The European Culture for Human Rights

The European Culture for Human Rights: The Right to Happiness

Edited by

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A FOREWORD INSTEAD OF AN INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to explain my enthusiasm and my renewed state of professional satisfaction as a psycho sociologist when I first heard from my colleague (Corina Dumitrescu, Rector of Dimitrie Cantemir Bucharest University, professor in law but also a very close friend of sociology) the proposal of the agenda of the international conference on the Right to Happiness and the Quality of Life. Perhaps this very difficultly justifies why I felt drawn to the theme of my presentation, together with many other social psychologists and theoreticians. Perhaps, among other things, my interest in the subject was a consequence of the unexpected revival of intense theoretical debates around an explicit focus on the right to happiness in times such as ours, being overly dominated by the political agenda and futile, populist discourse/debates about the economic crisis without hope for the near future, the social reform without impacting well-being, the cost-benefit analyses that tend to overlook the social and the individual, or by half-hearted and only marginally efficient attempts at social policies of inclusion.

I started with a rhetorical question: "Why do we talk about happiness again; why do we return to the traditions of ancient social philosophy?" I myself am inclined to revisit the topic of happiness not because I disagree with recent theoretical analyses or because I am dissatisfied with what was recently published about happiness, and not because there are a lack of arguments and theoretical constructions of new models of self-actualisation or self-fulfilment as basic components of happiness, but because the topic of happiness has been and will always remain a constant preoccupation of human beings, characterised by new meanings and new highlights, depending on how it is situated in time. Happiness, as a subjective state of mind or subjective well-being, as a complex interplay of cognitions and positive emotions, is deeply rooted in people's awareness of their relationship with their environment.

This book materialized after an International Conference focusing on the relation between the right to happiness and the quality of life. The coordinators have been gathered from the papers presented in the conference and classified according to their topic in an attempt to group them into sections and, as much as possible, to put them into the time frame. The papers included within the volume suggest distinct, multi- and

inter-disciplinary perspectives in analysing happiness and quality of life. Hence, **the coordinators are not responsible for any possible error or inexactitude that may occur in the papers contributed by the different authors, who remain solely responsible for the quality of their communications.**

These papers highlight the multiple approaches in the analysis of happiness and the quality of life in the modern terms of individual and collective welfare, while introducing instruments used to measure life satisfaction, welfare indicators and mechanisms which decrease of remove altogether the barriers that hinder the quality of life for individuals. Briefly, the bottom line of the book is that the right to happiness, stipulated into the Constitution, is worth fighting for.

I want to mention our acknowledgements for prof. univ. Corina Dumitrescu, the initiator of this international Conference with such special issues as the right to happiness, for Graham Clarke, our proofreader who provided constant professional guidance in improving the English version of this book, Keith Thaxton, our typesetter for her patient in the technical text arrangement, and last but not least for Carol Koulikourdi who encourage the preparation of this book in its English format by providing good advice for finalizing our manuscript.

Coordinators
Elena Zamfir and Filomena Magino

PART I

HAPPINESS AND LIFE QUALITY: TRENDS AND DEFINITIONS

CHAPTER ONE

REVISITING HAPPINESS AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE: NEW AND OLD SOLUTIONS

ELENA ZAMFIR[1]

Abstract

This chapter identifies a close association between the concepts of happiness and quality of life. It shows that a profound perspective of conceptualising happiness is based on multi- and interdisciplinary contributions from philosophy, ethics, sciences, religion, and even politics. However, attempts to define happiness have proven tortuous and tricky, because it is almost impossible to capture the complexity of the theoretical implications of the concept. Ancient philosophy used rational and speculative language/discourse to formulate the main theoretical difficulties generated by the act of thinking about the essence of human beings—their happiness and freedom—engendering many debates around defining these constructs. What these attempts have in common is the pervasive understanding of happiness as a dynamic process and never as a structured, finite state. The person as an open system is in a continuous process of defining and perfecting himself/herself, and of self-growth, self-development and self-construction. Human beings are capable of transformations that prolong the lines of their existence from the real into the possible and from the possible into the real. This is why human achievements that are due to the pursuit of happiness differ from reaching a closed and well-defined state, whose characteristics were clearly planned for in its development. On the contrary, the person's definition is related to her/his complex bio-psycho-socio-cultural environment, which ensures

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her/his complex development and the evolution of her/his ability to continually self-construct.

Keywords: happiness-definitions, quality of life, subjective well-being, perceived quality of life, self-actualisation, hierarchy of needs, life satisfaction, subjective indicators.

1. Defining happiness: A framework

Starting with ancient philosophy and ending with the latest contribution of psycho-social sciences aimed at devising practical strategies for individual well-being, happiness has been identified as a process of permanent pursuit of authenticity and responsible actions leading to one's improvement and development, and to self-actualisation. Happiness seems to be one of the central themes of philosophical meditation, but also a permanent goal of people's practical life strategies [1]. Formulating its concerns coincided with the birth act of philosophical reflection and it has continued to be reflected in theoretical and scientific disputes. The entire ancient philosophy that referred to itself as wisdom gravitated around this understanding of happiness as the main meaning of life of human beings [2] [3] [4].

The concept of happiness has often been characterised as slippery, treacherous, deceptive and difficult to identify precisely from a theoretical point of view, and difficult to capture in all the complexity of its cognitions and emotions.However, perhaps the most difficult thing is to measure the life satisfactions or the components of happiness. People have also emphasised how happiness as a desideratum is difficult to reach. The pursuit of happiness can be compared to a Fata Morgana—the closer to it we think we are, the further away it is actually getting [1].

This is why happiness appears to have two different hypostases: as an ideal to pursue and to reach, but also as an ideal to define. Happiness imposes itself as an aspiration. This state of happiness opens a new opportunity for "learned optimism" [5], with a special meaning for the future actions of human beings. The pursuit of happiness requires first defining happiness and specifying its basic components, and then identifying the favourable circumstances and the ways in which it can be pursued as a process of personal self-fulfilment in time. Practical approaches of happiness were formulated by applied social psychology, applied sciences ("Humanistic Psychology") and especially by "Positive psychology." Martin E. P. Seligman proposes the fundamental principles of the new movement of Positive Psychology for reaching "authentic

happiness" [5]. Knowledge as a way of truth-seeking uncovers the fascinating topic of happiness and the ways it can be reached. "The Science of Well-Being" [6a] is an important and recent example, wherein Ed Diener made a good synthesis on scientific contributions focused on surveys measuring happiness, taking into account the subjective and objective indicators of well-being and the main classical theories [6a] [6b] [6c]. In analysing happiness he points out three dimensions of the theories: "The first dimension is whether the theory places the locus of happiness in external conditions such as income and status, as many sociological theories do, or within the attitudes and temperament of the individual, as many psychological theories do. Throughout my writings there is a mix of both the internal and external factors that influence well-being.A second dimension that characterizes scholarship on well-being is the issue of whether the factors affecting well-being are relative or absolute … A third and related issue is the degree to which the influences on happiness are inborn and universal or are learned, based on the goals and values of the culture and of individuals" [6a, p.3].

In its nascent form, the entire social and humanistic thematic of modernity can be traced back to ancient wisdom, whose goal was attaining happiness. Ludwig Grunberg (1978), after the epicurean model of happiness from ancient philosophy, proposed a simple definition of happiness as the means between wishes had and wishes granted [7]. This was to be widely examined and disputed from the perspective of modern sciences. In this formula, the numerator is always going to be higher than the denominator, because humans will always have new desires and new goals. The human beings open to self-improvement will never feel completely comfortable or completely satisfied. Common sense suggests that individuals are never satisfied with what they are, with what they have, and with what they have accomplished. The finality of their aspirations/desires for complete self-fulfilment or self-development cannot be stopped. In antiquity, clarifying the idea of happiness stayed in the realm of philosophical theory and was never converted into the type of practical means that can change one's life. This idea was also the epicentre of the crisis of ancient philosophy.

What these attempts have in common is the pervasive understanding of happiness as a dynamic process and never as a structured, finite state. The person as an open system is in a continuous process of defining and perfecting themself, and of self-growth, self-development and self-construction. Human beings are capable of transformations that prolong the lines of their existence from the real into the possible, and from the possible into the real. This is why human achievements that are due to the

pursuit of happiness differ from reaching a closed and well-defined state, whose characteristics were clearly planned for in its development [1]. On the contrary, the person's definition is related to her/his complex bio-psycho-socio-cultural environment, which ensures her/his complex development and the evolution of her/his ability to continually self-construct.

Starting with ancient philosophy and ending with the latest contribution of social sciences aimed at devising practical strategies for individual well-being, happiness has been identified as a process of permanent pursuit of authenticity and responsible actions leading to the one's improvement and development, and to self-actualisation. Happiness seems to be one of the central themes of philosophical meditation, but also a permanent goal of people's practical strategies. Formulating its concerns coincided with the birth act of philosophical reflection and it has continued to be reflected in theoretical and scientific disputes.

Centuries later, it began to be reconceptualised using the instruments of modern sciences. This is why the legendary French revolutionary Louis Antoine de Saint-Just exclaimed that "Happiness is a new idea in Europe" [8]. However, modern philosophy, obsessed by knowledge and by the idea of truth-seeking through science, initially neglected the notions of happiness, goodness and freedom.

The birth of social sciences opened the possibility of some theoretical demarcations centred on people's day-to-day life satisfaction, approaching the issue of happiness directly and in a new light. The collaboration of scientific theories led to a new domain of multi- and inter-disciplinary analysis more similar to the daily concerns of the individual, to the meaning of life as **a theme centred on the quality of life**. Life satisfaction, its different degrees of accomplishment, and the accumulation of essential concrete life aspects under its different spheres, led to a shorter definition of happiness [1]:

a) self-actualisation through the precise definition of one's daily needs and requirements that have to be accomplished in order to feel fulfilled (conventionally proposed as a positive definition) [5] [9] [10]; and
b) what one should stay away from in order to avoid insecurity, unease, distress, daily risks or any other destructive force with a negative impact on one's physical or psychological balance (a negative definition) [11] [12].

Thus, happiness appears to be ambivalent. On the one hand, it is characterised by a desire towards balance, inner peace, harmony and

cooperation, perceiving optimism in the future; on the other hand, it is also characterised by a permanent searchto overcome one's limitations through self-improvement, pursuit of life satisfaction, and the expectation to succeed. This complex of actions, openly aimed at the pursuit of happiness, is the end result of various stages of achievements andthe gradual accrual of competences in relation to one's environment.

2. The relation between happiness and quality of life

The introduction of the concept of quality of life opened new opportunities for understanding and especially for measuring happiness. The quality of life, as a first stage of theory and social action, as an active practice for keeping the harmony/balance between humans and their environment, was introduced to public attention in relation to a shocking event that took place in 1967 when an oil rig was damaged close to the French coast, following which a wave of oil spilled over the beaches, sending the unlucky vacationers home. It might have been a simple accident reflecting the negative effects of modern industrial developments, with their disagreeable aspect that lacks environmental consciousness [1]. It was, however, also a symbolic event which prompted people to question how feasible it is to build an entire civilisation on industrial miracles, with no concern for human lives or the environment. That year, possibly responding to that particular event, Western Press launched a new concept, Quality Of Life, that was to become extremely popular in increasingly different social contexts. It spread rapidly from journalists to academics, politicians and social scientists (sociologists, social psychologist, etc.), becoming a key concept of our times [1]. It is interesting to note that it also spread geographically across different countries as well as across different political and social systems. It was adopted by communist as well as capitalist countries, and developing countries as well as economically developed ones. Interestingly, it became the common element and the liaison of different theoretical approaches in social sciences, economics and politics, defying the ideological barriers of the time. The concern for the quality of life, for the life satisfaction and well-being of the individual, rapidly became one of the hot topics of research and science.

Quality of life is more than just a label for rethinking happiness from a practical point of view [13]. The new concern for quality of life expresses a modern uneasiness in a world characterised by increased risks, and the individual's new search for balance at the intersection between social, economic, political and environmental factors. This uneasiness suggests firm criteria for balancing the requests of the person with those of nature,

especially when it comes to using nature's limited resources consciously and responsibly. Thus, we are witnessing a re-evaluation of the topic of happiness from the point of view of sciences, based on the pragmatic concerns of collective modernity. For instance, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett show the negative impact of modern economic growth on well-being and happiness, and on life-expectancy and the health state quality, presenting much evidence for a wise economic growth based on equality for everyone: "The scale of income differences has a powerful effect on how we relate to each other. Rather than blaming parents, religion, values, education or the penal system, we will show that the scale of inequality provides a powerful policy lever on the psychological well-being of all of us … Economic growth, for so long the great engine of progress, has, in the rich countries, largely finished its work. Not only have measures of well-being and happiness ceased to rise with economic growth but, as affluent societies have grown richer, there have been long-term rises in rates of anxiety, depression and numerous other social problems. The population of rich countries have got to the end of a long historical journey" [14, pp.5-6].

The theoreticians and analysts began to consider the conditions created by cutting edge technology in the context of a civilisation in the course of globalisation and analysed the perverse effects of "unhealthy" technology and their implicit, indirect effects on human life. The pragmatic solutions proposed by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett for our modern societial risks could appear strange to some at the time of writing, during a period of economic crisis. In fact, they return to the same conclusions of the 1970s to 1980s scenarios about green technologies of world development. However, from my point of view, they are thinking in a rational way when they mention that the sustainability and increasing quality of life since the Brandt Report in 1980 underline that: "social and environmental sustainability go together. It is fortunate that just when the human species discovers that the environment cannot absorb further increases in emissions, we also learn that further economic growth in the developed world no longer improves health, happiness or measures of well-being. On top of that, we have now seen that there are ways of improving the quality of life in rich countries without further economic growth" [14, pp.218-219].

Sociologists, psychologists and statisticians began to create new mechanisms for social indicators and a specific battery of instruments that measure the quality of life. Both objective and subjective indicators were created to measure people's satisfaction within different domains of their lives. Afterwards, many theoretical studies, empirical studies and surveys

appeared, trying to assess well-being and our life satisfactions [1] [6a] [6b] [6c] [15] [16] [17].

Politicians and decision makers introduced the concept of quality of life as a central objective of their programmes of social development.

The analysis of happiness from the perspective of quality of life is unique in the relevant literature. This analysis is based on people having an active role in bestowing meaning on different components of their life. People have the means and the power to decide whether their life is good or bad by taking into account their subjective perceptions, such as how different domains of their lives interact and what their meanings for their entire lives are, e.g. family, profession, civic or political participation, leisure, etc. "The concern for quality of life develops the individual's perspective on the world. It explores the signification of daily life and everything that surrounds the person. The subject appears immediately as a concrete individual and unique framework of reference for every aspect of existence. Thus, quality of life is always quality in relation to human beings" [1,p.18]. At this point of the analysis, the correlation between happiness and quality of life becomes clear. In fact, both concepts refer to the same subjective/personal reality of individual satisfaction, in relation to the individual's life, but these concepts are examined from different perspectives. If ancient philosophers defined happiness in relation to its content, and especially to its ethical component, from the point of view of spiritual and inner growth, the concept of quality of life approaches happiness from a more practical perspective, from the point of view of collective actions aimed at individual satisfaction and well-being. These different perspectives also lead to different ways of pursuing happiness.

Based on the interdisciplinary approach of time perspectives ("present, past, future"), Philip Zimbardo proposed a unique, profound analysis of love and happiness. Interestingly, taking into account the Dalai Lama's wise experience of life, he suggests that happiness can be pursued in the future through important personal decisions doubled by meaningful actions. "From time to time we are faced with pivotal decisions that can affect the entire course of our lives. We may decide, for instance, to get married, to have children, or to embark on a course of study to become a lawyer, an artist, or an electrician. The firm resolve to become happy—to learn about the factors that lead to happiness and take positive steps to build a happier life—can be just such a decision. The pursuit of happiness as a valid goal and the conscious decision to seek happiness in a systematic manner can profoundly change the rest of our lives" [17, p. 264].

Ancient thinkers proposed a model of self-actualisation and pursuit of happiness focused on individual ethics, while the theoretic model of the quality of life emphasises a solution focused on action politics from the perspective of an active intervention that promotes collective change. In this case, the instruments for maximising life satisfaction belong to collective interventions that can modify one's objective life conditions according to one's individual goals.

Quality of life is an eminently evaluative concept with an evaluative structure; it does not describe objects or characteristics in itself but, instead, refers to the person's value of life, as a whole, and for different components. It indicates the degree to which life conditions offer the satisfaction of its many necessities. Quality of life has a dual structure—a state of life as a whole and a set of values and criteria for evaluating this state of life in order to assess it. In this context, the general idea of life is of something that is "made" or constructed by the individual, but that depends on a set of given conditions. It depends on the person's goals, values, value orientations, individual skills and abilities, as well as on their objective life conditions and social environment. What are these life conditions? We are talking about the frameworks and resources of our life environment, analysed separately for conventional purposes [1]. Interestingly, from a quality of life perspective, the pursuit of happiness as the person's central goal can and should be extended into ethical considerations. This pursuit is rooted in a collective moral wisdom based on the rigorous imperative Kantianism of an individual morality, adapted not only to conceptualising action but also to encompass direct or indirect effects on the individual's life satisfaction and well-being. More than that, the moral norm constraints are focused not only on the final goal of action but also on choosing the means for action.

In truth, modern society, faced with multiple risks of development, has to be controlled by the wisdom or rationality of collective ethics principles in order to grant individual satisfaction. Its means of development through cutting edge technology can contribute to human accomplishments but also to human downfalls. Thus, responsible control of technology becomes mandatory. In today's world, we cannot talk about individual satisfactions without collective morals, without the collective responsibility that guides the directions of development of humankind (see the warnings of the scenarios envisioned by the Club of Rome in the 1970s, which return today to public attention) [18] [19] [20] [21]. Launching the new Report in 2012 should concern us because it reiterates the possible risks and dangers of the modern society, of globalisation, and of not taking into account the unwanted effects of globalisation and technology on social and human

development. Decision makers' lack of concern with and specific solutions for re-establishing a balance with nature, minimising social polarisation, and minimising the risks for social exclusion are expressions of an obliviousness of the conclusions proposed by the Club of Rome about the evolution of humanity. It is well known that technological advances that support the development of modern society are capable of both suggesting new ways of reaching human potential and destroying our constructive efforts. In fact, how we want to use them depends on our moral responsibilities.

As early as 1989, taking into account the Club of Rome conclusions, I emphasized that its members drew attention to the fact that "economic growth is limited not just by interests, but also by consequences" [1, 275]. They were arguing that although there is a strong concern to limit pollution due to the activity of production, a near future in which we have clean, fully pollution-free technologies would be a utopia. On the contrary, the data seem to show that we inhabit an increasingly polluted planet whose limit of renewal seems to have been reached. Continuing industrialization without social responsibility will unavoidably enhance pollution in an uncontrollable manner. This has a two-fold negative effect on humanity: destruction of the natural environment that supports life on Earth and depletion of the food reserves, and degradation of agricultural land, destruction of water life etc. On the other hand, the demographic explosion characteristic of our century will swiftly increase the world population, while the food reserves will diminish steeply. Meadow's "Limits of growth" report was a warning, even from 1972, that the possibility of a true catastrophe through the rapid increase of the population is no longer supported by the increase of food resources and the industry. Due to the harm to the natural resources the industry will regress. "Even from 2010, humankind will no longer be rich, but on the brink of falling into misery, poverty and hunger" [1, p. 275]. The responsible control over everything that mankind has created through technology is compulsory. We can no longer speak in the modern world of individual satisfactions without a moral regard to the collective responsibility towards setting the future directions of humanity's development. Unfortunately, the warnings issued by the scenarios of the Club of Rome during the glorifying 1970s dropped out of public attention and were not used in due time by the decision makers. There was no constant concern of increasing responsibility for the effects of a chaotic technological development with no social control. The 2012 Report should worry us all because it reiterates the possible hazards and risks of the modern society for social and human development within the new process of climate

change (2 degree celsius warming by 2052) and the polluting high technology. The lack of receptiveness of and concrete solutions issued by the decision makers in the field of the relation between man and nature, alleviating the social polarization and decreasing the risks for social exclusion, show the obvious disregard for the conclusions of the scenarios for human evolution proposed by the Club of Rome.

We live in a society in which individual life satisfaction cannot be disentangled from the moral implications of collective responsibility with a view for the future development of humanity.

3. Measuring happiness: Indicators of life satisfaction

When assessing the human condition by relating it to the environment, sociologists and social statisticians identified several ways of measuring life satisfaction [6c] [22] [23] [24] [25].

Defining happiness by relating it back to global and sectorial indicators of life satisfaction and the ways in which these indicators can be met established a link between the topic of happiness and the modern issues of quality of life. This approach, first introduced in the 1960s, also reflected an attempt to answer the rather complicated question of "Who can measure/how and when can happiness/quality of life be measured?" [1].

For instance, Richard E. Lucas, Ed.M. Diener and Randy J. Larsen refer to "future development in the measurement of Positive Emotions," considering that: "There are four main challenges regarding positive emotions. First, a number of the debates regarding the definition and structure of positive emotions will need to be settled … Second, psychologists must develop a better understanding of the ways that the various components of positive emotions converge. Most emotions theories believe that emotions have multiple components including subjective experience cognitive changes, action tendencies, and physiological changes. Yet measures of the various components are only modestly intercorrelated. Future research must determine when the components converge and why. Third, research on the measurement of positive emotion will benefit from a closer examination of the structure of discrete positive emotions. Although many theorists argue that there are distinct basic positive emotions or at least discriminable positive emotions facets, the specific positive emotions that are identified vary across different models … Fourth, clinicians and other practitioners must determine what implications these theoretical debates have for practical issues associated with the experience of positive emotions" [6c, pp.150-151].

Thus, the need for the development and improvement of consistent social indicators became clear. Both objective and subjective social indicators needed to be standardised and stable in time as much as possible, in order to allow for temporal comparisons. Thus, these indicators should be based on social and institutional devices that ensure maximum accuracy of information. However, the mechanism of development of concrete social and individual measures is complex, especially when we begin to analyse the structure of the indicators of quality of life, taking into account that the concept itself refers to an evaluation of a state by comparing it to subjective criteria that reflect the person's needs, requirements and temporal dynamic of their goals. This is why quality of life indicators have a unique and complex structure compared to other social indicators. They stand out as a combination of life indicators as well as indicators centred on evaluation [1].

In fact, both global and partial/sectorial indicators of the quality of life reflect their value and significance in measuring happiness.One of the reasons, Ed. Diener argues, that sociologists and other behavioural scientists began studying happiness was:"to assess how well societies were performing, with the assumption that happiness levels reflect whether a nation is meeting human needs. Thus, measures of well-being would provide social indicators much like crime, income, and education statistics that would monitor the progress of nations. If modern countries were to make progress, they needed measures against which to gauge it, and subjective well-being was argued to be one such measure" [6a, p.2]

4. When do people think of happiness?

In 1979 I argued that the idea of happiness is based on the possibility of access to self-actualisation or self-fulfilment, but only if it is associated with a culture of freedom versus a culture of silence [26], with a democracy based on moral politics and a culture of interpersonal relations [27]. I explained then (and added new elements to my explanation after) that periods of crisis, dissatisfaction, value confusion, aimlessness and meaninglessness generate mechanisms of looking for instruments aimed at finding solutions for the problems we face.

Personally, I have several reasons for revisiting the topics of happiness and quality of life twenty-five years later. I thought a great deal about these topics during the communist totalitarian regime [1] [26] [27]. One question that was particularly pertinent, especially after 1989, was "when do people think about happiness?" To simplify, my answer, in 1989, was that "people think about happiness when they are unhappy." Why is that?

Because those are the times in which people tend to gather their resources in order to invent or create new ways of reaching or achieving what is missing from their lives. People tend to focus on those projects that result in goods and values whose absence has an obvious impact on their comfort, satisfaction and well-being. All these wants are reflected in various indicators that measure our state of life satisfaction.

People reflect deeply about how to improve their quality of life not when they are happy, but when they are unhappy, when life seems meaningless and the significance they project onto their environment collapses. In these moments of individual or collective despair, focusing on solutions becomes pressing, as it is the only way out. People start to actively look for a means of change. The rationality of one's actions aimed at changing or moulding one's exterior or interior reality in moments of crisis is maximised. These actions are often doubled by the expression of a collective wisdom that tries to find the best direction of development. To reiterate conventional wisdom, the human being spends a lot more time thinking about what they don't have than about what they do. Consequently, people think a lot more about happiness when happiness is absent from their lives and when they are at a high risk of not reaching it. Even in these conditions, they still have hope for the future. Popular wisdom says: "The hope dies last." These moments of crisis allow the person to identify more precisely what is missing from their life, what priorities they have, and how to best fulfil these priorities through practical solutions.

Periods of social, human, environmental or moral crisis in evolution help clarify both the correct diagnosis of the problems and a set of flexible solutions well adapted to the person's situational context and particularities. Regardless of time, these periods emphasise the need to take into account the implicit/indirect/hidden costs of endemic economic growth that has little regard for individual well-being or for the human condition, producing unwanted effects such as pollution or natural catastrophes that are the result of an ecologic imbalance due to the irrational exploitation of natural resources. The perverse effects of the myth of economic growth force us to reconsider what human needs are essential and authentic and what is, in fact, ostentatious consumerism in accordance with Veblen theory [28].

Coming up with solutions for overcoming difficulties, even when these solutions are tentative, generates hope and optimism with respect to new actions. The person is searching for and generates feasible solutions for her/his aspirations in crucial moments of their life, when they are forced to change something in order to recover. People think deeply about how to

come up with more efficient actions that will improve their life satisfaction not when they feel fulfilled, but when they are in critical or high-risk situations, when life seems meaningless. They do not stop and think about the meaning of life in moments of fulfilment. In those moments, everything seems to be ordinary/normal from the point of view of life balance and this state of contentment feels timeless. We are all victims of a well-known imperative that is as reassuring as it is misleading— "seize the day."

The challenges related to the current crisis prompt us to rethink our strategies of intervention and social action, and people channel their efforts to find appropriate answers to issues of life, growth, and well-being.

5. The pressure of needs in the context of maximising solutions which will satisfy them

According to Maslow's theory of authentic development of human beings, authentic needs of development differ from artificial or compensatory needs [29]. Thus, taking into account the requirements of a responsible and balanced life, rationality and responsibility with respect to the use of goods and consumption are emphasised.

When our normative authentic bio-psycho-socio-cultural needs are not met, they become pressing shortcomings or active frustrations and exercise a pressure to be met. They come to the forefront of awareness and lead to finding or imposing new strategies, instruments or techniques directed at meeting them through a succession of actions, often through trial and error.

In general, satisfying one's needs/goals/requirements takes place either quicker or slower depending on how these needs, goals, etc. are situated with respect to one's inner balance and harmony in the context of one's life environment.

When the needs are not met, after Maslow's (1970) theory, they are pushed to the surface. Latent necessities become active and exercise the pressure to be met as quickly as possible (see Maslow's hierarchy of needs) [29]. If, in times of relative normality with respect to satisfying one's needs, the desires to meet them are somewhat less specified and more diffuse, these desires become increasingly well-articulated and are translated into clear action motives as soon as their failure to be met pushes the human being to his or her biological limits of survival. This justifies the existence of different stages of need fulfilment according to their importance for the individual as well as according to one's means for

reaching certain goals through a practical search for the most efficient solutions.

When it comes to happiness, things are more complicated and not as clear. Happiness is, in fact, a dynamic process and not a pre-established given that remains equal in time. Happiness is a continual exploration, not an immutable constant. It consists of a multitude of desires, purposes and goals that generate others as soon as they are met. New needs become pressing and active in time [1] [30].

This is why, in the pursuit for happiness, people mobilise their inner and outer resources permanently in order to succeed in meeting those needs involved in their permanent self-improvement. Ignoring their elementary, biological needs of survival (of food and security), people orient themselves towards needs that transcend the immediate ones, such as for love, social acceptance and self-actualisation [29]. In lay terms, the human being is never happy with what they have, what they do, what they are, because they will never stop wanting more, wishing for what they don't have, trying to reach new goals and taking on increasingly daring projects [31, p.275]. The human is never empty of wishes, goals and plans. As noted by Sartre (2001), only death as the ultimate limit can stop the human being from wishing and acting to become something other than they are [32]. The desire to be permanently active, to develop and improve oneself and one's environment, is a constant of human life.

The entire complex of the issue of quality of life sustains a pragmatic vision of the pursuit of happiness and well-being, based on changes aimed at the continual improvement of one's interior and exterior universe.

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CHAPTER TWO

DEFINING AND MEASURING WELL-BEING AND THE ROLE OF HAPPINESS

FILOMENA MAGGINO[1]

Introduction

Defining what a good society is, and consequently its observation and monitoring, should take into account two important and interrelated concepts: complexity and limiting.

In order to measure and monitor a country's well-being and progress, a systematic approach is needed, leading from "concept" to "measurement," to "synthesis" and then "interpretation."

The process requires the identification of, in order:

(a) the concepts (and their corresponding conceptual dimensions) to measure and monitor, and the ambits (or domains) in which the concepts have to be measured and monitored
(b) the indicators, including the techniques aimed at summarizing and summing up the indicators
(c) interpretative and explanatory models.

This work aims at: (a) clarifying different issues concerning the well-being of societies by providing conceptual instruments allowing anyone to orient oneself among all the emerging proposals and to distinguish between serious and propagandistic issues; (b) unravelling some important methodological aspects and issues that should be considered in measuring it and constructing indicators.

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