# Well-being: From Not- Being to Reality

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Abstract

The category of well-being is not a real abstraction of classical capitalist economy. Nascent emergence of an interdisciplinary well-being discourse gives testimony to formation of well-being as socially constructed object.

The objective of this paper is consideration of ontological matureness stages of well-being as a social reality object. The discursive objects formation theory by M. Foucault, the knowledge transformation model by I. Nonaka and H. Takeuchi and the paradigm analysis of social reality objects according to G. Burrell and G. Morgan are used as a methodological base of the study.

The result is substantiation of social value-creating entrepreneurial action as a factor which makes provision for a reliable ontological status of well-being. Interdisciplinary studies of well-being are hypothecated as means of well-being social construction by force of its representation in the subjects of various sciences. Reducing well-being to its representations means nonexistence of well-being as autonomous object of social reality. Instead, multiparadigm approach enables cognition of well-being as a kind of individuals' activity at the various stages on the well-being's way toward its own reality.

Keywords—well-being, socially constructed object, representation of well-being, paradigms of well-being, transformation of knowledge, representation of well-being, social value, social entreprepreneurship.

## INTRODUCTION

In order to determine the level of satisfaction of people lives conditioned by modern economy, experts of various fields of knowledge use such concepts as welfare and well-being, which are clearly evaluative in nature. As far as is known evaluations are always subjective, no matter who performs them: whether people, and then it comes to subjective well-being, or researchers who try to provide the most objective evaluation, such as the level of population well-being in different countries

This work was performed by the authors in collaboration With Tomsk Polytechnic University within the project in Evaluation and enhancement of social, economic and emotional well-being of older adults under the Agreement No 14.Z50.31.0029.

and regions [1]. In these cases a relational character of what is called well-being is evident. This circumstance is not unusual for economics, because the majority of its categories are relative. The difficulty lies in the following fact: human well-being is also one of basic human values along with security and other crucial components of human culture [2].

Accordingly, the concept of well-being is "overloaded" with double relativity and subjectivity. First, people form their values, then researchers analyze them and compare them according to country and time peculiarities. Later, according to the data obtained on this basis, they create various ratings and indices. In this respect, in order to interpret the data, researchers are forced to consider status of some of these values as bases for comparison or standards of well-being. The abovementioned is intended to emphasize the peculiarity of well-being as an object of investigation. But it is known that «peculiarity» is a distinctive feature of scientific research.

One of these peculiar objects is wealth. It was a starting point for the emergence and development of economics. Axiological and relativstic nature of wealth was a central element for early studies of economy based on private property. Through wealth comparison of individuals it was possible to reveal economic structure of society and to display the causes of the wealth of nations. An object of exchange acted as an element of wealth and also was a relative unit. In an attempt to overcome the relativity of its objects political economics resorted to such theoretical constructs as "true value", "natural value", "fair price". Michel Foucault shows that the possibility of understanding of value in classical period was limited by the "episteme," which reduced knowledge to representation. As a result, the analysis of wealth turns into an endless table of representations of some goods into others. In modern language, each item in this table received its relative index or rating.

However, the reason and the very content of value were not detected by these tabulated representations, classifications and comparisons. One "actually fundamental event» (M. Foucault)

was required to provide that the representation of knowledge in the space of a table ceased to work as a criterion of rationality. The basis of this change in the type of rationality is a radical transformation of activity, as a result of which it ceased tracking the connections between things; instead it quickly turned into something that provided their connection. Therefore, the language of this activity has turned into the inner speech of things. Now, according to Foucault, the relations of things are established by very human activity, which is embodied in them [3].

This story is instructive as it shows that science does not have its object in finished form, it develops together with it. This co-evolution leads to the fact that the object acquires reliable ontology, ceases to be seemed as a result of subjective "tabular" presentations and classifications, and science, in its turn, acquires some confidence, that the concepts which it produces present the speech of the object itself.

The purpose of this article is to study the activity approach to well-being. For "well-being", as for scientific concept, like wealth, it is necessary to acquire its own ontology, the sustainability of which is provided by appropriate transformation of human activity system.

In this case, the activity responsible for well-being should be the subject of economic science of well-being as well as industrial production in its time became the subject of science of wealth. To achieve this goal in the first part we deal with paradigmatics and methaphorics of well-being, in the second part we analyze the very process of object "crystallization", the result of which is well-being functioning.

### PARADIGMATICS OF WELL-BEING

Paradigms of research - are ways of vision of reality, which determine the content of research programs, that is, the questions on which it is possible to find answers with the help of this vision, along with corresponding methods for their obtaining. For example, if the subject of study is understood as certain reality conditions, then the results will be the descriptions of different qualities that illustrate this reality, obtained on the basis of relevant measurements. If a subject will be understood also quite objectively, but as a dependent and derived from the objectively existing external forces that ensure the preservation and operation of this subject, there is no point to put questions what the subject presents itself, instead it is necessary to find out what and how forces act by means of this subject, and how this relation changes this activity in comparison with the situation if these forces could act directly.

The concept of scientific paradigm, introduced by Thomas Kuhn, was used to explain that scientific revolutions may be described by change of admissions, which are grouped by academic community in accordance with the nature of reality and rules of its application [4]. G. Morgan and G. Burrell developed and transformed this primarily evolutionary concept of paradigms into understanding of paradigms as alternative models of social objects analysis [5]. As a result, a multiparadigm approach to the formation of problematic and thematic research field of a social phenomenona started to penetrate with social studies. The examples of the implementation of multiparadigm approach at the moment are

descriptions of paradigms of education [6], organizations [5] and entrepreneurship [7].

Within the frameworks of a short article it is impossible to describe all the problematic and thematic fields of well-being concepts. For this reason we are limited to the definition of basic paradigms of well-being and their key metaphors.

Big paradigms are formed by pair combinations, created on the basis of alternative assumptions. The first group of assumptions relates to the nature of reality and represents an option between objective and subjective perception of reality. The second group refers to human ability to change reality gradually or radically. On the basis of these oppositions four paradigms of perception of reality are formed: functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, radical structuralist paradigms [8]. Let us examine them individually in relation to such object-matter as well-being.

Functionalist paradigm considers its objects as material or reasoned by material cause ones. Their existence is provided by functional connections, the presence of which makes possible their knowledge and regulation (and, correspondingly, gradual change). The basic metaphors of functionalist paradigm is a machine and a system.

Within the functionalist view on economy as on a system the concept of people well-being plays a role of a characteristic of system elements, their ability to function within it, the same role which the evaluation of technical condition plays in characterization of parts of any machine in terms of their integrity or malfunction, suitability or unsuitability for use. Economic reality, in terms of which the concept of well-being is studied, is considered as an objective, taken for granted phenomenon, which can be improved and, thereby, can improve characteristics of human existence. Thus the problem is reduced to determination of the quality of life in the framework of this economic system and to the development of recommendations for its improvement through gradual changes. As long as the boundaries of economic system as a system of human activity are given, primarily the processes related to distribution and consumption should undergo these favorable changes [9].

Following the functionalist metaphor of a system it is possible to say that the concept of well-being reflects the entire complex of aspects of human existence in economic system, which is not included in the concept of level of living. And here again, a system metaphor may be useful: for description of any parts of a system not only evaluation of its functionality and energy consumption is important, but also the information about maintenance and operation within its functioning, recording actual deviation from specified parameters.

Well-being within the functionalist paradigm can be seen much more thoroughly than it is possible through the metaphor of a system. Introduced by G. Morgan metaphors of an organism, a cybernetic system, a population ecology, a political system, a theater, a culture, if applied to the concept of wellbeing, can elucidate many aspects of human existence, outside of their definition in terms of income and consumption, and their functional connections such as, for example, the feedback effect of well-being on economy or the dependence of

transition to new technological structures from a particular type of well-being [10]. However, any methaphorics of functionalist paradigm cannot provide clarity of the question of this category historicism. The reason of this lies in the fact that well-being here defines the state of an object with unlimited flexibility, rather than historically specific activity. Therefore, there is nothing that impedes the exploration of well-being in any retrospection, despite the fact that in the past the reality of this abstraction was not found in any business practices or in treatises on economics. This makes us reflect on the reasons and consequences of the emergence and wide pervasion of the investigated concept.

In the functionalist paradigm the subjectivity refers to the entire system, to an engine, which automatically addresses the research results of well-being to an abstract " engineman", who presents a system as a whole. This modality is the reason that the ownership of functionalist discourse automatically shift to a «ruller" and that is why can easily justify the success of his "governance" in promoting the growing well-being of population.

The structuralist paradigm contrary to the previous one problematizes power, makes any object of study dependent and derived from the structures for which it is beneficial, which use it as a instrument of domination. If "an instruments of domination" is a basic metaphor of all radical structuralist paradigms, then a metaphor of biopolitics, introduced by Michel Foucault, perfectly provides the structuralist view on well-being [11].

In the context of this metaphor the power of "structures" touches all the aspects of life, from conception, the well-being of citizens is subordinated to the provision of dominance of ruling elite. With the help of focused attention to the issues of power the structuralist discourse makes out of well-being a battlefield, above all, against the project of well-being, imposed by prevailing economic and social structures. Moreover the structuralist discourse reveals the catastrophic nature of well-being project implementation. This transforms well-being from natural category into socially constructed. We receive an allusion that well-being is the result of a particular efforts to its construction. However, in this paradigm, this efforts and activity are of a purely political and ideological character.

The radical-humanist paradigm of well-being should be based on true human values, on values corresponding to human nature. Criticism of well-being, based on the reification and alienation, now goes beyond the fetishism of commodities intended directly for consumption, and extends to what is usually associated with personal growth and spiritual sphere [12].

The basic metaphor of commodity fetishism transforms into a metaphor of a spectacl [13] and cyber-fetishism [14], which elucidate the alienated nature of those activities, which show well-being and quality of life in postmodern society. However, radical humanist ideas are dangerous for actual practice of social transformation because they are based on idealism. The attempts to implement them will turn into dehumanised utopia of building prosperity, obligatory for everyone.

A common feature for radical-humanist, structuralist and

functionalist paradigms is the fact that all of them, each according to its characteristics, suggest certain norms of existence of studied object. At the same time, the nature of these norms varies considerably. Functionalist paradigm sees the norm of well-being in current situation, or in extrapolations of existing development trends, of investigated phenomenon. The radical-humanist paradigm sees them in the ideals of human nature, which are actually turned inside out of standards of modern world. The structuralist paradigm, without inventing utopias, accepts as the norm exactly the reality and mundanity of power, domination and dependence - the things ignored or overcome by the other two paradigms. With regard to the concept of well-being it turns out that the subjection of things to a certain way and quality of life should be seen not only as imposed by dominant structures ( a state, corporations); but it is also primarily produced as a result of daily efforts of ordinary people [15].

Interpretive metaphors are aimed to create "room for clarity" in the matter of how people create their reality, including the reality of their own well-being [16].

In this case well-being is daily constructed by interactions and sense creation of people. It is of activity nature. There are no structures, or functions, or conditions responsible for alienation of a person from himself. The philosophy of this paradigm - is a philosophy of responsibility and self-creation of a person. The basic metaphors of this paradigm in relation to well-being are «sensemaking» [17], "self-enterprise" [18] and "enactment" [19]. The demand for this paradigm is certainly dependent on the presence of a man, capable not only to maximize utility, but also to maximize the sense of his presence in this life. For this understanding of human the economics of well-being is closely connected with the economics of meaning [20].

## ECONOMICS OF WELL-BEING: EXPECTATION OF AN OBJECT

Formally well-being is seemed to be a purely mental construct that allows people to compare the satisfaction of life in different periods of time and in different regions. In pure form, the problem of well-being is comprehended when we compare the lives of two different people with the same standard of living. It is evident that such a comparison detects a problem, but not the object: there is a long distance between words, ratings and indices, on the one hand, and the object of social reality, on the other hand. This way, according to the theory of knowledge management involves four stages of transformation of knowledge — socialization, externalization, combination and internalization, which can be used to describe all the processes of conception and maturing of socially constructed objects [21].

At the beginning - it is not an object yet; it is its mental and communicative precursor, socializing various questions and problems of different paradigms that arise as a result of gradual accumulation of mutations in economic reality. These problems are as follows: how to learn to manage by values [22], if management capabilities through financial incentives are becoming exhausted; how to learn to comply with universal or global values in the world of free mobility of labor power; how to ensure the involvement of wealthy managers in capitalism, if they can live by means of their own savings; how to create a

sense of existence for those who are unnecessary for material production becoming more and more efficient? Even for those who do not have savings, «pay is insufficient to induce commitment and stimulate enthusiasm for the task, the wage constituting at most a motive for staying in a job, not for getting involved in it [23].

At the stage of socialization various mystifications appear associated with ontologization of discursive constructs of well-being. Radical humanist ontologization is built on a belief in the reality of true human values; functionalist is built on the belief that constructed indices have a reliable referent in people's lives. However, the question arises about the source of knowledge of true human nature or about objective parameters of well-being at the current moment.

These issues are removed to some extent at the stage of externalization, or promotion by life itself and documentation of empirical objects in scientific and publicist speech, ensuring representation of the constructs of language and digital reality. As a result there is a reference to a particular phenomenon, which is attributed to the ideal-typical embodiment of these constructs. For example, the Kingdom of Bhutan is a metonym of complex and ontologically dubious concept of "economics of happiness".

However, at this stage the ontology of well-being, of quality of life, of economy of happiness, and of similar objects - is still open to question: one, two, or even two hundred cases still do not determine the reliability of new object of social reality. A possible objection to this, consists in the fact that people's perceptions of well-being has always existed, and therefore it cannot be out of an objective basis, it is removed by the fact that well-being was an unnecessary element for system of categories of bourgeois economy in both practical and conceptual aspects.

What does play the role of essential prerequisite for the formation of reality of such categories as quality of life and well-being? It is evident, that such a condition is the occurrence of system of people activity in order to ensure their well-being. At this point, let us use a sort of tautology and try to determine in future how to exclude from the definition of well-being this very well-being as a determinant.

Tautology - is a feature of preliminary stages of the formation of discursive or socially constructed objects. Tautology arises in the process of socialization of a problem for solution of which there is no corresponding object in existing system. Then, at the stage of externalization a question begins to be elaborated on the basis of indicatory definitions that refer to empirical objects, which is seemed to have a way to problem solution. With regard to well-being, this means that its tautological or indicatory definitions appear on the decline of the discourse of economic determinism, concentrated around the concepts of level of living and labor motivation on the basis of material incentives. The surfaces of emergence of a new discourse of well-being and quality of life are the spheres of consumption and distribution. Here it is spoken about justice of income differentiation and access to activities out of the bounds of the provision of material goods and their consumption.

Along with the surfaces of emergence M. Foucault describes and other elements of discursive objects formation, such as instances of distinction and specification gratings [24]. Instances of distinction are all organizations that take into account not only qualification and level of living, but also social capital, as well as social, emotional, practical, etc. intelligence. Multiple locations and devices of recording of such factors are formed [25]. Among them: personnel departments of corporations, educational institutions, offices and even column of marriage advertisements in newspapers [26]. Specification gratings of well-being factors are developed in the course of a variety of assessments of population well-being, as well as popular social qualities of individuals.

All these elements of well-being formation as an object of social reality provide only socialization and externalization of shortages of the system of economic determinism. On the positive side an object is represented by the activities of scientists, experts and public servants on registration, specifications and evaluation of "well-being". As far as at this stage autonomous activity of production of well-being is presented by the activities of government agents, specialized in the implementation of social policy measures, it is not necessary to talk about the crystallization of an object. It is still questionable in terms of ontology, because it does not have its own self-reproduction cycle: social policy may change, and state support is not the generator of well-being acceptable for all people.

For well-being to get its own base of reproduction, to convert into an independent object of social reality the emergence of activities and human subjectivity must go beyond the production of material wealth, which would produce and realize new senses beyond the sphere of material needs. The intensity of expectation of these activities and their subjects is determined primarily by the fact that the modern economy, by making knowledge the decisive factor of production, came into universal risk zone. In this situation, well-being finally receives its permanent antipode, just as in the days of classical capitalism when an alternative to the process of self-expansion of wealth and to individual's participation in it was the death from starvation.

The universalization of risk and uncertainty manifests itself in two principal dimensions of modern capitalism. Firstly, as noted by Imre Szeman "the disappearance of sites and spaces available for accumulation engenders a desperate need for state and capital to innovate their operations. The risk for contemporary capital today is an outcome of both the need for change in a period of ever more intensive and extensive processes of accumulation and the potential failure to make the changes necessary to be able to take advantage of new sites and spaces of accumulation" [27]. The second dimension of risk today is, according to I. Szeman, in the precarity of life of inhabitants of contemporary capitalism.

Under these conditions, "multidiscursive construction of entrepreneurship beyond any economic or progress-instrumentalist reductionisn" connects "entrepreneurship to social change and societal transformation" [28].

On this basis, the self-realization of well-being idea passes the remaining two stages of formation of objects of cognitive nature: combination, that is the entrepreneurial sensemaking and entrepreneurial action in the spheres of social problems solution, and internalization, that is, self-creation of entrepreneurial subjectivity.

Well-being as an object of cognitive nature is formed from the actions of those who shape the meaning of activities beyond the production of usual forms of value. Moreover, the main thing is that it must be serious. And the seriousness of activities and objectivity of values are provided only by entrepreneurship. One may carry out his activities through grants and government subsidies as long as he wishes. However, an object emerging in it will always have the dubious ontology and will always act as a deduction from the income generated, while entrepreneurially generated social value, environmental value and others will level up overall well-being.

As long as well-being is understood as a individually significant product of activities of individuals or socially significant result of "activity" of public institutions, ensuring the well-being of certain categories of population, it will not be reliably reproducible product of economic system as a system of human activity. The economy of well-being as a historically determined system of human activity, which is a part of knowledge society, with its risks and uncertainties, does not express care of "society" about the quality of life of its members. On the contrary, it expresses that society itself is the result of independent people activity on implementation of meanings beyond the production of material goods, meaning that provide both individual life satisfaction and solution of social problems.

Classic, or physical capitalism [29] is based on individuals left to themselves in providing their livelihood. Cognitive capitalism – entrepreneurialism demonstrates itself as logical development of this base leading to the emergence of new subjectivity of individuals, independent in a sense determination of their own activities beyond the process of livelihood provision, participation in the solution of social problems [30] .

### CONCLUSION

Well-being as an economic category goes a long way of development starting with problems associated with the consumption and distribution of wealth, provision of access to activities (modes of engagement) beyond economic sphere (civil self-fulfillment, formation of communities within it, assigning of specific meaning of one's participation in high-technology corporate machine) to the systems of indices of quality of life under various economic conditions and complex research of those alternative ways of life, which are accessible for a human at the highest stages of capitalism, based on the conditions of economic determinism.

However, on this way well-being is perceived as a representation of a certain level of development of production, but not as the inner content of independent people activities which constitute this production.

For the conversion of well-being from the presentation of activity into activity itself it is necessary to apply conditions of contemporary cognitive capitalism, developing methods of profit production based on production of social value [31].

Social value is generated on the basis of social entrepreneurship, which is transformed into the essence and meaning of all entrepreneurial activities under the conditions of risks and uncertainties inherent to the knowledge society. "Structures" are not able to exclusively represent "society" in the environment where the generation of threats is based on the exploitation of decisive factors of modern production -knowledge. It is a matter of people themselves, whose work on blocking threats and solving social problems becomes productive and, determines all other activities, including the production of material goods. It also eliminates the problem of subjective well-being, because under the conditions of entrepreneurialism all claims towards reality are removed by people's responsibility for its creation and preservation.

Since well-being is becoming object, it is necessary to learn and to design it on the basis of multiparadigm approach. Different paradigms provide clarification of various aspects of subjective and objective in the nature of this phenomenon, combining actions of different degrees of transformation. Unlike interdisciplinary approach, multiparadigm approach aims at careful "bearing" of an object, preventing its dissolution among already existing objects. In addition, interdisciplinary research does not provide a real comprehensiveness, because all involved disciplines and approaches may be of the same paradigm and accordingly may hold an object in one paradigmatic domain and, thus, serve as a brake on the path of an object from its non-existence and its representation to its reality of activity.

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