

MENTAL HEALTH AS EUDAIMONIC WELL-BEING?

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Many researches agree on the fact that mental health and mental illness are not categorical but rather continuous variables. It is very difficult to define the exact and precise point where health ceases and illness begins. In other words, the formal absence of mental illness is not necessarily an indicator of mental health.

The definition of mental health according to the World Health Organisation on the one hand takes into consideration the concept of health as a state of integral physical, mental and social welfare, whereby the concept of absence of disease is overcome, while on the other hand it also emphasises the concept of health which also includes the capability of leading or living an economically and socially productive life.

In the last few decades, the human capacity to grow, develop and change have been recognised in research and practical work. This reversal has offered fresh and optimistic paradigms of human nature. Despite various translations and the level of understanding of Aristotle's and other philosophical hypotheses, fundamentally two basic approaches can be distinguished, through which attempts to explain prosperity and well-being have been made throughout history.

The first originates from the Greek philosopher Aristippus of Cyrene (435 – 356 B.C.), whose philosophical doctrine was hedonism (Greek: hedone – comfort, pleasure) according to which basic good is pleasure or comfort (Döring 1988). On the other hand, not necessarily oppositionally, there are philosophical ponderings of the Greek philosopher – Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.) whose philosophical doctrine states that the basis of every moral and mindful act comprise the possibility of creating personal welfare or appiness. (Greek – eu good; eus – good; eudaimonia – bliss, happiness; eu + daimon – good spirit). Aristotle identified eudaimonia as the greatest human good, as the best or greatest activity of the soul or joy which permeates and fulfils a good life. Edaimonia is often translated as happiness, joy or well-being, but it should be noted that it also has some connotations like “success”, so it is possible to understand that “living well” also includes “doing well”. It is integral and independent, achieved by nothing but itself, so that it may include everything else, and even comfort, however it extends beyond it (Broadie 1991).

However, aside from basic determinants of mental orientation or rational action, the objective of which is to create human well-being, happiness or joy, it should be noted that in the eudemonistic concept exists a distinction between well-being and happiness as momentary states, and well-being and happiness as aspirations or way of life which leads to permanent happiness as measure of the value of each human act. With this, systematically bad choices or making bad decisions about the way of life are not completely or are not at all rational, they are burdened by

the desire for pleasure, power or some other external objective which is so strong or attractive that it completely overwhelms logical and ethical actions whose objective is joy or happiness (Broadie 1991). It is precisely the possibility of creating personal well-being and happiness that opens the path to the optimistic paradigm of man, which looks at man not as a being who passively reacts to his environment, a being limited only by his physical nature, instincts, early conflicts, but rather as a being capable of growing, developing and changing in processes of learning, maturing and transformation.

HEDONIC WELL-BEING

The concept of subjective well-being finds its origin primarily in the hedonistic concept of well-being, by which well-being is operationally defined by a high level of positive effects, a low level of negative effects and high degree of life satisfaction (Deiner 1984, Kahneman et al. 1999), where it is questionable how hedonistic each mentioned variable is, as every self-assessment implies cognitive evaluation, if nothing else than of present life conditions. In research of subjective well-being, the primary focus is on self-reporting by which global life satisfaction or happiness is assessed. Whereupon pleasure or the feeling of happiness of an individual is defined as the sum of current feelings or state of favour, comfort or usefulness at a certain time, while subjective well-being of an individual is often used as a synonym for happiness, so unfortunately an increase in subjective well-being of an individual is often automatically wrongly interpreted as also an increase in the feeling of happiness.

EUDAIMONIC WELL-BEING

The hedonistic concept of subjective well-being is not the only way of looking at well-being. The other perspective in research (Waterman 1993) points out that well-being is not so much a measure of a final outcome or state, but rather a process of fulfilment or realisation of true human nature and achievement of human potential. From the eudaimonic perspective, subjective reports of people about feelings of happiness, presence of positive effects and life satisfaction founded on the sum of current feelings at a specific time do not necessarily mean that they are psychologically well or that they are socially well (Ryan & Deci 2001).

The concept of psychological or emotional well-being (Ryff 1989) was originally construed as a challenge in overcoming the hedonistic concept of subjective well-being in psychology, and with the aspiration of making a distinction between the hedonistic state of comfort and eudaimonic *process* of growth and development by which happiness, and finally also pleasure, is achieved. Psychological well-being is comprised of 6 basic dimensions (Ryff & Singer 2008). *Self-acceptance* denotes positive self-regard, as well as the acceptance of good and bad aspects of oneself; *Personal growth* denotes the pursuit of continuous development, growth and realisation of personal potentials, openness towards new experiences, readiness for changes which reflect greater self-knowledge and personal efficacy; *Autonomy* denotes independence and self-determination, capability of regulating social pressure, it assumes internal regulation of behaviour and evaluation of self on the basis of personal values and standards; *Relationships with others*

denotes positive and trusting relationships with other people, warmth, satisfaction, capability of feeling empathy, exchange of positive emotions; *Environmental mastery* denotes a feeling of competency in managing the environment, control of a whole series of external activities, capacity of choice and creation of appropriate context for achieving personal worth, and finally the dimension; *Purpose in life* denotes an orientation towards setting objectives, feeling for the meaning of the current moment as well as past life experiences, retaining attitudes which give life a purpose and meaning.

Furthermore, given the fact that man is a social being and that only by living with other people can he grow, develop and change, that is, overcome his nature, evaluate himself, the quality of his life and personal functioning in relation to other people, and all that by respecting socio-cultural and ethical norms of the community in which he lives, the concept of social well-being which is also comprised of a number of dimensions which together indicate a level in which an individual functions well in a social life (Keyes 1998) was construed. Social Well-being is comprised of 5 dimensions (Keyes 2005). The dimension of *social acceptance* is a construct of society expressed through generalised parameters and qualities of differences in other people, *social actualisation* is the evaluation of potential and attractiveness of a society and denotes the creation of convictions that people, groups and society as a whole have potential and can develop positively, *social contribution* assumes evaluation of individuals in a society and denotes the possibility of seeing one's daily activities as useful and valued by others and society, *social coherence* assumes the perception of the quality and organisation of a society and denotes the level of interest in society and social life, recognition and understanding of social events, and finally the dimension of *social integration* denotes the evaluation of the quality of relationships which an individual has with a community and society through feelings of belonging to a society, feeling of comfort in society and support from the society.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

It is very clear from the overview of the dimensions of emotional well-being, psychological well-being and social well-being that the concept of well-being theoretically rests precisely on those schools and directions in psychology and philosophy which emphasise the importance of learning, as well as the opportunity for growth and development of individual personality, the importance of self-actualisation of personal potential and achievement of a continual feeling of satisfaction and happiness which is based on every moral and mindful act according to the concept of positive eudaimonism.

On the one hand, the hedonistic concept expressed as "feeling good" is based on the state in which the feeling of comfort predominates. Comfort is also a constituent part of eudaimonic hypotheses in situations when it is based or originates from carnality and sensuality. The importance of comfort in behaviour and experiences of an individual must not be neglected. Comfort is an undeniably important result or state of each individual. Comfort and a positive effect which accompanies it may accelerate, ease, initiate various activities of an individual.

On the other hand, the eudemonic concept expressed as "living well" is founded on the process which attempts to specify content and establish expected processes of good living and

achieving personal satisfaction and happiness. In doing so, eudemonia does not also mean anhedonia. The consequences may of course also include hedonistic satisfaction, however in this approach the emphasis is on the processes which lead to growth, development, self-actualisation and realisation of all human potentials. Therefore, “feeling good” may simultaneously be accompanied by, but may also be a consequence of “living well”.

In every day professional work with patients, but also in life in general, the manner in which we define well-being effects our practice of leading, managing, learning, treating, therapy, treatment, parenting, family and other social relationships, as well as all other achievements whose objective is to change the individual, group, society, as rule, for the better. Therefore, we must have a clear vision about what “living well” actually is, as well as about how to teach other people that the possibility for growth and development of the personality of an individual, self-actualisation of personal potential and achievement of a continual feeling of satisfaction, happiness and joy, are our joint objective. Especially in our daily work with patients who suffer on mental disorders we should strongly respect their personality and have to apply transdisciplinary, holistic, integrative approach and find best way to rich patients complex needs (Jakovljevic 2008).

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