

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING: FROM MYTH TO SCIENCE

Aleksandra Mindoljević Drakulić

Faculty of Teacher Education University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia

received: 25.9.2011;

revised: 16.10.2011;

accepted: 29.12.2011

SUMMARY

This paper summarizes the concept of subjective well-being, from ancient philosophical reflection to the first psychological, empirical research on the construct of positive psychology. The author examined the different conceptual definitions of subjective well-being throughout history as well as the dominant themes in the philosophical theories, concluded with some contemporary philosophical trends in Western culture of the 20th and 21st century. This framework also touches upon the dynamics of the relationship between philosophical and psychological thoughts on subjective well-being.

Key words: *subjective well-being – happiness – positive psychology*

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

Even as early as thousand years ago, the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 to 322 BC) emphasised in his teachings that everyone deserved happiness in life. That's why back then, money, power, health and physical attraction were valued only as the fulfilling elements of happiness. (Penezić 2004). The pursuit of happiness has always been considered as old as history of mankind, the subject of long-term interest of man and one of the central themes of most cultures around the world (McMahon 2008). Historically, the concept of subjective well-being, happiness and life satisfaction has long been, and remained the subject of philosophical speculation that has shaped the outlook and works of many influential writers, whether on religious, ethical or political issues.

The cult of happiness was graphically presented through the characters of ancient myths such as the Roman Goddess of Luck, Fortuna, the Greek Goddess of Silence and the Greek God of Happy Moment Kairos. Fortuna, Silence and Kairos were the most inconsistent of all gods, and were despite of that (or perhaps because of) highly respected and adored by aristocracy as well as the people. Kairos, as the personification of a happy moment in human life, moved quickly and silently among the people. Therefore, it was very difficult to take advantage of the happy opportunity to receive this gift of happiness offered to nearly every man, and at least once in their lifetime. Who knew how to take this, was considered lucky. All three gods were appealing themes that received a lot of attention by many ancient builders who had dedicated their magnificent temples and shrines in their honour, of which many are still well preserved. Also, their symbolism inspired many ancient and contemporary artists, mostly painters, sculptors, poets and playwrights, who had portrayed their unique

way. The Goddess of Silence was often painted as the patroness of ancient cities, with a wreath on her head in the shape of city walls, whereas Kairos was portrayed as a young man with luscious short hair holding a scale in his hand (Zamarovsky 1985).

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

The question of subjective well-being and happiness as the ultimate goal of human existence and a fundamental philosophical concern was covered in the works of many eminent philosophers of ancient times. Therefore the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Democritus (460 to 370 BC) was the first to mention one of the key concepts in ancient ethics: eudaimonia as a state of happiness. He wrote about the concept in the treatise "On Happiness" which was later frequently quoted by ancient philosophers Seneca and Plutarch. Although he was regarded as a materialistic atomist, Democritus considered the soul of man to be the home of human happiness. His understanding of eudaimonia included "well being" (eu-esto) and "feeling good" (eu-thumie), and the Democritus peace of mind and fearlessness (athambie) is understood today as an anticipation of the Epicurean state the so called ataraxia - a special state of peace of mind without passion. He believed that the essence of virtue (virility) is in moderate activity. Socrates' disciple Aristippus of Cyrene (from approx. 300 BC) the founder of the so-called Cyrenaic school absolutised the eudaimonic side of Socrates' ethics, considering human virtue as the ability of (physical) enjoyment. Epicureans in turn, took a much more refined view on the issue of hedonism and seeking happiness. Led by Democritus views on the importance of overcoming the sensory pleasures, finding happiness in spiritual values which are permanent and the so

called Euthymia development (mental calmness, bliss), the Athenian philosopher, Epicurus (341 to 270 BC) thought that the task of philosophy was to find a way towards happiness. He claimed that all beings try to avoid suffering and that real pleasure is of spiritual kind, by nurturing friendships, gaining knowledge and achieving ataraxia, a state of inner peace as an ideal of the wise. As a contrast to these teachings, in the period between the 4th and 2nd century BC, a new ancient school of philosophy emerged known as - Stoicism. The Stoics had a much more reserved attitude towards human happiness and pleasure in life. Their concept of stoic eudaimonism was more static in comparison to the teachings of Aristotle. The outcome or final goal they aspired to was complete impassivity and peace, the so called "Gently flowing life." A stoic person would be the one who has mastered the control of mind over emotions and who'd rarely be prone to extremes. Affective phenomena such as pleasure (hedone), sadness (lupe), lust (epithumia) and fear (phobos), were considered irrational and incompatible with human nature. Therefore, they proposed the so-called perfect virtue apatheia - the state of highest good without the emotional or affective charge. One of the representatives of stoicism, the Greek philosopher Epictetus (from approx 50 to 138) emphasized that by obedience and compassion a person can overcome them self and thus build their character. He felt that reaching a state of happiness and mental well-being could be achieved by adopting the key slogan of "Carry on and abstain" (Latin: "Sustine et abstinence"). For the Stoics, to be happy in the form of frivolous, impulsive enthusiasm was considered negative, as happiness could never in itself be good nor be a goal, but is associated exclusively with life activities and the circumstances that follow. The Stoics considered happiness to be just an agreed companion in one's life and a product of certain personal virtues. Similarly, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 to 322 BC) also stated that the people could enjoy their life in a variety of dubious ways, such as experiencing life passively like "grazing cattle", which is certainly not sufficient to achieve subjective well-being. Also, in his work, "Nicomachean Ethics" he argued that in order to be happy, apart from ethical virtues that must be constant in a person's life, we also need some external factors such as health, food, shelter, healthy children, and freedom. From his standpoint, passions are only temporary affects and one must be prudent to be happy in life. He believed that man could learn to be good, and therefore learn how to be happy (Haybron 2008). Aristotle's reservations regarding the concept of well-being were evident in his insistence that we need to admit of how incapable we are to eradicate our self-absorbed attempts to be happy. "The more a man is prone to a virtuous life and feels happiness, the more suffering he'll experience. As the happiness of the happy man increases, so does his suffering at its loss" - he said, and like the Stoics, he paradoxically advised the dying to develop the virtue of courage, by looking death

straight in the eye with a smile on their face (McMahon 2008).

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

After the era of ancient philosophers and the emergence of Christianity all the way to the Renaissance period, these (paradoxical) ideas and reflections on achieving life happiness gained an increasingly stronger impact. "Blessed are those who mourn" or "Happy are those who are persecuted for righteousness's sake" are just some of the lines written in the biblical texts. To the Christians of that time suffering and death became the gateway leading to a better life, a journey that will ultimately end in ecstasy, delight, bliss and happiness. For those who suffer and live in hope for a better life after death, it has remained an inspiring perspective, which St. Aurelius Augustine (354 to 430), one of the greatest theologians of medieval philosophy, called "the happiness of hope." However, he stressed that hope always carries a dark shadow reminding one that the struggle for earthly happiness can easily become vain and that humans for as long as they're mortal, are doomed to suffering and constant pursuit of happiness.

According to his understanding, the ultimate human happiness doesn't lie in the perfection of the person (such as virtue and knowledge), but the unification of the body after death with God. "Nothing will be missed in eternal life after death because even the man's final desire to be happy will be fulfilled," is a quote by one of the most famous philosophers of Christian scholasticism, St. Thomas Aquinas, an Italian Dominican priest and theologian (1225 to 1274), giving additional hope to the faithful. The philosophers of that time believed that the pursuit of happiness is actually a type of penalty, a permanent reminder of the persecution from the Garden of Eden, a reminder of man's inability to live a calm and happy life without God's grace (McMahon 2008).

The German theologian and founder of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther (1483 to 1546) urged people to experience "hell on earth". Luther's faith in grace, hope in the joyful resurrection during the Protestant Era conquered life and gave an enormous advantage to death. He stressed that happiness and good can be seen as a sign of presence of God's grace, where sin is pure unhappiness" and "forgiveness is pure happiness" (Brown 1989).

ENLIGHTENMENT AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

The notion that human beings have the right to be happy is a modern Western thought. In societies of great poverty, strict hierarchies or strong religious passions, happiness as a concept has no great meaning as a goal

itself. After the Middle Ages, this desire for happiness, began to develop at the dawn of the Enlightenment in countries like England, France, northern Italy and north America. At that time, the discussions about the notion of human rights began, and regardless of the habits and customs of society, there are two, almost cliché formulations: freedom and pursuit of happiness. Both categories form part of all the human psychological needs of the 18th century as part of their psychological integrity (Sennett 1989).

Happiness was then no longer observed as the divine gift or award, and its significance was no longer exaggerated. Questioning the previous social order, in opposition to the religious and moral oppression, the French writer, historian and philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778) stated: "Paradise is where I am" and "The great and only concern is to be happy".

While in Middle Ages the desire for personal happiness provoked guilt in people, in the Enlightenment period, the exact opposite occurred. Guilt, grief and suffering occurred in the moments of failed "pursuits of happiness" (McMahon 2006). This period revived the Epicurean thoughts on issues of welfare, pleasure and happiness and in the light of the new 18th century era it gained a brand new meaning. Enlightenment increasingly emphasised the postulate that man is born to be free and happy. The question of happiness mentioned in numerous books became the topic of impassioned debates and an issue that was analysed by many Enlightenment philosophers as some type of important natural law. A child of the Enlightenment, the famous French writer and philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 to 1778) considered that the modern world of that time, was surrounded by more and more space used for commerce which increased possibilities but also the human demands, and thus the needs of people multiplied, creating envy and discontent which then prevented them from experiencing happiness. In that case, Rousseau concluded, both the world and people had to change radically and seek a new form of their being. These reflections were taken advantage of by Rousseau's contemporaries, particularly the Jacobins who had in the turbulent time of the French Revolution, distorted the statements and stated in the first article of their draft Constitution, that the aim of new society is to establish happiness. At the end of the Enlightenment, a new ethical teaching emerged in philosophy: Utilitarianism (Latin utilis - useful), (Klaić 1990). This ethical theory preached the necessity of increasing total happiness in the world and promoted the idea of common good. The founder of utilitarianism was an English jurist, philosopher and reformer Jeremy Bentham (1748 to 1832) who was at that time a radical liberal with ideas that are still present in contemporary political philosophy. In his writings he argued that all the laws that govern human behaviour are the governing laws and commandments, supported by sanctions and preserved by the habit of obedience. Bentham was led

by the fundamental axiom of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people" that is, he considered laws to be good only if the individual could gain benefit, advantage, pleasure, happiness and general welfare.

Assuming that the goal of life is to create comfort and happiness, Bentham had in legal terms, proposed the conducting of personal bookkeeping which would measure whether the pleasure in a person's action was greater than the pain, and if so, would it be worth the activity. In this way, the entire life was shown as a business in which a positive balance showed that it was profitable and successful to do business. He portrayed life practically as an enterprise that needed to bring profits, success and winning. By Studying Bentham's reflections, the world-renowned scholar Erich Fromm (1900 to 1980) described this concept as meaningless. He said: "We can be happy or unhappy, we can achieve certain goals, and some not, and yet there is no visible balance that can show whether it was worth living." (Fromm 1989).

What was important to the utilitarians was that everyone achieved a sense of freedom, a liberation which would help them meet some of their life goals and shape their life in accordance with individual priorities. According to the British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806 to 1873) one of the most influential supporters of utilitarianism after Bentham, happiness cannot be reached by its constant seeking, but in indirect, external ways: seeking happiness for others, for a better humanity and a better world order. After long periods of battling with depression, in his "Autobiography" Mill wrote: "Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so. This theory now became the basis of my philosophy of life." (Mill 1989).

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING – SOME PHILOSOPHICAL TRENDS IN WESTERN CULTURE OF THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY

It was this very sentence by Mills that was also quoted by the well-known contemporary Hungarian-American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1934-). In his research on psychological construct of positive psychology: the flow, he confirmed that the persons, who are engaged in different meaningful and challenging activities in life, are happier and have a higher sense of subjective well-being (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Other modern investigators of subjective well-being of today also agree that the real path to happiness and well-being is not the one that acts as instant gratification, such as consumption of pain killer pills, but a completely different direction, that is, the reverse long way in which one searches for meaningful activities that require careful planning, sacrifice, dedication and worthwhile commitment. Voltaire wrote in his important philosophical novel "Candide," a

remarkable final last sentence: "We must cultivate our garden." This was a clause in the novel expressed by the main character, a young man, called Candide who had met all the evils of the world and decided to take responsibility for his own happiness. The writer McMahon conveyed this illustrative message by Voltaire to the modern world, saying that all those at the dawn of the 21st century inclining towards the ultimate must-have of today - happiness, should do the same thing as Candide, that is simply, start working on it (McMahon 2008).

However, there are different opinions. In line with Aristotle's conception of human nature that distinguishes real human needs from the neurotic needs of consumers (as cited "perverse money making"), the father of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (1856 to 1939) considered that money and material wealth brought hardly any happiness in life. According to Freud, happiness is the postponed fulfilment of a man's prehistoric wish. He thought that this was precisely why money brought such little happiness and that it's only a part of the pleasure principle and the type of neurosis. He believed that the man's entire psychic activity aims to obtain pleasure and avoid pain, which is managed by the pleasure principle, that is, "the program for the purpose of life." Just as Aristotle's maxim was that all people seek happiness, Freud proclaimed that the goal of the pleasure principle is happiness (Brown 1989).

The contemporary French philosopher and professor in the University of Grenoble Gilles Lipovetsky (1944-) criticized in his book "Paradoxical Happiness - Essay on Hyperconsumption Society" (2008) ("Le Bonheur Paradoxal. Essai sur la Société D'Hyperconsommation") the spirit of today's postmodern time, that became absorbed in the spectacular and euphoric hyperconsumption. The meaning of his phrase about the "happiness paradox" lies in the idea that the man of today feels self-fulfilled and happy through something extremely "inhuman" but desirable at the same time: in flaunting idleness, desire for possession, in the pleasure of consumption. He considers this phenomenon to be a result of the modern industrial society which has since the 19th century until today turned into a so-called cycle of total life hedonization and amusement park, with mandatory use of notorious "labels", "logos" and "brands". Lipovetsky equates happiness with prosperity, luxury and pleasure, and the paradox of this idea he associates with an increase of narcissism and indifference of society as well as a greater sense of loneliness and self-doubt. He sees man as a socialized Dionysus, a modern barbarian in fact, who at the time of afternoon "happy-hour", as a figure of the modern era trying to survive in the machine of global capitalism and intending to daily make the best of it by using the Latin phrase "carpe diem". Lipovetsky cited his contemporaries, the French peer, Andrea Comte-Sponville (1984) "The wise man has nothing left to expect or hope for". However, he disagreed with him and pointed out that hope is essential as it helped modern man to

literally "gain more oxygen" in order to open a full range of offers and promises for a better and happier life" (Lipovetsky 2008).

The modern American university professor Eric Wilson also believes that people by being obsessed with achieving their "American dream" and trying to have control over their lives, maim and devalue all the other emotions at the expense of the pursuit of happiness. He mentioned self-help literature, antidepressants and plastic surgery as the important elements in hiding feelings of sadness and unhappiness. He also believes that melancholia as a creative and turbulent state of spirit is the only way to achieve human happiness and the essence of what is called "being human". (Wilson 2008). From all the above, it can be concluded that unhappiness is now increasingly viewed as a disorder or deviation from a natural state of internal peacefulness and harmony of life and satisfaction, which indicates how important the concept of well-being and happiness is to the entire modern society (Profaca 2009)

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT

At the beginning of the 20th century, an empirical approach to the study of subjective well-being slowly started to expand, especially from the late 1940's when the World Health Organization concluded that mental health is not merely the absence of mental illness (Gallagher 2009). At that time, after World War II psychology was greatly influenced by the medical model focused on the alleviation of human problems and suffering, research and treatment of various mental illnesses. It was in some way understandable, especially because of the enormous psychological consequences of war. The humanistic psychology movement started in the 1950's and 60's with the most famous representatives being Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Emphasizing the human tendency towards personal growth, after World War II they were the first to write about, not as the previous authors, human weakness and disease, but about person's development through self-actualization, the goals toward which one strives, and generally about the fundamental questions of human existence and the meaning of life. The impact of their teachings on the wider culture was very strong, but on psychology itself it had little impact because of the lack of empirical research (Rijavec et al. 2008). The reason for this relative failure within the profession also lies in the fact that this model of thinking promoted a philosophical outlook and it wasn't considered scientific. In some postulates it even got close to religious interpretations, reaffirming existential concepts such as freedom, faith, hope, love, will, etc. (Milivojević 1989). This interest emerged in large part as a reaction to long-term focus of psychological research on negative emotions and psychopathology, which has been prevalent in literature almost 17 times

more than the studies examining positive states (Diener et al. 1999).

Subjective well-being - is a psychological construct in a relatively new field of positive psychology and for about half a century now there's been an increasing scientific interest of researchers, especially psychologists and psychiatrists. The author Edward Diener who first began to explore the concept of subjective well-being, in one of his cited articles of a highly influential scientific journal *Psychological Bulletin* from 1984, proposed three components of subjective well-being: life satisfaction, pleasant emotions and unpleasant emotions (Diener 1984.). In 1999 the same author and his co-workers added the fourth component to the explanation of subjective well-being: the pleasure gained from certain aspects of life such as job satisfaction, marriage, leisure activities and satisfaction with one's health (Schimmack 2008).

Although in literature and everyday life, the term subjective well-being is often used as a synonym for happiness, this psychological construct is defined as a cognitive evaluation of life that is filled with pleasant emotions without the unpleasant ones, and which apart from the cognitive component includes the emotional component. Although these two components are separate, it turned out that they are usually poorly to moderately correlated (Rijavec et al. 2008, Lyubomirsky et al. 2005).

This model of subjective well-being as described by Diener, is actually an extension of the construct of hedonistic well-being originating from the philosophy of hedonism, which described human yearning for happiness and satisfaction while avoiding pain and suffering. However, subjective well-being is not only described by the hedonistic component, but also all the positive and negative aspects of human life.

The cognitive component of subjective well-being - one of the most researched components of subjective well-being is the life satisfaction assessment. Although the concept of life satisfaction has been researched since the 1960's, no comprehensive theory has been discovered that would operationalise this construct. More recent results speak in favour of the fact that in explaining the concept of life satisfaction it is exactly the cognitive component that prevails, while the influence of the affective component is relatively small.

Considering that literature contains divergent perceptions of life satisfaction and related concepts, there are a number of theoretical approaches explaining this by all means, complex construct. Cognitive evaluation of life is determined on the assessment of life satisfaction (Diener et al. 1999). However, global life satisfaction is not a sum of satisfaction from particular aspects, as people give different importance to certain areas of life. Also, it is important how people assess their life satisfaction, and affects this estimate (Rijavec et al. 2008). Studies of cognitive components of well-being show that it is a relatively sound and stable component, because in order to assess global life

satisfaction people use this important and stable information and areas of life that are more important to them rather than those that are less important.

The affective component of subjective well-being - includes both positive and negative moods and emotions associated with our daily life (Rijavec et al. 2008). The first comprehensive work that has set the foundation of distinguishing between the negative and positive emotional / affective states was a book by the American writer Norman Bradburn from 1969, "The Structure of Psychological Well-Being." In this book, Bradburn explained that the positive and negative emotions are independent categories of subjective well-being and are independent in three ways: structurally, causally and momentary. Structural independence was assessed by a questionnaire consisting of 5 dichotomous statements with yes or no answers. For example, "I felt on the top of the world"- "I felt depressed or very unhappy".

During several weeks in the process of retesting, he received three results: 1. existence of high correlation between positive emotions, 2. existence of high correlation between negative emotions and 3. a connection that is almost equal to zero between the positive and negative statements. He explained causal independence with the fact that both positive and negative feelings arise due to various causes, and he said that momentary independence is transient, fleeting perceptions of positive emotions that are independent of the current experience of negative emotions (Schimmack 2008). And subsequent studies have shown that positive moods are not opposing to the negative, but rather than, these two dimensions are independent and associated with different types of events (Rijavec et al. 2008). The current independence of positive and negative emotions were apart from Bradburn, later investigated by many other psychologists. The study by Diener & Iran-Nejad (1986) discovered that people, referring to some life event, report on only the weak or moderate positive and negative emotions. None of the participants reported on the existence of intense emotions. This led the research duo to the conclusion that the positive and negative emotions are a result of different neurobiological processing and that the current activation of one inhibits the emergence of other emotions (Schimmack 2008). Later studies have added other important variables that may affect the occurrence of positive and negative emotions, and is a known fact today that there are many complex life situations in which it is entirely possible to get both positive and negative emotions at the same time (for example, experience headaches at a party). Therefore, the key role in the emergence of emotions is given to individual experience and some personality traits, particularly extraversion and neuroticism. According to the latter findings, the affective components unified in the positive and negative emotions, as much as they're presented as separate, today don't seem so dichotomous and separate from each other. In addition, the researchers also pointed out that people when

expressing general life satisfaction rely more on the affective component, which varies from person to person, but also between cultures (Eid & Larsen 2008).

In defining the concept of subjective well-being, it's unavoidable to mention the American author Warner Wilson who made a statement in 1967 that happy people are the ones who are young, healthy, well educated, well-paid, intelligent, and moderately religious, of modest aspirations, married and have built highly professional ethics (Wilson 1967). Over the years, many of Wilson's conclusions were inverted, and today they represent an essential prerequisite for the existence of subjective well-being.

Today, subjective well-being is observed as a broader phenomenon that includes emotional responses (affects, emotions), satisfaction with different aspects of life (family relations, leisure, hobbies, job, relationships with partners, etc.) and global satisfaction. Thus, Andrews and Robinson (1991) concluded that in order to measure the subjective well-being, it's ultimately important to calculate what the person wants out of life in comparison to what they've achieved (Andrews & Robinson 1991).

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING, MENTAL ILLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

To many scientists, the ability to be happy and satisfied with life represents a fundamental criterion of adaptation and mental health. There is a growing body of academic literature and research that attempts to define and describe aspects of well-being and to measure their impact on health and disease (Buchanan & Hudson 2004). There is no universally accepted definition of mental health as the interpretation of the term is influenced by cultural differences, different theoretical models and subjective assessments. One of the definitions of mental health is that it is a state in which there is no mental illness but there's a high level of well-being.

Many authors have found that the symptom measures of mental illness are moderately associated with subjective well-being or mental health (Rijavec et al. 2008).

In her book "Health and Lifestyles", Mildred Blaxter (1990) explains the three models of human mental health:

1. Health as the absence of disease (in which the diagnosis and identification of particular symptoms form part of this model, through observations of patients and / or objectively quantifiable criteria (DSM IV)). However, using this model in practice raises many specific questions. For example: how to define well-being and mental health of a person who doesn't have any symptoms but still feels poorly? Also, one can imagine the reverse situation: how to define the mental health of a person who feels well even though they're

experiencing high blood pressure, epilepsy, early-stage cancer, etc.

2. Man's ability to cope, a psychological resistance to disease (this concept refers to what people do to preserve their own resources and experience a faster recovery, which may be more important than medical forecasts and opinions).
3. The third definition is that proposed by the World Health Organization. Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely as the absence of disease. The presence or absence of health is determined by the subjective assessment of the individual concerned and not by the objective assessment of others.

Following this definition of mental health from the end of the 1940's, the WHO amended the concept of health in 1986 as a "positive and holistic concept, emphasising social and personal resources, as well as physical capabilities". In other words, mental health can no longer be interpreted only as the absence of symptoms, and therefore mental health and mental illness are considered as dichotomous entities that do not exist on the poles of one continuum. Moreover, many authors underline its multifaceted nature, identifying mental health as a generic term encompassing several dimensions: affective, behavioural, cognitive, physiological, socio-political and spiritual (Tudor 1996). In all those definitions, we can see not only an attempt to integrate positive indicators of well-being into conception of health, but also an integration of all the major human systems (physical, mental and social).

CONCLUSION

The dimensions of subjective well-being theoretically rest on those schools and directions in psychology and philosophy which emphasise the importance of hedonistic (feeling good, feeling of comfort, global life satisfaction) and eudaimonic concepts (achieving personal satisfaction and growth, happiness and purpose in life) (Bošković & Šendula Jengiđ 2008). As Plato suggested that "therapia" is of vital importance to a healthy society and a primary resource to the human soul (House & Loewenthal 2009), in contemporary psychotherapy, the term of well-being is used to describe a holistic, life coaching and well-being therapy which may increase one's effectiveness, improve life satisfaction, shape an efficient and meaningful context for treatment and help one achieve a full recovery (Jakovljević 2007).

Acknowledgements: None.

Conflict of interest: None to declare.

REFERENCES

1. Andrews FM, Robinson JP: *Measures of Subjective Well-Being*. In Robinson JP, Shaver R & Wrightsman LS (eds): *Measure of Personality and Social Psychological Attitudes*. Academic Press, San Diego, 1991.
2. Blaxter M: *Health and lifestyles*. Tavistock-Routledge, London, 1990.
3. Bošković M, Šendula Jengiđ V: *Mental health as eudaimonic well-being*. *Psychiatria Danubina* 2008; 20: 452–455.
4. Brown NO: *Život protiv smrti*. Naprijed, Zagreb, 1989.
5. Buchanan A, Hudson B: *Promoting children's emotional well-being*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004.
6. Csikszentmihalyi M: *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. Harper & Row, New York, 1990.
7. Diener E: *Subjective Well-Being*. *Psychological Bulletin* 1984; 95: 542–575.
8. Diener E, Suh EM, Lucas R, Smith HL: *Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress*. *Psychological Bulletin* 1999; 125: 276–302.
9. Eid M, Larsen RJ: *The Science of Subjective Well-Being*. The Guilford Press, New York, 2008.
10. Fromm E: *Zdravo društvo*. Naprijed, Zagreb, 1989.
11. Gallagher MW: *Well-being*. In Lopez SJ (Ed): *The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology*. John Wiley and Sons, Chichester, 2009.
12. Haybron DM: *Philosophy and the science of subjective well-being*. In Eid M, Larsen RJ (eds): *The Science of Subjective Well-Being*. The Guilford Press, New York, 2008.
13. House R, Loewenthal D: *Childhood well-being and a therapeutic ethos*. Karnac books, London, 2009.
14. Jakovljević M: *Contemporary psychopharmacotherapy in the context of brave new psychiatry, well-being therapy and life coaching*. *Psychiatria Danubina* 2007; 19: 195–201.
15. Klaić B: *Rječnik stranih riječi*. Nakladni zavod MH, Zagreb, 1990.
16. Lipovetsky G: *Paradoksalna sreća – Oglad o hiperpotrošačkom društvu*. Antibarbarus, Zagreb, 2008.
17. Lyubomirsky S, King L, Diener E: *The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success?* *Psychological Bulletin* 2005; 131: 803–855.
18. McMahon DM: *The pursuit of happiness in history*. In Eid M, Larsen RJ (eds): *The science of subjective well-being*. The Guilford Press, New York, 2008.
19. McMahon DM: *Happiness: A history*. Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 2006.
20. Milivojević Z: *Konceptualni modeli u psihijatriji*. In Kecmanović D (ed): *Psihijatrija – Tom I*. Medicinska knjiga, Zagreb-Beograd, 1989.
21. Mill JS: *Autobiography*. Penguin Books, London, 1989.
22. Penezić Z: *Zadovoljstvo životom u adolescentnoj i odrasloj dobi – provjera teorije višestrukih diskrepancija*. Doktorska disertacija, Odsjek za psihologiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu, 2004.
23. Profaca M: *Sreća kao problem*. *Filozofska istraživanja* 2009; 29: 763–773.
24. Rijavec M, Miljković D, Brdar I: *Pozitivna psihologija-znanstveno istraživanje ljudskih snaga i sreće*. IEP-D2, Zagreb, 2008.
25. Schimmack U: *The structure of subjective well-being*. In Eid M, Larsen RJ (eds): *The science of subjective well-being*. The Guilford Press, New York, 2008.
26. Sennett R: *Nestanak javnog čovjeka*. Naprijed, Zagreb, 1989.
27. Tudor K: *Mental health promotion: paradigms and practice*. Routledge, London, 1996.
28. Wilson EG: *Protiv sreće - U pohvalu melankoliji*. Naklada Jesenski i Turk, Zagreb, 2008.
29. Wilson W: *Correlates of Avowed Happiness*. *Psychological Bulletin* 1967; 67: 294–306.
30. Zamarovsky V: *Junaci antičkih mitova*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1985.

Correspondence:

Aleksandra Mindoljević Drakulić, prof. of psychology
Faculty of Teacher Education University of Zagreb
Savska cesta 77, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia
E-mail: aleksandra.mindoljevic@ufzg.hr