

# **FROM HAPPINESS TO SUPER HAPPINESS: NOT A TRADEOFF ANYMORE**

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*In Happiness And Contemporary Society : Conference Proceedings Volume* (Lviv, March, 20-21, 2020). Lviv: SPOLOM, 2020. P. 114-116.

**ISBN 978-966-919-593-7**

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## **FROM HAPPINESS TO SUPER HAPPINESS: NOT A TRADEOFF ANYMORE**

The quest for happiness has rendered the homo sapiens of the last two centuries a quasi-money-making machine. The severe principles of capitalistic system, and the global economic propaganda speaking in the name of those principles, made human beings believe that money, as a medium of exchange, can buy everything. Even the Hollywoodian movies sometimes consider the happiness as the ending state of business achievements. In the movie “The Pursuit of Happiness” (2006), Will Smith (interpreting Chris Gardner’ story), shows that you can struggle with homelessness, but at the end, once you become a successful businessperson, then happiness shows up. This mechanism of causality, treating happiness as an ending state, finds support also on the psychological studies. The Rokeach Value Survey (RVS), developed by social psychologist Milton Rokeach (1973), which classifies values as instrumental (means) and terminal (ends), considers happiness as a terminal value. RVS played an important role in business studies and especially the marketing ones. For instance, marketers promote a product as instrumental for achieving happiness, social status, and other terminal values. Thus, marketers stress that who buys a “Maserati” does not buy a simple car, but buys the prestige associated with the product, making buyers believe that someone possessing “Maserati” will be happier compared to someone using public transportation (just as an illustration).

Besides the mechanism of cause and effect, strongly incorporated in many scientific disciplines (as both framework and mindset), hunting for happiness is counterproductive. Studies have shown that happiness, as a spontaneous process of emotions and feelings, cannot be obsessively controlled and intentionally caused (Nardone and Watzlawick, 1993; Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch, 1974). In contrast, if such a behavior is attempted, then paradoxically will cause unhappiness (Watzlawick, 1983).

When it comes to the economic development, the traditional indicator of growth is GDP (gross domestic product). Nonetheless, the welfare of a state is not measured simply by its growth. Growth is a vertical concept and might be characterized by the concentration of money on few. On the other side, the spread of wealth is crucial for the economic development. The latter happens when there is a fair distribution of wealth among the population. Hence, a country with a high GDP cannot automatically guarantee economic and social welfare.

In 1972 the king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, introduced the Gross National Happiness (GNH) as an alternative to GDP. This movement, as well as some other similar, led to the field of happiness economics or that field of study concerned with populations’ well-being, quality of life and life satisfaction. Thus, the meaning of

happiness economics is that money helps to avoid some dissatisfaction in life but cannot guarantee the happiness. According to Kahneman and Deaton (2010), higher earners generally reported better life satisfaction, but people's day-to-day emotional well-being only rose with earnings until a threshold annual income of \$75,000.

Going back to the *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith (1776) defines the entrepreneurial spirit based on selfish impulses of the producers. Quoting Smith: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages". This quasi-realistic panorama of the classical capitalistic system unfolds a dichotomist reality where selfishness triumphs over selflessness. It should not be forgotten that even the self-actualization of human beings passes through selflessness. This point is clearly shown by Maslow (1954) in his *Motivation and Personality*, when he makes an analysis of the hierarchy of human needs. For Maslow, to achieve the top of needs' pyramid (i.e. self-actualization) you cannot ignore the presence of others helping you in this path. He labels these as belongingness or social needs. Aristotle described the individual as a "zoon politikon", or the animal of the city. He meant that the self-fulfillment cannot happen without socializing with other species that some social psychologists define as "social animals" (Aronson, 2008).

Based on the above reflections, business models have changed, directly impacting the pillars of capitalism. With the recent move of social business, attributed to the Nobel Peace Laureate prof. Muhammad Yunus, businesses are not only and simply seeking for profit maximization (as Adam Smith and the whole generation of classical economists advocated), but they see profit as an instrument for the business to survive (Baril, 2008; Golinelli....) and possibly making "others" happy as well. The "others" are the category of stakeholders or suprasystems that are in interaction with a defined organization. Following the principles of the social business, any business must search for profit in order to survive, but the profit stays with the business and not shared as a dividend (Yunus et al., 2010). Additionally, social businesses are driven by social causes (e.g. improving health, overcoming poverty, reducing carbon emissions, increasing cultural awareness, etc.) (Yunus, 2017). Therefore, doing business by simultaneously making happy yourself and others is not "taboo" anymore; it is not even a tradeoff. Concluding with Yunus' words: "making money is happiness, making other people happy is super happiness" (Yunus and Morshed, 2015)

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