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Well–being, Capabilities and Philosophical Practice

Abstract   *The concept of well being has become the main criterion to assess quality of life in contemporary society. Individual well–being describes the individual quality of life, while social well–being refers to quality of life in a society. Given that well–being has a multitude of dimensions, a unique definition of it is elusive to scholars. In this article social well–being is conceptualised as a dynamic process within the context set by social integration as one's relationship to society and the community. This includes the quality of interaction between the individual and society and one's 'social actualisation' understood as the realisattion of one's social capacities. Social actualisation also involves one's ability to influence social processes and to benefit from social cohesion, which consists, in any society, of the quality, organisation and functioning of the social world. Hence the ability to impact society is an integral part of individual well being. This paper suggests that philosophical practice as a new paradigm in the humanities holds out promise for the improvement of both individual and social well–being.*

Key words: *well–being, quality of life, concept, capabilities, experience, philosophical practice.*

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The aim of this article is to point toward a novel perspective of social transformation by inquiring into the nature of well–being. I suggest here a re–setting of the traditional intervention horizon of the helping professions with regard to well–being through philosophical practice as a cultivating methodology. When it is seen in this reformatory way, philosophical practice can be understood as sustainably enhancing individual and social well–being.[1]

The theoretical perspective used in the article for the the conceptualisation of well-being is embedded in the tradition of the social constructionism. This particular theoretical approach describes social reality as the interplay between social actors and their historical and cultural contexts. More specifically, social constructionism implies that well–being is a product of the specific overall context of one's life. Such a perspective supports the understanding of well–being which arises from an appraisal of one's circumstances and one's ability to productively functioning in

society (Sen, Nussbaum 1993). Well–being provides a person with a sense of how their life is unfolding in light of one's circumstances, activities and 'mental capital' (psychological resources).

The concept of well–being and related notions

In public policy studies, the shift towards accountability–based public policy, which is based on reliable information and requires accurate measurements of the outcomes of policies, has caused well–being to increasingly become a major concern in public policy planning. At the same time improvement in the quality of both individual and social life started to be seen as the ultimate aim of public policy. In recent years, the collection of relevant statistical data used for the measurement of effects of public policies has become transformed into a complex system of indicators. Notably, several European governments and institutions have recently developed new statistical measures of progress that include indicators of well–being, following the already established monitoring systems for well–being established by the OECD, the UN Canada and the USA (Chapple, 2010; Dolan, Metcalfe 2011)[2]. A growing body of research into what contributes to the quality of people's experiences of their lives provide social context to well–being and supports understanding of the factors that both influence and constitute well–being as the ultimate motivation behind a person's actions (Quick, Seaford, internet; Dolan, Metcalfe 2011; Helliwell, Barrington–Leigh, Harris Huang 2010; Manderson 2005; Huppert, Baylis, Keverne 2005; Helliwell, Putnam, internet). Individuals are embedded in social structures and face myriad of social tasks and challenges. It is impossible to explain social transformations without linking them to personal hopes and aspirations.

Subjective well–being, which primarily pertains to an individual, is usually seen as a psychological construct which arises from the way in which people experience the quality of their lives. It consists of a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of their life. These evaluations rest on emotional reactions to events as well as on cognitive judgments of satisfaction and fulfillment (McGillivray, Clarke 2006: 4). Thus, subjective

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2   New statistical data–collection relevant for well–being has been initiated by the European Commission and the Italian Council for Economics and Labour in 2013, the German Council of Economic Experts and the French Council for Economic Analyses in 2010, and by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2011. In 2013 the Unites Nations introduced the International Day of Happiness with a view of acknowledging that in order to attain global happiness, economic development must be accompanied by social and environmental well being.

well–being is a broad concept that includes experiencing pleasant emotions, low levels of negative moods, and a generally high level of satisfaction with life. In order to achieve a subjective well–being one needs an individual vitality to undertake activities which are meaningful, engaging, and make one feel competent and autonomous. It also requires a stock of inner resources to make one resilient to changes beyond one's immediate control. Finally, subjective well–being requires one to have a sense of relatedness to other people, a sense of availability of supportive relationships and dynamic connections with others (Huppert, Baylis, Keverne 2013; Andrews, Withey 1976).

Severine Deneulin and Alister McGregor argue that "it is necessary to take account of (...) 'living well together', expanding the social conditions in which it is possible for people to live well in relation to others in society. Our struggles to live well take place within the inter-subjective space of human relationships" (Deneulin, McGregor, 2010). The term 'living well together', which is derived from Paul Ricoeur's 'structures of living together' seeks to encapsulate the reality that the individual and social projects of living well co–constitute each other (Ricoeur, 1992). This suggests a dynamic conception of the relationship between 'the individual' and 'the community' and indicates that the term 'community' in itself does not adequately capture the usually contested and conflicted interplay between the different individual projects of 'living well'. On the other hand, Corey Keyes insists that a degree of social equality despite the competition of individual life plans is also necessary for a sustained sense of personal well–being in society (Keyes 1998). The need for social recognition and inclusion as a vital part of individual well–being was experimentally tested by the method called 'functional magnetic resonance imaging' (FMRI), which has shown that the emotional region of the brain that is activated when we experience rejection is in fact, the same region (*dorsal anterior cingulate*) which registers emotional responses to physical pain (Cacioppo, Patrick 2008). The desire for social connection has thus been classified as a human need in psychology, and described as "the need to belong" (*Baumeister, Leary* 1995). Conversely, social exclusion obviously thwarts the need to belong and militates in principle against the possibility of social acceptance (Diener, Diener, Diener 1995). This makes the concept of well–beings in its individual and its social guise almost identical from a functional point of view.

Social acceptance is a key element of well–being because it helps cater for the needs whose satisfaction is instrumental to the achievement of

well-being. Individuals who illustrate social acceptance trust others, think that others are capable of kindness, and believe that people can be industrious. Socially accepting people hold favorable views of human nature and feel comfortable with other (Wrightsman 1991). Such people are likely to experience greater personal well–being than others and are likely to be instrumental to the achievement of social well–being from which both they and others benefit.

Socially accepting members of society also contribute to everyone's sense of 'social contribution'—another concept deemed relevant to individual well–being. In this context one's social contribution is the evaluation of one's social value as it includes the belief that one is a vital member of society, with something of value to give to the world. Social contribution reflects whether and to what degree people feel that whatever they do in the world is valued by the society and contributes to public welfare. For Joachim Israel, this construct is consistent Karl Marx's idea that people are naturally productive Thus social alienation is a counterpart to the diminution of the perceived value of one's life and everyday activities. (Israel 1971). All of these concepts, when they become experience, contribute to a sense of self–actualisation in society, in including a sense of achievement of "the meaning of life" (Maslow 1987).

The capabilities approach as a theoretical context for well–being

On a basic level, the capability theory suggests that achieving well–being is a matter of "freedom to do and be", thus predicating well–being on a sense of agency and ownership of one's own choices. The agency and the sense of empowerment arising from agency thus represent the relevant "capability" to achieve well–being. Very simply put, the requisite normative exercises for the adequate projection of capabilities in order to achieve well being naturally involve at least the following: (1) assessment of individual well–being; (2) evaluation and assessment of social arrangements; and (3) design of policies and proposals aiming at social change. In all these normative exercises, the capability approach prioritizes certain opportunities for individuals in society (such as their genuine opportunities to receive education, their ability to move around or to enjoy supportive social relationships). In the more narrow way, the capability approach tells us what information we should look at if we are to judge how well someone's life is going or has gone; this kind of information is needed in any account of well–being or human development. Since the

capability approach contends that the relevant kind of information concerns human functioning and the opportunities to achieve those such functioning, it also partially provides for interpersonal comparisons of well–being (Robeyns, internet).

In the context of achievement of well–being, capabilities manifest themselves in daily life as the person's real freedoms or opportunities to achieve increased levels of personal and social "functionality", and indirectly social self–actualization. Thus, while travelling is a form of social functioning, the real opportunity to travel is the corresponding capability. The distinction between functioning and capability is between the realized and the possible in the social world; in other words, it is the distinction between achievements, on the one hand, and freedoms or valuable opportunities from which one can choose, on the other.

According to the Amartya Sen (deem a founder of the capabilities theory), the concepts of functioning and capability are the best metric for most kinds of interpersonal evaluations (Sen 1985). In other words, interpersonal evaluations should be conceptualized in terms of people's capabilities to function, that is, their effective opportunities to undertake actions and activities that they have reason to value, and their effective opportunities to be the person that they have reason to wish to be. All such functional capacities and active realizations together constitute what makes a life valuable. Whereas functioning is a proposed conceptualization for interpersonal comparisons of (achieved) well–being, capability is the conceptualization for interpersonal comparisons of freedom to pursue one's well–being. Sen calls this freedom "the well–being freedom" (Sen 1985:169).

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On a political level, Sen's well–being freedom results in the qualities of social system described as justice and development, both of which, according to him, should be conceptualized in terms of people's capabilities. However, there is a more complex level of calculation which is required to measure social well–being accurately. What matters are not only the individual opportunities that are open to a particular person at a particular time, hence "capabilities" in a piecemeal way, but rather the combinations or sets of opportunities which constitute a consolidated prospect for the realization of a strategy of the good life. Thus, in a "happy" society, a maximum number of maximally encouraging combinations of opportunities are available to people to pursue their choices which are related directly to their personal well–being. In an ideal case, the existence of such social opportunities for the personal pursuit of well–being engenders social well–being as well.

Ingrid Robeyns provides an illustrative example of a low–skilled, poor single parent, who lives in a society without decent social provisions. This person is supposed to acquire and hold a job, which require them to spend many hours working and commuting to and from the workplace, but will generate the income needed to properly feed the person and her family. Additionally, the person is expected to achieve the function of caring for the children at home and giving them all the necessary attention, care and supervision in order for them to flourish as human beings and healthy and productive members of society. In a piecemeal analysis, both functions arise from the respective opportunities which are open to the single parent, but according to Robeyns they are not *both* open at the same time. For both capabilities to be effectively available to the person the society would need to provide adequate social assistance in a fashion sufficiently coordinated and "user-friendly" in order to allow the single parent to both work productively and take care of her children adequately. For example, this could involve the availability of high–quality child–care at the work place or opportunities for work from home which is compensated in the same way as work at the workplace. Both options are typically offered to single parents in societies with the highest level of social provision. Thus, while a society with a low level of social provision does appear to offer both the opportunity to work and, in abstract, the opportunity to raise one's children adequately (e.g. it is a relatively safe society with a relatively low unemployment rate), unless it offers these capabilities in a coordinated fashion, as a combination of opportunities, only one of the capabilities can be utilized and result in adequate social functioning (Robeyns 2005: 93).

The capability approach explicitly endorses and relies upon a key distinction instrumental for the achievement of social well–being, namely the means–ends distinction. The approach stresses the need for clarity on whether something is valued as an end in itself or as a means to a valuable end. For the capability approach, the ultimate ends of interpersonal comparisons are people's capabilities. This implies that the capability approach evaluates public policies according to their impact on people's capabilities as well as their actual functioning in society. There is an interesting consequence here: when evaluating a social system, the capability approach does not tend to let the estimate be slanted by examples of exceptional functionality in the face of debilitating capabilities, which is characteristic in the individualistic cultures that value "heroism". In the context of the capability theory exceptional functioning against militating odds tells us little about the quality of the system and the range

of coordinated chances that it offers to its constituents as genuine prospects of self–actualization. The fact that somebody in a particular society might be able to become a top student by bearing extreme sacrifices arising from the lack of social support structure does not show that it is an acceptable system: only a coordinated spectrum of opportunities does which systematically leads to optimum self–actualization through social functionality does. The theory does not ask whether a particular population is relatively healthy (it could be healthy because it has adapted to relatively poor health provision, e.g. by developing immunities to infections after initially suffering a high level of deaths from these infections). Instead the theory asks whether the means or resources necessary for good public health are available in a sufficiently broad and effective set of combinations, such as clean water, adequate sanitation, access to doctors, public education on the prevention of various diseases, etc. The theory asks whether people are well-nourished, and whether the means or conditions for good nourishment, such as a sufficient food supply and adequate distributive entitlements to food are guaranteed as a matter of public policy. Likewise, the theory asks whether people have access to a high–quality education system, to a real political participation, and to supportive communal activities that enable them to cope with struggles in daily life and foster caring mutual relationships in the community.

However, the measurements of well–being within the context of the capabilities approach tend to focus on ends rather than the means, within limits. The main theoretical reason for this orientation in measurements is that people tend to differ in their abilities to convert means into valuable opportunities (capabilities) or outcomes (functioning). Since ends are what ultimately matters when thinking about well–being and the quality of life, means can only work as reliable proxies of people's opportunities to achieve those ends if they all have the same capacities or powers to convert those means into equal capability sets. Just as the existence of a single high–level scholar in a society which does not provide adequate support to learning does not tell us that this system is still adequate, so the existence of certain opportunities which do not translate into ends (e.g. the existence of many schools and a free education which yields a semi–literate population) does not mean that the level of well–being in the society is high. Such discrepancies between a high level of means and a low level of achieved ends falls within the category of what the capabilities theory calls adverse 'conversion factors': despite a favorable policy focusing on means, the ability of the people to convert such concrete means into real life opportunities or capabilities and turn them

into high functionality is low, thus the level of well–being in the society is lower than would be expected judged by the means only.

This is problem well illustrated in some parts of the world. Food may be abundant in a village, but a starving person may have nothing to exchange for it or no legal claim on it. A society might be wealthy, but the wealth could be concentrated in the hands of only the top 10% of the population, and the remaining 90% might live in utter poverty because the systems of distributive justice are not sufficiently egalitarian and access to social goods is cut for most. Similarly, a country might be rich in oil but its citizens could starve because oil is used by corrupt political elites to foster delusional foreign policy aims, pay a foreign debt ahead of time or inflate the defense budget in an attempt to assert national military power. In all these cases, the means, strictly speaking, exist, but this means little for the well–being of the citizens.

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The capability theory's preference for a normative analysis of ends rather than the means has at least two additional advantages apart from its capacity to account for inter–individual differences. First, in light of the priority of the evaluation of the ends, the concomitant evaluation of the means is cast in an instrumental context for the achievement of the means, rather that assuming the status of an "intrinsic evaluation". This is in many cases consistent with our basic moral intuitions: for example, if the ends are the primary yardstick by which to measure social well–being, then money or economic growth will not be valued for their own sake, but only in so far as they contribute to the expansion of people's capabilities. Secondly, by measuring well–being primarily by the achievement of ends, one does not *a priori* assume that there is only one overridingly important means to that end (such as income as a means for material well–being as an end). Rather one can measure well–being by ends, while leaving it open for discussion which types of means are important for the fostering and nurturing of a particular capability, or set of capabilities, that are, in turn, requisite for the achievement of that particular end. For some capabilities, the most important means will indeed be financial resources and economic production, but for others it may be particular political practices and institutions. In the case of material well–being, income is surely an important means, however in the absence of complementary means, such as fair taxation, reasonable prices, and a sustainable system of distribution of financial burdens between members of the society, even a high impact might translate into sub–optimal material existence, thus failing to result in material well–being. Conversely, even

a comparably low income might result in quite a decent material well–being if one lives in a social system which provides education, health–care, social services free of charge and, for example, the income taxes are low. In some oil–producing countries today there is no income tax and health care and education are free. In such systems, assuming that there is a reasonable pricing policy, people might be expected to possess a relatively high level of material well–being even if they had lower incomes than those living in the contemporary liberal societies where all of these things are charged for and taxes are high. In other cases, people's general well–being in very wealthy societies might be fundamentally predicated upon a variety of mutually complementary public policies, such as fighting a homophobic, ethno–phobic, racist or sexist social climate (Robeyns 2005). Thus the analysis of the means that translate into capabilities should be left for discussion wherever possible rather than being immediately prejudiced by a measurement of well–being based on means only. The capabilities theory achieves this advantage.

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Finally, the coversion factors themselves need to be differentiated by type. Amartya Sen and scholars influenced by his writings (e.g. Peter Vallentyne, Vivian Walsh, Frances Stewart) point out that conversion factors tend to be categorized into at least three distinct groups (Robeyns 2005: 99). All conversion factors basically describe how a person can, or is free to, convert the available resources into a functioning, yet the *sources* of the conversion factors may differ.

Personal conversion factors are internal to the person: they include things such as a metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skills, or intelligence. If a person is disabled, she is in a bad physical condition, or has never learned to cycle, then a bicycle (a resource) will be of limited value for her to convert it into a capacity for the achievement of the end of personal mobility.

Social conversion factors are embedded in the social system in which one lives. They include things such as public policies, social norms, practices of fair or unfair discrimination, societal hierarchies, or power relations related to class, gender, race, or caste.

The e*nvironmental conversion factors* emerge from the physical or built environment. They include things such as climate, pollution, the proneness to earthquakes, and the presence or absence of seas and oceans. Among aspects of the built environment are the stability of buildings, roads, and bridges, and the means of transportation and communication.

Take the example of a bicycle. How much a bicycle contributes to a person's mobility depends on that person's physical condition (a personal conversion factor), the social mores including whether in a particular society, for example, women are allowed or socially encouraged to ride a bicycle (a social conversion factor), and the availability of bike paths so that riding a bike is not a serious risk to life and limb (an environmental conversion factor).

The three types of conversion factors all stress that it is simply not sufficient to know the resources a person owns or has access to in order to be able to assess capacity to achieve well–being; instead one needs to know much more about the person and her circumstances. Sen does not use the concept of "capability" to refer exclusively to a person's abilities or other internal powers, but rather to opportunities which are made feasible, and are at the same time necessarily constrained by, both internal (personal) and external (social and environmental) conversion factors (Robeyns, internet; Canevello, Crocker 2010).

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Philosophical practice
as a tool to enhance well–being

To complete the picture of the capability's theory as a context for the perception of well–being, Martha Nussbaum builds upon the capability approach's attempt to sketch the *needs* that must be met in order for a person to be fully empowered (Nussbaum 2004). Nussbaum highlights *empathy* as an essential ingredient of humanity. In her work on disgust, shame and dignity, she dismantles the concept of *disgust* to highlight the necessity of empathy for social justice, and shows how constructs of disgust have been deployed to deny the full humanity of marginalized people. For example, she explains how constructing taboos around issues such as menstruation and the policing of rigid frameworks of sexuality have limited the scope of who is considered worthy of a humane and dignified treatment. To address such de–humanizing consequences, empathy allows us, in a relevant moral and emotional sense, to become "other–to–ourselves". By identifying with others, however fleetingly or partially, we shift the grounds on which our own self rests (Manderson 2005). A space opens up for ethical imagination, for creating a difference in relation to ourselves which gives us the potential to imagine new possibilities for self–other relations. Such imagination encourages the empathizing person to actively and collaboratively share a world with others.

According to Nussbaum, those whom we "dehumanize" and "otherize" are outside of our circle of empathy, beyond the realm of concern of the state or society (Nussbaum 2013). The development of empathetic mutual understanding features as essential to both individual and social well–being, because it facilitates the development of an ability to identify with others and understand another person's situation and feelings. Such understanding, in turn, enables us to establish rapport and build a basis for trustworthy communication within the community. The achievement of our personal well–being, after all, is only possible if we ask ourselves *why* we wish to engage in a particular activity, *whose* needs will be met by our engagement, and *what* the potential consequences (both positive and negative are) of our engagement are likely (Griffiths1985). When empathy is added to these considerations, we are able not just to assess whether a particular activity would contribute to our own well–being, but also whether it will cater to someone else's needs as well and whether and how far it is likely to contribute to someone else's well–being, in addition to our own. The satisfaction that arises from such multiply beneficial choices for the well–being of ourselves and others, in turn, is likely to additionally increase our own personal well–being, as well as contributing to the development of a caring and socially constructive character traits in ourselves as the agent. Philosophical practice potentially plays a key role in facilitating the development of empathetic dispositions and in the cultivation of sensibilities that lead to the development of particular socially desirable character–traits. Thus philosophical practice could be seen as a crucial method of facilitating both personal and social learning which is geared to the achievement of well–being on any level.

Very generally speaking, by the use of different philosophical methods, philosophical practice aims to clarify, articulate, explore and comprehend philosophical aspects of belief–systems or world–views. Activities common to philosophical practice include: the examination of arguments and justifications, clarification, analysis, and definition of important terms and concepts, exposure and examination of underlying assumptions and logical implications, exposure of conflicts and inconsistencies, exploration of traditional philosophical theories and their significance for concrete issues and all other related activities that have historically been identified as philosophical (Hamlyn 1992; Dewey 1991).

It is common to philosophical practitioners to use a multitude of ideas and methodologies within the philosophical lore and turn them into a highly adaptable set of tools (explanation, criticism, direction, and

imagination) which the philosophical practitioners used in consultancy, counseling or training with a variety of practical goals in mind.

Perhaps the greatest role for philosophical practice in fostering individual and social well–being lies in two places, pertaining respective to the individual and collective plane of consideration. On an individual level, the most obvious aim of philosophical practice arises from the ancient mission of philosophy as a whole, which, arguably, was to contribute to the achievement of "the good life". The idea of "the good life" was a complex one, consisting of a variety of qualities (the capacities theory would say: a variety of functionalities), which make life worthwhile, enjoyable and socially respectable. Thus the good life, in this context, involves what the capacity theory conceptualizes as the achievement of personal ends and the ability to achieve personal flourishing which is followed by a sense of satisfaction, control and ownership of one's actions, choices and, to some extent, their outcomes. The achievement of this goal, for each person, may require the assistance of someone else, preferably a philosopher. At times of existential crises a certain "narrowing", even a "darkening" of personal perspective tends to occur, which it makes it difficult, if not impossible, for a person to accurately view a way out of the perceptual, conceptual and emotional impasse by themselves. This is where philosophical practice offers practical assistance which allows the wealth of philosophical ideas, joined to the philosophical practitioner's keen perception, to be at work in solving real problem and providing well–founded guidance towards the good life. While the good life might differ from one person to another, arguably the way to it requires a degree of practical wisdom and reliance on the intellectual and existential experiences of others if it is to be as direct and as rewarding as possible. In this process, importantly, all of the concepts pertaining to the capacity theory are readily employable in a practical process of philosophical consultancy, with the express aim of improving one's overall existential well–being. Thus philosophical practice is a form of putting philosophy to work in the service of the achievement of generalized well–being, in much the same way as the capacities theory sees the ultimate ethical goal of life and personal development in the achievement of increased functionality, which, in turn, leads to increased satisfaction with life.

On a social level, the various modalities of philosophical practice highlight its potential for social intervention. The philosophical practitioner will work with groups, companies or institutions not just to increase the group's

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or institution's ability to achieve their formally proclaimed aims (though this too is an integral part of philosophical practice as corporate or institutional consultancy), but will also seek to identify and address any structural and dynamic issues within the group of institution that block the way to the achievement of a greater amount of collective well–being.

On a political level, philosophical practice deals with the inter–relation between social well–being and individual well-being in two directions. First, it addresses the way in which an increased individual contribution to collective well–being might increase individual satisfaction, thus leading to a transformation of political subjects to full–fledged political constituents in a strong functionalist sense, as agents behind the community's actions. In this context, philosophical practice addresses issues of empathy, solidarity and trust between members of a political community as the pre–requisites for the solidification of inter–personal bonds that the community, or the political system, themselves bestow upon their members or constituents. Thus philosophical practice is able to increase the ability of a political community to foster opportunities (or "capacities") for all its members in systematic yet very concrete ways, by addressing specific issues at the interface of personal, existential experience on the one hand, and social policy concerns, on the other. This the philosophical practitioner seeks to achieve in its consultancy role for the political institutions, on the one hand, and for grass–roots representative organisations (NGOs, ideally the political parties, or informal groups initiatives), on the other.

At the same time, philosophical practice holds potential to effectively address concerns arising from problems described as "conversion factors" by the proponents of the capability theory. The failings or "misfiring" of conversion of socially provided means to individually useful capacities to produce personally significant functionalities, to use the terminology of the capacity approach, are ideal material for practical philosophical work. These failures may arise from misconceptions about the instrumental value of the means, the nature and extent of the individual entitlements to such needs, or the significance of the capacities and the competencies required to turn such capacities into functionalities for one's individual and one's community's social well–being. Such value questions are readily dealt with by philosophical practice when they are placed in concrete contexts where they can be considered not theoretically (this is the job of theoretical philosophy), but in light of their existential significance for the person and the community; thus not merely

rationally, but in their full experiential reach both for the person and for the collective. Thus philosophical practice indeed appears to be is the tool of choice for social intervention when well–being is seen as the main concern. (Elias 1982). Given its direct orientation to the achievement of well-being in terms of aiming to help increase the quality of life, philosophical practice allows an approach that is measurable along the lines consistent with those proposed by the capabilities theory. While the basic focus of the measurement (or assessment) is on the results, functionalities, or ends, the critical consideration of these ends, which is fundamental to philosophy and philosophical practice as one of its faces, opens ample room for the consideration of the multiplicity of issues of sequencing and combinations of opportunities, as well as the nature and variety of conversion factors that determine the extent to which the good life, or well–being, will be achieved in any particular case. Thus it appears that philosophical practice is the natural complementary "twin" of the capabilities theory when both are perceived in the context of the practical concern of the achievement of well–being, whether on an individual or on a social level.

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Aleksandra Bulatović

Blagostanje, sposobnosti i filozofska praksa

Sažetak

Koncept blagostanja je u savremenom društvu postao ključni element razmatranja kvaliteta života. O kvalitetu života pojedinca govori se u kontekstu individualnog blagostanja, a pojmom društvenog blagostanja kolokvijalno se označava kvalitet života u zajednici. Kako blagostanje ima brojne aspekte, teoretičarima izmiče jedinstvena definicija. U ovom tekstu se društveno blagostanje konceptualizuje kao dinamičan proces u dimenzijama društvene integracije, odnosa pojedinca i društva, individualnog samoostvarenja u okvirima potencijala za društveni napredak, mogućnosti pojedinca da utiče na društvene procese i društvene kohezije kao faktora značajnog za postizanje individualnog blagostanja. Kako su ovo aspekti društvenog života koji predstavljaju zbir pojedinačnih, individualnih stavova, aktivnosti, osećanja i osećaja, pomenuta konceptualizacija upućuje na direktnu vezu između društvenog i individualnog blagostanja koja funkcioniše slično sistemu spojenih sudova, jer se promene na jednom nivou reflektuju na drugom, težeći za ravnotežom među tim nivoima.

Frazom „savremena filozofska praksa” u akademskom diskursu se označava kritičko promišljanje kao sredstvo prevazilaženja postojećih misaonih obrazaca i praktični filozofski rad na rešavanju problema koji narušavaju kvalitet života. Autorka razmatra filozofsku praksu kao korisno sredstvo za uvećanje dobrobiti gradeći argumentaciju na normativističkom teorijskom pristupu zasnovanom na sposobnostima (*the capabilities approach*) koji fokusira ocenjivanje i vrednovanje individualnog blagostanja, društvenog sistema i kreiranja javne politike.

Ključne reči: blagostanje, kvalitet života, teorija sposobnosti, iskustvo, filozofska praksa