these differences? Can there appear contradictions in the process of their realization, and is it possible to eliminate these contradictions? Here it is already the matter of talents, abilities, inclinations, internal aspirations, psycho-emotional, neurophysiologic, and other features of human as a biological being, personality, and social creature. And the fourth question, logically derived from the fourth characteristic of "human well-being" category, is as follows: can society create equal conditions and provide equal opportunities to all its members to enable them to live in accord with their nature, realize their potential as human beings, and achieve good things significant to them? Here it is also important to distinguish between personal well-being of an individual and social well-being of a member of society. This distinction allows differentiating between well-being as an inner condition of individual and well-being as a criterion of the quality of life and the result of the development of society and human as a member of society. Only discoursing in the framework of such conceptually comprehensive logic, it is possible to derive the "formula" of the well-being of human and society, to specify these concepts, to evaluate them in the retrospective, current and prospective contexts, and to identify the key factors having an impact on well-being.

Such approach to the conceptualization of the "human well-being" category allows us to distinguish its two substantial aspects:

- 1) The objective aspect or objective well-being.
- 2) The subjective aspect or subjective well-being.

The objective aspect of well-being is characterized by the third and fourth concepts and may be described with terms defining material well-being and the quality of life: these terms are formed and influenced by such factors as

the level and stability of income, the conditions of residence, the opportunity of having education, the quality of the social and natural environment, safety and security, and the opportunity to realize social and civil rights and needs. The terms are also measured and evaluated by way of the corresponding values. Meanwhile, the subjective aspect of well-being is characterized by the first and second concepts and may be conceptualized only as an internal subjective experience of each particular individual.

Understanding the category of well-being as the combination of its two aspects allows the formation of two approaches to its specification, measurement, and evaluation. In order for us to have a real opportunity to evaluate how many people have reached a particular factor of well-being in accord with a particular indicator, how stable this achievement is, how many people have not reached it and why, what caused the delay, and what has to be done to eliminate it, it is essential to work out the qualitative and quantitative criteria for all the factors and aspects of objective well-being which must clearly and objectively express and describe this aspect of well-being. Here, in order to prevent logical errors, these criteria need to be formed, firstly, through the categories of ill-being and their qualitative and quantitative criteria and values that have to be really concrete and relevant. For example, such a parameter as health is evaluated through the number of hospitals and other medical and pharmaceutical institutions available to people and through the number of people who have asked for medical help. However, if we evaluate this factor objectively, the increasing number of both medical institutions and people seeking medical help shows ill health. People become ill, their number is growing, new, not encountered earlier illnesses appear, people desperately need medical help, expenses on medicinal products grow, and the pharmaceutical market grows faster than the economy on the whole, including national economies.[†] Also, it appears that, for example, evaluating the level of well-being through the level of per capita income on a global scale is not just meaningless but also false: it is nothing but neglecting statistic data and mathematical calculations.[‡] The simple, widely known economic truth is that the level of income on its own does not signify well-being or wealth if the level of expenses is not known. It is important to know if a person's income covers his or her expenses rather than how much the person earns. In their turn, expenses are also stratified according to the levels of needs starting with minimal expenses insufficient to cover elementary needs – when people have to struggle to survive and they do not always manage to do it, which is confirmed by the above. These are followed by minimal expenses sufficient to cover elementary needs – where they extend to physiological survival and a simple self-reproduction of a person, making the person's further physical, psychological, moral, ethical, and mental development impossible. Then we move on to minimal expenses corresponding to the very same elementary needs but remaining below the "elite form" and enabling to afford a little above that (this level of expenses forms consumer behavior and the so-called middle class, which is the foundation of the whole economy), and so on. The specific features and the scale of needs are determined by culture, traditions, internal policy of the society in question, its structure, and many other factors.

The strategy of sustainable human development declared by the UNDP and OECD (2013) is based upon 2 components: 1) sustainable development and 2) human development. Sustainable development itself is based upon the concept of human development which was presented in the first Human Development Report 1990. This concept consists of the following key grounds: 1) formation of human abilities and opportunities; 2) use of human abilities and opportunities; 3) broadening the opportunity of choice for people; 4) balance between the formation of human abilities and opportunities and their use. These key grounds are the essence of human development. According to the UNDP, if the balance between these grounds is destroyed, enormous human potential will be lost. "Many people

[†] By the year 2016, the volume of the world expenses on medicinal products will reach, according to the prognosis of "IMS Health", approximately 1,200 billion US dollars (Picture 1), which is conditional upon the development of the world pharmaceutical market and also the increasing expenses on original and generic medicinal products. In this vein, it is expected that, by the year 2016, the world expenses on original medicinal products will be approximately 615-645 billion dollars, and on generic products – approximately 400-430 billion dollars. In comparison with 2012, the growth will be approximately 3-8% for original products and 65-78% for generic products. Here is an article by Ekaterina Dmitrik, published at the web-site of the Russian agency of medical and social information AMI on the 01st July 2013 <http://ria-ami.ru/read/17956>.

[‡] In connection with this, it would be useful to read the book "The Quants: How a New Breed of Math Whizzes Conquered Wall Street and Nearly Destroyed It", 2014, by Scott Patterson.

throughout the history lived – and are living now – their lives without being aware of their personal development potential, or the nature of the organization of their societies and the connections between individuals within said societies, or the opportunities to implement their personal development potential and thus improving the quality of life of the society and the humankind in its entirety..., which causes dissatisfaction with life of the vast majority of these people" (VP SSSR, 2011).

What abilities and opportunities are talked about in the strategy? The most basic ones which, according to A. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1999), constitute the first three levels: employment providing the minimal necessary income allowing for the minimal level of welfare (food, residence, clothes), literacy, safety, basic services including healthcare, an opportunity to participate in the political life of the country via voting and taking part in political and public institutes, and elimination of gender inequality.

It is evident then that the policies and strategies of states and regional and international organizations, such as the Sustainable Development Strategy and Millennium Development Goals of the UNDP and the Better Life Initiative of the OECD, are focused only at the objective aspect of well-being and, moreover, at its most elementary level.

In its turn, approaches to forming the factors, measuring, and evaluating the subjective aspect of well-being should be completely different: they should be more complex, more individualized, more directed by different vectors of influence and impact, based upon deep philosophical, ethical, moral, and psychological principles and categories, and, thus, they should be less material, less tangible, less quantitative, and more subjective. The subjective aspect of well-being can be described via such categories as respect and self-respect, confidence, satisfaction, harmony, harmonious physiological and psycho-emotional state, awareness of the purport of life and the person's own meaning and significance in the social and political systems and in the universe, the feeling of love, affection, friendship, necessity, the person's own place, implementation of the person's calling, etc.

At the present moment, the subjective aspect is, by all means, determined by the objective aspect, and, in this sense, the objective aspect of well-being is, without doubt, primary in relation to the subjective aspect exactly at the present moment, but it is not part of or the basis of the subjective aspect.[§] Conceptually, the subjective aspect is not limited to its objective counterpart. On the contrary, it is the subjective aspect which forms the principal foundation for the formation of the objective aspect of well-being, which is especially important for future generations.

Material well-being, health, longevity, literacy, and education are the constituents of the objective aspect of well-being, and they are, undoubtedly, the factor for creating opportunities and abilities to choose. However, even simply approaching the rhetoric on well-being, the UNDP and OECD, and the national governments – with or without such an intention – miss the main fundamental cause which is the moral approach to control in both socio-political and socio-economic areas even though, for instance, the UNDP Human Development Report 1994 mentions it. The Report clearly states the attitude towards the obvious contradiction between the vector towards accumulating material wealth and the vector of human development: "National wealth might expand people's choices. But it might not. The use that nations make of their wealth, not the wealth itself, is decisive. And unless societies recognize that their real wealth is their people, an excessive obsession with the creation of material wealth can obscure the ultimate objective of enriching human lives".

It is also admitted that the material welfare that nations reach today does not secure prosperity for future generations. In this context, it is very important to take into consideration the key principle of sustainable human

[§] It is vividly described by the folk wisdom expressed in proverbs and sayings.

All a hungry person can think of is food. *Kazakh proverb*

When hunger comes in through the door, love escapes through the window. *Cuban proverb*

Hunger is a bad advisor. *African proverb*

A hungry person was asked what the heaviest thing was, and he answered: "An empty stomach". *Georgian proverb*

When a person is hungry, their feet refuse to move. *Adygei proverb*

Empty stomach makes one's mind foggy. One cannot sing on an empty stomach. *Russian proverbs*

development, which was expressed in the Report of 1995: in order to provide good quality of life, infinitely high income is not needed.

However, the manifested principles of sustainable human development which are the guarantee of human well-being contradict the policies of all national states that declare economic growth to be their primary goal. We suppose that it is the substitution of true goals which states and societies should pursue and the current methods used to achieve them that are the true cause of the overall ill-being of people in both objective and subjective aspects.

3. Well-being or ill-being: objective and subjective reasons

Speaking of the objective aspect of well-being, we discover three key reasons for the catastrophic ill-being; they are as follows:

- 1) The replacement of development goals of any given economy, expressed in the fact that it is the economic growth that has been declared the goal of economic development on the global and national levels, not the satisfaction of the needs of the population;
- 2) The construction of the global and national levels financial system in isolation from economic goals and tasks, and the usage of funds credited at a high interest rate as the basic tool of financing, which resulted in the creation of the global debt economy that led us to the current global mutual debt bondage of all the national economic systems;
- 3) The intentional creation of aggressive conditions for the functioning of all economic subjects; in other words, competitive environment.

Speaking of the subjective aspect of well-being, we can see the following three key reasons of ill-being:

- 1) The elimination of the moral basis of the social, political, and economic interaction, and the construction of the said interaction on the basis of the objectivist philosophy which has, in the end, formed the economy of market fundamentalism proclaiming "absolutely unlimited aspiration to personal benefit" as the key driver of the economy and "the best way to achieve common benefit". It denies "the special nature of common values" and declares that "all values... can be expressed through market behaviour" (Soros, 2001).
- 2) The construction of economy on the principles of Keynesian theory of economic relations aimed at boosting consumers' demand, which, together with the ideas of market fundamentalism and the modern individualist culture, have formed a consumer society whose main priority is its individual subjective benefit;
- 3) The idealisation of democratic society not as one based on solidarity, mutual understanding, mutual respect, voluntary simplicity for the sake of public welfare and well-being, but as a society of personal rights, liberties, and needs isolated from those of others, which, in result, has led to the creation of the individualistic society, or the so-called social atomism, where every person acts to their own personal advantage.

However, there is an earnest conviction that, conceptually, the basis of these fundamental causes is the elimination of the moral grounds of social interaction on both local and global levels.

As it is known, "the main function of economy is to constantly create such goods that are vital for human life and without which society would not be able to develop. Economy helps to satisfy a person's needs in the world of limited resources" (<https://ru.wikipedia.org/>). And the pursuit of profits, as it was defined by Aristotle, is not economy – it is chrematistics. If the purpose of economic activity is to satisfy the needs, then in this case profit and economic growth are objectively results of this activity and the measuring unit of its efficiency. In this case, the high level of satisfaction of needs with high profit standards and high economic growth will demonstrate the high level of the activity itself which is performed in a qualified manner providing for the satisfaction of needs, maintenance of economic growth, and obtainment of profit. If the purpose of economic activity is to gain profit and maintain economic growth, the qualitative task – the satisfaction of needs – becomes obscured because profit and economic growth can be obtained by other means. (Alartartseva, 2014).

In 2009, the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission already reached an unequivocal conclusion that GDP growth does not signify the quality of life and the well-being of people, society, and state because quite often this growth is obtained at the expense of worsening the well-being: the intense exploitation of people, the burden of debt and inflation, the despoilment of resources, irreparable damage to the environment, pollution, and so forth; the growth of GDP often comes as a result of statistical and mathematical manipulations. As it is known (Perkins, 2014), a

considerable contribution to economic growth is provided by the alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, advertisement, banking, and finance sectors of the market, which are hardly instrumental for increasing human well-being. "...For example, if you bombed a city and then rebuilt it all over again, you would be able to demonstrate an enormous economic leap through "scientific" manipulations of predictive modelling, econometric theory, and statistics".

Moreover, not only the creation of GDP is important, but also its usage. And if the GDP growth is achieved through a tremendous enriching of a small part of human society, then the said part will use the benefits created for them, and the other part, the bigger one, will live in poverty.

The debt economy built to provide for economic growth leads to unavoidable impoverishment of everybody who depends on credit financing on the personal level as well as on the level of the whole society and state. The cause is simple and evident: if the financing of economic or human development is performed on account of credit resources which are fee-based, then everything created on account of this financing will in fact belong to the credit source, which was illustrated by the crisis of 2008.

There is an invincible belief that the fundamental cause of the objective aspect of factors of the critical ill-being of the modern society is the global decay of morality which is a factor of the subjective aspect of well-being. Weber said that "Abraham died pleased with the life he had lived, and a nowadays human dies tired of life." Małgorzata Jacyno (2012), a modern philosopher and sociologist, characterises the modern post-industrial consumer society on the global scale in her book "The Culture of Individualism" in the following manner: "...the modern culture of individualism brings chaos and leads to the disintegration of society due to the egotistic ideology of "enjoying life" and the applied individual life strategies. They hide narcissism and mechanical attitude to others, which, in its turn, leads to the destruction of society and interconnections... The strategies used by separate people reveal an insistent pursuit of rationalisation of life in order to "pump out" as much health, happiness, youth, money, and sense of well-being as possible. Full gyms, popular classes for training intellectual abilities and "being programmed for success", excessive ambition, inclination to keep to rigorous diets – all of these are another image and the reverse side of the life of modern individualists keeping to a regime that they would have considered inhuman unless they had chosen it for themselves".

The most ancient Vedic doctrine speaks of human well-being as a continuous inner state of wholeness and, due to harmonious interaction, unity with the surrounding World, Nature, and Cosmos. Then, the dawning and developing Buddhism regarded the quintessence of human well-being as, expressing it with modern language, a harmonious psycho-emotional state. Confucius (2001) in his teachings declared human well-being to be the uppermost merit of life. However, to achieve this merit, a person has to follow unfailingly the five basic rules which, according to Confucius, are eternal. Firstly, a person should exercise philanthropy and mercy and be humane, which constitutes the moral and ethical bases of the inviolability of the wholeness of society and state despite any perturbations. The second rule is implied by the first one and it says that a person should perform all his or her actions, guided by the principles of truth and fairness, which constitutes the virtue. These two rules create the foundation for the safekeeping of the integrity of society and its moral and ethical grounds through abiding by the third rule: any activity of any individual person, group, or government should provide for the preservation of this integrity. Rationality, awareness, meaningfulness of actions, reasons, and consequences constitute the essence of the forth rule: a person should be guided by this rule when comprehending the motives of his or her actions, thinking at the scale of societies, states, and even the World on the whole, predicting the prospects of the consequences, results, and effects of these actions. And the fifth rule demands that, when performing actions at both personal and global levels, a person must act sincerely and honestly.**

We can see the same logic of understanding well-being in the works by Aristotle, Socrates, Spinoza, and many other thinkers. And we consider this aspect extremely important because, in accordance with our earnest conviction, it is this aspect that constitutes the foundation of the subjective aspect of well-being and forms its objective aspect.

** These five rules constitute the basis of 14 principles of control in TOYOTA Company and are the foundation of the corporative culture – DAO TOYOTA.

4. Conclusion

It is our earnest conviction that it is possible to provide for the well-being of human and society only by a radical re-assessment and alteration of moral bases. The President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin also stated that the problem of morality makes the core of all our problems. The fundamental grounds of wellbeing originate in morality and psychology, and they have to lie in the basis of building social, political, economic, cultural, and moral interactions if we want to build a society of social progress and reach the goals of sustainable human development. "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Koran, Surah 13:12(11))

Bernard Shaw said "We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers."

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