

**Happiness and Psychological Well-being:  
A Psycho-Philosophical Study**

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Happiness and Psychological Well-being: A Psycho-Philosophical Study submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Soumitra Basu and Dr. Atashee Chatterjee Sinha. And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere / elsewhere

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

An undeniable uniqueness of human existence, as against other simple animal lives, lies in a sense of purposiveness permeating the totality of her/his lived-in experiences. The in-built capacity for consciousness and self-awareness endows individual human beings with this purposiveness in day-to-day life. Every individual, in their normal course of life, are seen often to plan and arrange their present and future activities according to some desired goal or ideal. The future envisioned in these plans can extend from next few minutes to the whole of future life, according to the different types of plans of activities undertaken. Needless to say, these plans are made within the limitations set down by individual capacities and the social and environmental context of one's existence.

Human goals or ideals vary according to their socio-cultural backgrounds; however both our short-term and long-term goals seem to entail a norm, based on which we tend to evaluate our lives. This kind of evaluative activity appears to be a *sine qua non* of conscious, self-aware human lives. Given the wide variations in goals, plans, ideals etc. that different individuals undertake in their lives, the evaluative judgements (or, minimally, the expressions of these judgements) apparently crystallise into a relatively narrow range of concepts: happiness and wellness and their polar opposites, unhappiness or dissatisfaction and illness. We usually express our evaluative judgements of our activities, experiences and life (as a whole) with these terms. Hence these concepts constitute a kind of provisional standard to determine the worth of our goals and activities.

The question we are concerned with in this present work is how to understand these two concepts and/or states of being. We need to explore happiness and wellness for two reasons; first to ascertain the relationship between these concepts if any and second to find out whether there is a need to admit of such a relationship. The presupposition of such a quest is that a clear understanding of these concepts and their inter-relatedness will be helpful at different levels: at the individual level, by enhancing our understanding and insight about an ideal human life and the awareness of various possibilities in enriching our lives.; building a society that promotes as well as contributes to attaining psychological wellbeing for its members; and at the global level, by discerning ways to bring in necessary policies and socio-economic as well as political arrangements so as to ensure the making of a modern welfare state. Fuzziness in the concept of the above is likely to obstruct our perception of what happiness is; what we deem to be wellness and what are the circumstances that may lead us to deepen our knowledge of the human condition.

Philosophy, both western and eastern, has a rich and long tradition of exploring the nature of the *telos* of human life, thereby prescribing desirable ends and means of an ideal human existence. It is only in recent years, that the academic disciplines of social science like psychology and economics etc. have focused on these issues. A large body of literature, both empirical research data and theoretical discussions have come out from these academic sources in last few decades. Our aim here is to undertake a theoretical analysis of these emerging ideas and insights with conceptual tools already available in philosophy. Before we proceed, it is important to note that these phrases we use in our daily life on our state of existence are neither unitary nor well defined. In ordinary interactions

and in social sciences the concepts are used without proper definition. This leads to much ambiguity not only in understanding the theory in those sciences but also in development of the theories.

When we think about a happy person, we picture someone smiling, feeling pleased or comfortable; the person might even be satisfied with her or his lot. Apparently, all would want to be in such a mental state. On the other hand, when we talk about psychological wellbeing, it invokes a sense of inner strength and calmness. Associated with this, there is probably a sense of empowerment also. Ostensibly, this would be a desirable state to all of us. From commonsensical intuition we feel that there is a connection between these two. Sometimes it might seem that one leads to the other or perhaps both are the same. We cannot be too sure what the association is. If we claim that there is an association between the two, we need to clarify the connection between happiness and psychological wellbeing. If we deny such an association, we need to need to explore the reasons for the dissociation. Happiness and psychological wellbeing are both important dimensions of all aspects of human living. A clear conception of the two and their interplay may have the potential to enrich our understanding of the notions and their relationship.

“Animals are happy so long as they have health and enough to eat. Human beings, one feels, ought to be, but in the modern world they are not...<sup>1</sup>”

These are the opening lines of Bertrand Russell’s book - *Conquest of Happiness*. Undoubtedly, the problems of living a good life are applicable only to human beings. But one may here disagree with Russell that it is a

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<sup>1</sup> Russell, B. (1930), *The conquest of happiness*, London, England: Allen and Unwin, p.15

problem of the modern world. This problem has existed since *homo sapiens* became human. We find that two thousand years ago the same sentiment echoed in the Bible – Man does not live by bread alone. The *telos* of human life has been discussed in various ways; in terms of philosophical, theological, ethical and other evaluations. All religions assume some purposiveness to human lives. But even without the religious or ethical evaluations, humans have always felt the need to have a reason to live for; the need perhaps being integrally entwined with self-awareness. Evaluation of the experiences of living is central to existence. The norm against which we evaluate may not necessarily be a moral norm. It can be of many varieties – aesthetic, social, intellectual and several others. How these norms develop is a different question altogether, but the evaluations give a meaning to our actions and situations.

We cannot escape the search for giving life a meaning; to have a worthwhile life. The worthiness of our life depends on how far our experiences of living have been commensurate with the norms against which we evaluate ourselves. Our wellbeing depends on this evaluation. Frankl quotes Nietzsche's words, –"He who has a *why* to live for, can bear with almost any *how*,"<sup>2</sup> and the power to go about the "how" lies in the goals we set for ourselves. What should be the meaning or the ultimate goal of life has been a central theme in human civilization as early as human history and many theories have specified different human goals. Among them happiness and wellbeing have been principal contenders.

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<sup>2</sup> Frankl, V. E., (1992), *Man's search for meaning: an introduction to logotherapy*, part one translated by Use Lasch, 4th ed., Boston: Beacon Press, p-84



Let us review the commonsense notion of each of these notions one by one.

One of the earliest researchers on happiness in psychology states:

When one looks at the various meanings attributed to the notion of difficulties in living, one particular variable— happiness, or a sense of psychological well-being – stands out as being of primary importance, both on a commonsense basis and on historical grounds. Discussions of human happiness, concerning both the best means for achieving it and whether or not it is a proper goal of human activity, have been frequent throughout history<sup>3</sup>.

“Happiness” is a term that has been in the coinage of human civilization since perhaps the invention of language itself. All of us know what it feels like to be happy or to experience happiness. But what does happiness really mean? Can we define happiness? Although most people can understand what happiness means, nonetheless it is extremely difficult or “perhaps” impossible to define. “Happiness” is one of those terms that has defied all attempts at an explicit or unambiguous definition in the history of mankind. Yet the remarkable fact is that it is one of the most frequently used words in the English language today. What we understand by the word ‘happiness’ is often not very clear and more often we are not even aware of this less than desirable clarity, probably because of what J. L. Austin calls “blinding veil of ease and obviousness<sup>4</sup>”

From the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in most European and Scandinavian languages, “hap” or “happ” meant “chance”, “good luck”, “fortunate” and the like. “Happy” has its origin from Old Norse “hap” meaning chance, luck or

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<sup>3</sup>Bradburn N.M., (1969), ‘The structure of psychological well-being’, Chicago: Aldine, p.15

<sup>4</sup> Austin, J., L., ‘A Plea for Excuses’, <https://sites.ualberta.ca/~francisp/NewPhil448/AustinPlea56.pdf>, accessed 09.12.2014

fortune, used in the positive sense. In English the term “hap” came to mean "good fortune" from early 13c. The Middle English use of “happy” originally meant to be fortunate or lucky. A “happy” person meant a lucky person favoured by fortune. The modern sense of happy as a felt sense of gladness, cheerfulness, joy came much later. The only exception to the meaning of “hap” as “good fortune” or “luck” was in Welsh, in which it meant “wise”. But all of these meanings are quite far from the modern meaning of happiness as cheerfulness or delight. It is important to note that the initial meaning of happy does not contain a felt aspect, i.e., happiness was not originally meant as a feeling.

In terms of feelings, “happiness” denotes pleasure or gladness. So a happy person is one who is in a pleasant state of mind. When we say, “You seem to be happy today.” what we mean is that at present it appears that the person concerned is feeling good; that he is in a good mood. Seeing a person with a long face, we might comment, “You don’t seem to be happy today” or “What’s the matter, aren’t you happy?” So it seems that the use of “happy” has with it a felt sense of pleasure at the present moment. But the word “happy” in our practices and customs perhaps portrays something more than only an emotional state. When we wish a new-born child a happy life, do we mean that his life be of the eat-drink-and-be-merry type and that he lead a life of pleasure only? Even if we take the concept of being happy as leading a satisfied and agreeable life and feeling glad, it does not really amount to a meaningful life. A mentally disabled person, or a person afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease may very well be able to feel glad. Such people may feel glad and may also live a happy life. But this is not what we mean when we wish someone a happy life. It is a much better life that we want for the person.

What we really mean is that the person be capable of leading a worthwhile life, a fulfilling life free from ill-being. The term “happy” as used here means we feel that being happy also brings with it a feeling of contentment. It is in these contexts that the commonsense belief about the close relationship between happiness and wellbeing becomes evident. This is why in many of our blessings, greetings, wishing, hoping we use the term “happy”. We intuitively assume that happiness contains a promise of wellness and fulfilment. When we cheer a person with a happy long life on their birthday, what we actually imply is that he may live contentedly to an old age without any accompanying illness, although that is not mentioned. Our deep insight tells us that illness will bode unhappiness and hinder one’s quality of life significantly. It will be interesting to explore why illness provokes a sense of dejection in us.

Illness always brings with it some aspect of undesirability. None of us want to be ill. Being ill is associated with a feeling of negativity. When one is ill, he does not say that “I am well”. Rather after recovering from an illness, we say that we are now well. In ordinary language, the two words ‘ill’ and ‘well’ appear to be polar opposites like ‘good’ and ‘bad’. There is, almost always a negative emotional state accompanying states of ill-health but that is not enough or sufficient to evaluate ill-health negatively. May be, the negative emotional state is secondary to negative cognitive appraisal of reduced capacity arising out of ill-health. So it is obvious that the affliction of illness leads to ill-being. That illness cannot be a state of wellbeing is evident. This will be made clear if we explore the concept of illness in a greater detail. The lived experiences of an individual give rise to certain expectations of living. These expectations are more or less the same for all individuals in the community. The

concepts of wellness and illness also arise from the different judgements of the lived experience of a person. Illness comes from a negative evaluation of a given condition of living.

A human being eats, sleeps, grows, learns to talk, walk, laugh, reproduce and after a given period shows signs of aging and die. This is what normally happens<sup>5</sup> and is taken to be appropriate functioning of the entity. These are objective observations of overwhelming majority of human beings over a very long period of human existence and gives rise to an expectation about individual human beings able to carry out the same activities. When a life condition prevents a person from performing these typical functions, we call that a dysfunction<sup>6</sup>.

So the appraisal of what is healthy and what is unhealthy is not an ethical valuation. The evaluation of a health condition is a social judgment. It is an appraisal performed with respect to a given social norm. So we see that the concept of health and ill-health are normative assessment about a given human state in terms of benefit and suffering, both at the individual and the communal level. It is not a moral norm and this judgment is not the opinion of any one individual. It is from a body of wisdom, gathered over centuries, which is applicable to all members of the human society. Thus the appraisal of disease as ill-being and health as wellbeing is a social valuation born from the subjective experiences of living. We also noted that illness is associated with dysfunction. Proper functioning of a person is judged as normal functioning. If the assessment of a functioning

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<sup>5</sup>Wakefield, J.C., (1992), 'The concept of mental disorder: on the boundary between biological facts and social values', *American Psychologist*, 47 pp. 373-88

<sup>6</sup>Kendell, R.E., (1975), 'The concept of disease and its implication for psychiatry', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 127, pp.305-315

is higher or exceptionally good compared to normal functioning, it is judged as a condition of wellbeing. So conditions of good functioning are social appraisal of subjective living viewed positively.

The Indian conception and specifically the Bengali concept of illness and wellness may be reviewed here. In Bengali, the word for disease is *a-sukha* which literally means the “absence of *sukha*”. This can be translated to mean discomfort, absence of ease or absence of psychological wellbeing. In a similar vein, the word for disease in Sanskrit is *byadhi*. In Sanskrit, the etymological meaning of *byadhi* is distress of the mind. Although in western medical science, disease is more readily associated with the body, we see that the oriental concept of disease has its root in the distress of the mind. So in the Indian tradition, a necessary condition for a state to be noted as disease or illness is that the state necessarily brings about psychological agony. If illness then, denotes a state of distress of the mind, by definition, a state of illness cannot simultaneously harbour a state of wellness of the mind. Thus a state of illness can not by definition mean a state of psychological wellbeing. So a state of mental illness will also not be state of psychological wellbeing.

There is ample evidence to show that this concept of wellbeing has been implicit in most cultures. We find this in the notion of happiness in literature, poetry, nursery rhymes and fairy tales. Consider the allegory of “*The Happy Prince*”, written by Oscar Wilde<sup>7</sup>. The prince describes to the swallow his life of pleasure in the palace of Sans-Souci, where sorrow

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<sup>7</sup>Wilde, O., & Young, E., (1989), *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, London: Puffin Books

was forbidden to enter. Yet after spending a life without ever being sad or sorrowful, he denounced such a life and embraced the life where he could feel the sadness of life and act in ways to alleviate the misery and suffering of others. A life of doing something worthwhile is more precious than all the riches and pleasures in the world.

Whether our life has been worth living depends on the evaluation of our life against the goals that we set. A life commensurate with the presumed goal is evaluated positive and affords a sense of wellness. We consider such a life as well lived and feel our living has been worthwhile. Feeling of worthiness makes our life valuable and gives meaning to our life. The Bengali short lyrical story, “*Suyoranir Saadh*”, Rabindranath Tagore shares the same sentiment. The Favoured Queen of the King, in Bengali traditionally called *Suyorani*, has everything she wishes for. Yet what she craves for in the end is the sorrow felt by the disfavoured and indigent Queen, the *Duyorani*. Because all her life *Suyorani* or the favoured Queen has been only possessing wealth but has never had the experience of using them. She tells her companion,

সুয়োরানী হয়েও কী চাই সে কথা লজ্জায় কাউকে বলতে পারি নে। তাই তোমাকে ডেকেছি, স্যাঙাৎনি। আমার শেষ কথাটি বলি তোমার কানে, ‘ঐ দুয়োরানীর দুঃখ আমি চাই।’”

সুয়োরানী বললে, “ওর ঐ বাঁশের বাঁশিতে সুর বাজল, কিছু আমার সোনার বাঁশি কেবল বয়েই বেড়ালেম, আগলে বেড়ালেম, বাজাতে পারলেম না।”

“Friend, let me tell you something. I have everything I want, yet the sorrow of the *Duyorani* is what I most crave. I’m ashamed to admit this to any one but you.

Such sweet melodies were played in her wooden flute. But I have never been able to play a single note on my golden flute. I have spent my life just carrying and watching over it.<sup>8</sup>”

Most of the writings of Herman Hesse, seem to echo the same sentiment but much more directly. In his short story *Augustus*, we find that Augustus is reminded of his earlier days, by Herr Binsswanger:

... How would it be now if you allowed me to fulfil a wish for you too, any wish? Very likely you will not want money or possessions or power or the love of women, of which you have had enough...and if you believe you know a magic spell that could make... you happy once more, then wish it for yourself...think of all the moments when you have ever been happy and when life seemed to you good and precious<sup>9</sup>...

In the Indian tradition, the phrases used for greeting or wishing someone also contain the idea of wellbeing. Some of the common greetings are: *Sukhi bhava* or *kalyanam astu*. *Sukhi bhava* may mean be prosperous but since Indian tradition has the concept of the collective implicit so this would mean to be prosperous with everyone around you. Actually a song written by Tagore conveys this very phrase. The song was written on the occasion of marriage of the daughter of Biharilal Gupta, who was a close friend of Tagore<sup>10</sup>. It starts with the phrase “*Sukhe thako ar sukhee karo sabe*”<sup>11</sup>. Literally it means be happy and keep everyone else happy. The difficulties that are faced when trying to define happiness are the same as

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<sup>8</sup> Tagore, R., (1986), ‘Syuoranis Sadh’, *Lipika, Rabindrarachonaboli*, Volume XIII, Vishwabharati, (Translation – author) p.340

<sup>9</sup>Hesse. H., (1995), ‘Augustus’, *The Fairy Tales of Herman Hesse*, Translated by Jack Zipes, London:Bantam Books, p.92

<sup>10</sup>Sengupta, S., (2008), *Gaaner Pichhane Rabindranath*, Papyrus: Kolkata, p.62

<sup>11</sup> Tagore, R., (1982), ‘Song No.5, Anushthanik’, *Gitabitan*, Vishwabharati, (Translation – author) p.608

when we try to define wellbeing. We find that both wellbeing and happiness are overlapping concepts and both are equally evasive to yield to a formal definition or a theory.

Till now the common sense meaning of happiness has been discussed with a view to elucidate certain aspects of happiness that need to be clarified before we embark on the different areas of research on happiness. In doing so, we have been tracing the common sense meaning of wellbeing implicit in being happy. The next question that comes to the mind is: What then is the explicit or the precise dictionary meaning of happiness? In the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, there is no separate entry of “happiness”. It is given as a derivative of “happy”. The primary meaning of “happy” is given as: “feeling or showing pleasure or contentment; willing to do or accept something”. The original meaning of “happy” as “fortunate” mentioned above has become secondary or virtually non-existent. More often than not, “happy” has come to mean, glad, cheerful, pleased, and other adjectives corresponding to the felt aspect of the word.

Several issues emerge from the above discussion. The foremost among them is that good functioning is both a desirable state and a state of wellbeing, as mentioned above. If we consider that happiness as a mental state has an implicit sense of wellbeing embedded in it, then happiness is also desirable for living well. Considered from the point of mental health, a happy man is one who enjoys psychological wellbeing. This was the predominant view till the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The concept of mental health was equivalent with happiness. On the other hand unhappiness was viewed as maladjustment to one’s environment which at



times took the form of mental illness<sup>12</sup>. During the 1960's the definition of health came to include positive functioning and not merely as absence of illness<sup>13</sup>. Studies on positive psychological health were conducted by studying happiness of persons, since happiness was taken to be identical to or represented psychological wellbeing<sup>14</sup>. Psychologists who were engaged in the wellbeing studies from this tradition later called themselves Hedonic psychologists.

As research in this tradition progressed, another tradition of research developed within the discipline of psychology where psychological wellbeing was conceptualised as something very different from hedonic happiness. These psychologists studied psychological wellbeing from an entirely different perspective. In this branch of wellbeing studies mere feelings of happiness was not identical to psychological wellbeing. This branch is now known as eudaimonic study of wellbeing<sup>15</sup>.

In recent times there has been a surge of interest on the importance of happiness in various disciplines. An overwhelming number of researches on happiness have been conducted or are ongoing. In the last 10-15 years, innumerable numbers of self-help books have been published to provide various ways of achieving happiness. In particular, currently, all of the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, sociology and more recently economics are increasingly being interested in the study of "happiness". Among the various disciplines, philosophy, as we mentioned earlier, is one of the earliest subjects where philosophers have engaged in serious

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<sup>12</sup>Bradburn, N.M., (1969), *op. cit.*, p. 22

<sup>13</sup>Jahoda M , (1958), *Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health*, New York Basic Books

<sup>14</sup>Bradburn, N.M., (1969), *op. cit.*, p.24

<sup>15</sup>Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001), 'On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, p.142

discussions on this issue. In fact in philosophy, happiness has been a major subject for analysis from the times of Ancient Greeks. The problem however is that each of these disciplines mentioned above has tried to define happiness in different ways. This has led to the term having many connotations.

Psychology is concerned with the study of the mind, so psychologists are likely to study wellbeing with a special emphasis on psychological states of wellbeing. To those who propose happiness to be identical or constitutive of psychological wellbeing, it may appear that psychological wellbeing may be enhanced if we can enhance happiness. Others may think that happiness and psychological wellbeing are different entities so happiness is not a relevant aspect for exploring the domain of psychological wellbeing. To explore the subject of human wellbeing and happiness, it is necessary to know the significance of the relationship and the determinants of the relationship between happiness and psychological wellbeing.

There are several possible relationships that may exist between these closely associated concepts. There are several plausible alternatives. Happiness might be wholly identical with psychological wellbeing; it might be a component of psychological wellbeing; happiness might contribute to psychological wellbeing; it might be an outcome of psychological wellbeing or it might have no relation to psychological wellbeing at all. Whatever the relationship is, happiness and psychological wellbeing have been and will be of primary importance to human living. In modern world, we find psychological wellbeing as a very important factor which is considered in all aspects of our behaviour

and in all walks of life. Similarly, throughout history happiness has been variously cited as “an ethical, theological, political”<sup>16</sup>, economic and obviously a psychological issue. Wellbeing also has been studied by various disciplines as different conceptual entities. The inter-relatedness of these two concepts is important because both are human conditions of living and affect us in all fields of our life. In this thesis, we will try to clarify the relationship between the two. We will also explore whether and how changes in happiness affect one’s psychological wellbeing.

Initial characteristics of happiness and psychological wellbeing in this dissertation will be as follows. By happiness we will mean a psychological state such that if one experiences it, then one will be inclined to experience it repeatedly. This will be corroborated with Mill’s claim that if one ever experiences a higher grade of happiness, one would never remain satisfied with the lower grade. By psychological wellbeing we will mean a state which is free from psychological disorders. It will be a continuum. At one end of the continuum will be psychological disorders and the other end will consist in optimal realisation of one’s potentialities. That means if one tries to increase one’s happiness it will not be regarded as a meaningless and impossible activity. The same holds true for psychological wellbeing also.

Accordingly if happiness and psychological wellbeing be related to each other one may legitimately ask whether increase in one leads to an increase in the other. This leads us to introduce the notion of measure in relation to happiness and psychological wellbeing.

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<sup>16</sup>Bradburn, N.M., (1969), op. cit., p.22

Philosophy is familiar with the notion of measure of happiness since the time of Jeremy Bentham and James Stuart Mill. We would like to argue in the following chapters how the notion of measure enters into the understanding of the nature of both happiness and psychological wellbeing. In relation to the measures, the philosophical question that immediately becomes relevant is whether the measure of happiness and psychological wellbeing should be subjective or objective. In this dissertation we will try to show that for measuring these two phenomena neither subjective nor objective will suffice alone.

An associated assumption which we will accept as valid, since it has never been questioned in the literature of psychological wellbeing, is that increase in individual wellbeing will result in an increase in the societal wellbeing. It may be noted in this context that both of happiness and psychological wellbeing leave room for the possibility of achieving an increase and we need to see whether the above mentioned goes for both.

So, in what follows I will give a short summary of the chapters that follow and a brief glimpse of the conclusion.

Human life is different from that of other living beings by virtue of their possession of self-consciousness. An important aspect of self-consciousness is that it has given rise to our sense of agency from which has stemmed our sense of ethicality and the core of our humanity. As self-aware beings, the quest for *telos* is innately given in human beings. The meaning of our lives is evaluated against the various norms (not necessarily only moral) we develop and we express this evaluation in terms of– happiness and wellness. Our focus is on the exploration of a better understanding of these concepts and their relation to each other in order to gain insight into what makes one’s life worthwhile and

meaningful; what makes life good and valuable for an individual and for a group or community.

There is a rich history of discussion on these issues in philosophy and it is only in recent times that social science disciplines like psychology and economics have focused on this area. This study is a modest endeavour in trying to attain a better understanding of their inter-relatedness by finding insights on this relationship through interdisciplinary research. Having specified the objective and significance of our study what follows will be a brief outline of what each chapter aims to accomplish and how that relates to the overall goal of the thesis.

Our study into this area has shown that in psychology there are various theories on happiness and psychological wellbeing but all of these can be classified into two basic distinct approaches – one approach identifies happiness with psychological wellbeing and the other distinguishes the concepts of happiness and psychological wellbeing as two separate states. In the second chapter we have discussed the theories which identify happiness with psychological wellbeing. In this chapter happiness is defined in a specific internalist theory as subjective wellbeing where the concept of subjective wellbeing has been used as a synonym of happiness. Happiness was initially identified with psychological wellbeing. The operational definition of happiness was primarily conceptualised as a “high level of positive affect, a low level of negative affect and high degree of life satisfaction”<sup>17</sup>. Research on subjective wellbeing focussed primarily on self reports of felt aspect of

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<sup>17</sup>Kahneman, D., (1999), ‘Objective Happiness,’ in Kahneman et al, *Well-being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, pp. 3-25.

Diener E., (1984), ‘Subjective well-being’, *Psychology Bulletin*, 95, p.544

pleasure or positive affect and a cognitive evaluation global life satisfaction.

After clarifying the concept of subjective wellbeing we will present the empirical findings and their relevance. We will also give an overview of the methodology used in subjective wellbeing studies. The empirical findings on subjective wellbeing have been fruitful to some extent and several interesting features emerge from the empirical findings. Despite such promising beginning, there has been significant concern questioning the adequacy of subjective wellbeing measures because it appears that subjective wellbeing ignores several factors of psychological wellbeing and falls short of giving a comprehensive measure of happiness. There have also been concerns regarding lack of integration and the methodology used. Several concerns have been raised that are related to the contradiction between conceptual framework and methodology used. Others have pointed out the limitations of ignoring objective measures and including only subjective measures to account for happiness. This takes us to the next chapter where objective measures are discussed.

The third chapter begins with the introduction of wellbeing in welfare economics and the basic assumptions on which it is based. It goes on to give a brief account of the gradual transition of happiness measures from utility to income and to other monetary measures. Welfare economics defines happiness to be synonymous with welfare or wellbeing of the individual as well as the community. The subsequent part deals with the role of economic development on happiness or welfare at both levels. It describes the methodology and various objective measures of economic growth and how far they translate into individual welfare.

A discussion on the practical implication of findings of economic growth on happiness and the associated public policies formulated under the institution of democracy is given. This chapter also tries to show the implications of the “Easterlin paradox” that shows the coexistence of huge increase in income with a flat stagnated level of happiness. Although various plausible explanations for this paradox are construed from the perspective of welfare economics, these explanations conflict with the basic assumptions of this theory. In this chapter, the gradual delineation of economics from subjective reality and as a consequence the challenges faced by economic measures of happiness is traced. The chapter concludes with an overview of the drawbacks in economic measures of happiness and a suggestion regarding the plausible revision to be incorporated.

The fourth chapter is divided into three sections each of which discusses wellbeing as distinct from the hedonic view of happiness. In the first section of this chapter, the concept of psychological wellbeing is taken to be distinctly different from happiness as subjective wellbeing. Here we discuss two models of psychological wellbeing where both give emphasis on the positive functioning and realisation of human potential and true human nature. These theories define psychological wellbeing from the eudaimonic concept of wellness as human flourishing. In this chapter we discussed the relation between happiness and psychological wellbeing in the backdrop of two eudaimonic theories. The theory of Self Determination, proposed by Deci and Ryan, asserts that optimal functioning and self actualisation is facilitated if three basic needs such as Relatedness, Autonomy and Competence are satisfied.

The other important theory discussed here is a theory of psychological wellbeing proposed by Ryff and Keyes that claims the presence of positive relatedness, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life and self-acceptance in realising the eudaimonic process of flourishing. This chapter discusses about several problems regarding methodology and its negative implication in assessing psychological wellbeing. Several disadvantages related to absolute subjectivity in measures and certain conceptual problems of both theories is considered. This chapter ends with a note on plausible integrations and revisions needed to get a comprehensive view of psychological wellbeing. The possible integrations needed are partly addressed in the theory presented in the next chapter.

The second section of chapter four begins with the introduction of radical changes brought in welfare economics in the Capability Approach proposed by Amartya Sen. This section first outlines the basic concepts in the Capability Approach and the critique of conventional principle of utility and interpretation of happiness. Here a brief outline of the Capability Approach and its implication on human wellbeing is discussed. The Capability Approach bridges quite a few gaps existing in the theories discussed in previous chapters. The section ends by discussing the advantages of including the Capability Approach as a new definition of wellbeing and a proposal for several modifications that may be needed to afford a more accurate measure of wellbeing. The Capability Approach and the theories of psychological wellbeing as eudaimonic wellbeing all of them claim to have their root in the Aristotelian theory of



happiness as *eudaimonia*. It is pertinent at this point to study the Aristotelian notion of happiness as *eudaimonia*.

The third and final section of chapter four is given to exploration of the *eudaimonic* view of happiness as propounded by Aristotle. Aristotle views happiness as the *telos* or the central purpose of human living. He considered happiness to be the highest good and goes on to argue why it is given the place of the highest good. He also iterates how a person may be happy. According to Aristotle the unique faculty that distinguishes human beings from other animals is the faculty of rationality. He shows how happiness is related to rationality and which human endeavours can successfully culminate in attaining happiness. Analysing the *eudaimonic* view of happiness shows that Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia* provides a moral dimension to happiness. He considers the cultivation of virtues as attaining excellence of human actions.

Aristotle describes a number of external factors such as good fortune, good looks, friendship and other external attributes along with a high sense of rationality that have to be present for a person to attain happiness. Aristotelian account of *eudaimonia* as happiness is a long way off from the ordinary use of the term "happiness". Moreover the conditions laid down by Aristotle to gain happiness is so providential that only a very few people will be eligible to attain such happiness. We discussed the Aristotelian view of happiness to explore how happiness and wellbeing may be related in the light of this theory.

Thus we find that no one theory that have been discussed provide us with a view of happiness or psychological wellbeing which includes a commonsense notion of happiness coupled with internal attributes

required for attaining psychological wellbeing. Nor does any theory give us a moral dimension to the views on wellbeing. We have however discussed a theory of happiness where the moral dimension has been discussed. We have mentioned above that in section three of the fourth chapter the Aristotelian theory of happiness has been discussed. Although the Aristotelian theory includes a moral dimension, yet it was found to be inadequate in giving a holistic view of happiness. In this context we have discussed Mill's theory of Utilitarianism because in this theory of happiness a moral dimension is taken into account.

Utilitarianism is a theory of happiness that has as its foundation the principles of pleasure and pain and that of greatest good for the maximum number. Jeremy Bentham and later John Stuart Mill were the founder fathers of utilitarianism. In this theory, an action is judged according to its resultant yield of happiness. Bentham proposed that action that produced the greatest good for the greatest number of people is to be chosen among many alternatives. Happiness is the highest end and universal good; so happiness is the good of the whole, general good or wellbeing. The happiness produced by an action is termed utility and everyone is prescribed to try and maximize utility, so that the total utility is maximized. In this section we have tried to explore how Utilitarianism may help in clarifying the relationship between wellbeing and happiness. We have also discussed the implication of the limitations of Utilitarianism in defining the relation between happiness and psychological wellbeing.

A holistic view of wellbeing is not gained even after combining the various theories mentioned. Thus in the final chapter we will explore whether there may be an approach of wellbeing that addresses the inadequacies given in the fore mentioned theories while retaining the

valuable insights, if any, contained in those theories. We will endeavour to develop an outline of such an approach by invoking a moral dimension of wellbeing. We will also try to explore the relationship between happiness and wellbeing in this context.

## Chapter II

### Hedonic Happiness and Psychological Wellbeing:

#### A Psychological Approach

The last chapter explored some of the significant ways in which the term “happiness” is employed. Although these usages are widespread, it is not easy to determine the relation between these usages. In the course of our study we found happiness and psychological wellbeing to be two commonly used concepts. We envisage that studies on happiness would be of interest in psychology if it were to be significantly related to psychological wellbeing. It was found that happiness and psychological wellbeing may be related in several ways. In this chapter we will try to understand the views in psychology regarding the possibility about whether happiness and psychological wellbeing are identical or not. Many studies in which happiness and psychological wellbeing are taken to be the same have been conducted by defining happiness to be the balance between positive and negative feelings. We will discuss some of these studies and their findings to clarify our views on the relationship between the psychological states of happiness and wellbeing.

Studies on psychological wellbeing came to the fore front with the publication of the article “Structure of Psychological Well-being” by Norman Bradburn in 1969, written on the basis of empirical findings of nation wide survey conducted in 1965<sup>18</sup>. In this article Bradburn takes psychological wellbeing and happiness to be equivalent mental states. He writes:

The conceptual scheme we shall use...takes as its fundamental dependent variable avowed happiness or the feelings of psychological wellbeing<sup>19</sup>.

Here Bradburn puts forward the model that happiness of an individual depends on “the degree to which pleasure predominates over pain in his life experiences”<sup>20</sup>. He identified feelings of psychological wellbeing with happiness and states it is comprised of two affective components - positive affect and negative affect. By

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<sup>18</sup> Bradburn, N.M., (1969), *The structure of psychological well-being*, Chicago: Aldine, p. 9

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

positive affect, he means positive feelings such as joy, happiness, optimism and the like. Negative affect is feelings of sadness, sorrow, hopelessness, frustration, anger and other such negative feelings. Bradburn declares:

...When one looks at the various meanings attributed to the difficulties in living, one particular variable – happiness, or a sense of psychological wellbeing -- stands out as being of primary importance, both as a commonsense basis and for historical reasons<sup>21</sup> ...

According to this model, the level of happiness of an individual will be higher, the greater the excess of positive affect over negative affect. Bradburn stated that his model was very similar to the hedonic or utilitarian model where happiness is defined in terms of pleasure over pain. He says:

...in many respects, the model is similar to older pleasure-pain or utility models that view an individual's happiness or wellbeing in terms of the degree to which pleasure predominates over pain in his life experiences<sup>22</sup> ...

Actually the idea that happiness consists in primacy of positive affect and paucity of negative affect is claimed to have been “directly traceable to the hedonist tradition in philosophy<sup>23</sup>. Here the term hedonic is used for the assessment of happiness and it evaluates happiness with respect to measures of pleasure and pain. Hedonism in this context shares the notion that happiness or psychological wellbeing consists of the presence of positive mood and the absence of negative mood in an individual. Like the hedonic approach Bradburn also uses the pleasure/pain continuum in human experience to evaluate happiness and defines psychological wellbeing in terms of one's balance of pleasant over unpleasant experiences.<sup>24</sup> So here psychological wellbeing includes both the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect. The affective balance is described in the following manner -

...the difference between the scores on the positive and the negative feeling indices, which we have named the “affect balance” Scale (ABS), is a good indicator of an individual's current level of wellbeing<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Bradburn N.M.,(1969), op.cit.,p. 7

<sup>22</sup> Bradburn N.M., (1969), op.cit.,, p. 9

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup>Diener, E, (1984), ‘Subjective well-being’, *Psychological Bulletin*, 95, p.543

<sup>25</sup> Bradburn N.M., (1969), op.cit.,, p. 67

The view that happiness is the excess between the pleasantness of life experiences over experiences of unpleasantness. It is interesting to note that Bradburn uses the terms happiness, wellbeing and psychological wellbeing interchangeably. His survey includes self reports of respondents on their level of happiness to measure psychological wellbeing. The “affect balance” Scale, developed by Bradburn was used to measure the level of an individual’s happiness.

...we shall develop several measures to tap what appears to be two significant dimensions of happiness, or what we shall be calling a sense of psychological wellbeing , and use the self-reports of happiness as a validating criterion...in this manner we hope to lay the foundations for further inquiries into the meaning and determinants of psychological wellbeing<sup>26</sup>.

The landmark finding here is that Bradburn claims positive and negative affect to be two independent variables and not two ends of the same spectrum. He proposes happiness to be a function of two independent dimensions – positive affect and negative affect. Let us explore the conceptual framework of psychological wellbeing in view of the finding that the two affects are independent.

The statement that positive affect and negative affect are independent means that the presence of one affect does not or at most negligibly influence the presence or absence of the other. We may understand this with an example. Suppose a man comes home from office, as he routinely does everyday, but on this evening he is delightedly surprised to find that his wife has made his favourite sweet dish for him. As a result he might feel elated. Then his level of positive affect will increase. However if the individual had a given level of negative affect, this particular incident has no bearing on that. So on the basis of this incident there would be no ground for a decrease in any negative affect he might have had prior to this incident. Thus although there is an increase in the level of positive affect, he would not feel a decrease in his negative affect. Now consider the possibility that had he returned home as usual and found everything as he usually finds, then he will not experience a lowering of his positive affect by the absence of the sweet dish. Indeed his positive affect would remain unchanged. Neither would it have increased his negative affect. Both his positive affect and negative affect would remain unchanged. So the factor (i.e., the presence of

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<sup>26</sup>Bradburn N.M., (1969), op.cit., p. 52

the sweet dish cooked by his wife), that was crucial in increasing his positive affect, when absent or present, does not produce any change in his negative affect at all.

Similarly suppose he came home and had a harsh argument with his wife. His negative affect would increase. He might be angry, hurt or bitter. Now in a similar vein of reasoning, it is again evident that if he came home and found everything as it regularly is, he would not experience an increase in positive affect nor would it lower his negative affect. The absence of the bitter argument with his wife will not produce any change in his positive affect or negative affect. So here also, the factor responsible for increasing his negative affect does not produce any change in his positive affect either by its presence or absence. So in the two situations, we see that the factors that influence the presence or absence of one affect does not necessarily influence the other in an opposite direction, indeed in any direction at all.

Again suppose he had come home and found the sweet dish and also had an argument with his wife, then he will experience an increase in both, his positive affect as well as negative affect. What the outcome would be on his overall sense of psychological wellbeing would be determined by the relative severity of the argument and the enjoyment of the sweet dish. So the frequency of his argument with his wife will not enable us to significantly expect anything about his psychological wellbeing. We can have a view of his psychological wellbeing if we have data about the frequency of his positive affect. The fact that, positive affect and negative affect can exist on their own without changing each other makes them two independent variables that are to be measured in two different dimensions. From 1969 to very recent times, this view has been replicated in numerous studies<sup>27</sup>. Many later studies using the Affect Balance Scale to measure happiness have confirmed the dual nature of affective wellbeing<sup>28</sup>. One of the philosophical implications of the independence of these two affects is that the presence of negative affect does not preclude the presence of positive affect. In other words, the presence of pain is not a deterrent for having pleasure. We might say that if a person can acknowledge that he is in pain and also endure it in a manner that

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<sup>27</sup> Schimmack, U. (2005), 'Response latencies of pleasure and displeasure ratings: Further evidence for mixed feelings', *Cognition and Emotion*, 19, pp. 671–691

<sup>28</sup> Diener, E., & Emmons, R. A., (1985), 'The independence of positive and negative affect', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, pp.1105–1117

does not deter him from enjoying other pleasures, then it is likely that he has a positive strength of mind. To acknowledge that one is in pain does not mean that one is denying the pain. The denial of one's pain does not mean that one has dealt with it. Actually refusing to admit that one is in pain may lower one's psychological health. It might be plausible to say that what is important is not the existence of pain but the manner in which one deals with it. This is a significant insight that we may realise from the studies on positive affect and negative affect.

The independence of these two affects has certain implication on studies of happiness. We have seen that the independence of positive and negative affect means that there is no impediment in the simultaneous occurrence of both the affects within a given period of time, maybe a week, or month etc. Another type of independence refers to the fact that positive affect and negative affect might be produced from different sources, so the occurrence of one does not affect the occurrence of the other<sup>29</sup>. Studies have found that “positive affect (is) more related to situational factors and negative affect (is) more related to dispositional factors”<sup>30</sup>. This will be more evident if we can explore the association of positive affect and negative affect with respect to personality traits.

Several studies give evidence that positive affect and negative affect might be related to different personality traits<sup>31</sup>. Let us examine these research findings in a bit more detail. An influential study by Diener and Emmons was conducted on the relationship between affect and personality. In effect, the personality types of Neuroticism (N) and Extraversion (E) have been studied extensively in relation to subjective wellbeing and emotion. At this stage it would be useful to explain briefly what Extraversion and Neuroticism is. A short description of traits and types in personality theory may be helpful in understanding these two characteristics. A general definition of personality is as follows –

Personality is that which permits a prediction of what a person will do in a given situation. The goal of personality research in psychology is thus to

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<sup>29</sup> Baker LA, Cesa IL, Gatz M, Mellins C., (1992), ‘Genetic and environmental influences on positive and negative affect: support for a two-factor theory’, *Psychology and Aging*; 7, pp.158–63

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Diener, E., & Emmons, R. A., (1985), ‘The independence of positive and negative affect’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, pp.1105–1117



establish laws about what different people will do in all kinds of social and general environmental situations...personality is concerned with all the behaviours of an individual...<sup>32</sup>.

Thus knowledge about an individual's personality will enable a person to gauge the general behaviour pattern of that individual. Different persons have different *types* of personality. Each *type* of personality is composed of several *traits*. There are several theories of personality. Among them the typological theory of personality proposed by Hans J. Eysenk has been used in researches regarding subjective wellbeing and personality types. Eysenk's theory proposes three tenets. According to this theory behaviours are best described in terms of trait and these traits characterize people in varying degrees. The traits combine to form more fundamental *types*. This model has had exemplary success in generating testable hypotheses regarding personality. An overview of what we mean by trait and type is as follows :

A trait refers to a related set of behaviours that covary or repeatedly occur together. A person with a trait of sociability goes to parties, talks with friends, likes to spend time with people and so on. Type is a higher order or superordinate construct comprised of a set of correlated traits. An extravert for example is sociable, assertive and venturesome.<sup>33</sup>

The three fundamental types described by Eysenk are extraversion, introversion and neuroticism. Extraversion is opposed to introversion. This means that the traits of a person of the type extraversion are opposite to those of a person of type introversion. The traits of person of type neuroticism are different to either of the traits in extraversion or introversion.

Eysenk devised multiple pen and paper tests for measuring the various traits of extraversion, introversion and neuroticism. According to Eysenk a person scoring high on extraversion might be described to be outgoing, cheerful and needs people around him to talk with. He would not like solitary activities like studying, reading, fishing and others. He engages in risk taking activities and often acts without thinking. He is impulsive and needs constant excitement. He may be quick witted and

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<sup>32</sup> Cattell, R. B., (1950), *Personality: A Systemic, Theoretical and Factual Study*, New York: McGraw Hill, pp.2-3

<sup>33</sup> Hall C.S., Lindzey G.& CampbellJ. B., (1978), *Theories of personality* , New York: John Wiley & Sons,pp. 362-367.

quite a practical joker. He usually like changes and is light-hearted, blithe and free from care. He is optimistic and generally a happy-go-lucky person. He tends to be aggressive and short-tempered. His feelings are not very controlled and it is likely that he will not be reliable.

In contrast an introvert is a quiet, peace loving, introspective and pursues solitary activities like reading and studying. He tends to be aloof, reticent and detached from people except with an intimate few. He is disciplined, planned and likes a well-organized life. His emotions are extremely restrained and he hardly ever loses his temper or becomes aggressive. He leads a methodical and conventional life with solemnity. He does not like excitement or socialising. He is likely to be pessimistic, reliable and deeply ethical.<sup>34</sup>

The person scoring high on neuroticism may be described to be apprehensive, worrying, and temperamental and given to frequent bouts of sadness. He is a poor sleeper and may experience range of a range of psychosomatic disorders. He tends to be touchy and extremely sensitive to all stimuli and when excited, finds it difficult to calm down. The upshot of this strong reactivity often blocks his efforts to adjust with circumstances. As a result his behaviour may become irrational and inflexible. He is a typical anxiety prone person and is continually preoccupied with thoughts of failure and negative consequences. Coupled with this, his strong emotional reactivity to these anxiety provoking thoughts makes him jittery and nervous.<sup>35</sup>

A huge body of evidence has consistently surfaced about the positive correlation between positive affect and Extraversion on the one hand and between negative affect and Neuroticism on the other hand. A survey of such studies shows that Neuroticism and Extraversion are not only related to the current affect of a person but may also help to predict future affects of the person. Across cultures over a period of 10 years Extraversion predicted pleasant affect and Neuroticism predicted unpleasant affect. “Correlational, experimental, and longitudinal studies all consistently conclude that

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<sup>34</sup>Eysenk, H.J., Eysenk, S.B.G., (1975), *Manual of the Eysenk Personality Inventory*, London: Hodder & Stoughton (San Diago, ed), p-5

<sup>35</sup> Eysenk, H.J., Eysenk, S.B.G., (1975), op. cit., p.5

Neuroticism and Extraversion are, linked to negative and positive emotions” respectively.<sup>36</sup>

This finding is important for studies on happiness because it has the potential to enhance our understanding of human nature and perhaps help us to learn newer ways of altering our affect for the better. If personality is a factor in predicting the frequency of positive or negative affect, then better ways of parenting and upbringing may increase the chances of cultivating traits that enhance positive affect. A durable increase in the level of positive affect of a person would lead to a stable increase in subjective wellbeing of a person. In terms of happiness we might say that inculcating personality traits that have a positive influence on affect is likely to increase the chances of enjoying higher levels of happiness for an individual.

Currently we have a vast body of evidence that seems to suggest positive affect and negative affect are independent and the relationship between positive affect and Extraversion is strong. It has also been established that Extraversion and Neuroticism are orthogonal<sup>37</sup>. Taken together these studies seem to suggest that the aetiologies of positive affect and negative affect are different. It is likely that genetics or heritability may have a significant influence on how environmental or situational factors cause the presence or occurrence of positive and negative affects<sup>38</sup>.

The research finding that the scores for personality trait of Extraversion and those of Neuroticism are independent and also the finding that positive affect is highly correlated to the personality trait of Extraversion and negative affect is significantly associated with Neuroticism, further reinforce the independence of positive affect and negative affect. So we find that there is a significant influence of personality traits on affective components of subjective wellbeing.

The fact that positive affect is not just the absence of negative affect implies both has to be measured separately. One implication of this finding is that the two affects might be processed by distinct biological systems. If that is the case, then better

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<sup>36</sup>Ng, W., & Diener, E. (2009), ‘Personality differences in emotions does emotion regulation play a role?’, *Journal of Individual Differences*, 30, p.100

<sup>37</sup>Chamorro-Premuzic, T., 2nd ed (2011), *Personality and individual differences*, BPS-Blackwell, reprint 2013, United Kingdom, p. 41

<sup>38</sup>Walker, M. (2011), ‘Happy-people-pills for all’, *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 1(1), p.129

understanding of separate neural pathways of processing positive and negative affect might help us to comprehend ways of regulating human emotion. Also if both are processed by different biological systems, then it is better to measure them separately. Ambiguous conclusions about the experience and effects of the two types of affect can be avoided if they are treated separately.<sup>39</sup> .

An adverse outcome of the independence of these two affects is that this poses a difficulty in conceptualising the notion of “affect balance”. Given that these two aspects cannot be measured on the same spectrum, it is hard to consider that the two affects can be compared to get a measure of psychological wellbeing. Even now, happiness is measured by comparing positive affect with negative affect. Typically preponderance of positive affect over negative affect is called “affect balance” and this is an indicator of happiness. Bradburn’s “affect balance scale<sup>40</sup>” is a widely used indicator for measuring the affective state of an individual. If positive affect and negative affect do not belong to the same spectrum but are independent then adding or subtracting one from the other becomes mathematically implausible. But the Hedonic calculation of affect balance involves just that – “Hedonic level or balance refers to the pleasantness minus unpleasantness of one's emotional life.<sup>41</sup>” This whole operation of measuring affective balance by mathematical manipulation becomes conceptually problematic<sup>42</sup>.

A more serious drawback of using the Affect Balance Scale as a measure of psychological wellbeing lies in a lot of common life experiences we see around us. In the first chapter we saw that a person afflicted with a mental illness like Alzheimer’s or manic stage of bipolar disorder may have extremely high positive affect, but by definition these states are not states of psychological wellbeing, or in fact any type of wellbeing. A state of mental ill-being cannot simultaneously be a state of

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<sup>39</sup>Diener, E. (2000), “Subjective well-being: The Science of Happiness, and a Proposal for a National Index”, in *American Psychologist*, 55, p.36.

<sup>40</sup> Affect Balance Scale is given in Appendix A

<sup>41</sup> Diener, E. (1994), ‘Assessing subjective well-being: Progress and opportunities’, *Social Indicators Research*, 31, p.108.

<sup>42</sup> My observation is if “affect balance” stands for net affect between positive and negative affect then this may be possible when we can balance out one type of affect with another type of affect. This can only be done when both are in the same spectrum, i.e. one end of the spectrum involves positive affect and the opposite end involves negative affect. If this is not so then it becomes conceptually difficult to find how a certain degree of positive affect cancels out the effects of the presence of negative affect.

psychological wellbeing. We all know that even when a person is debilitated in any way, he may very well feel happy. So happiness as measured by the hedonistic account does not ensure wellbeing. When we wish someone a happy life, we have in mind a much better life than the one described<sup>43</sup>. The implication of the wish for a happy life is actually a wish for something more. As Russell says “

The lunatic who thinks he is a crowned head may be, in a sense, happy, but his happiness is not of a kind that any sane person would envy<sup>44</sup>.

What this implies is that not all happiness is desirable. Russell’s lunatic is happy but he certainly does not have psychological wellbeing. His happiness is of a kind that no one would care to have. If happiness is characterised only as positive affect balance, then it will fail to exclude such instances.

Apart from the above, there are several other significant arguments against having “affect balance” as a measure of happiness or psychological wellbeing. Let us examine certain lived experiences in terms of this concept. We have seen that many studies were conducted that indicated the balance of positive affect over negative affect is a good indicator of psychological wellbeing. Now if we take this to be true, it will be difficult to explain quite a lot of phenomena. Firstly any addictive item makes one feel good. In fact literature abounds with novels and stories where a person drinks alcohol or smokes marijuana to forget his sorrows. So if we say that a high level of positive affect over negative affect indicates a person is high in psychological wellbeing, then this is certainly not the case with our addict, since addictions to ganja, LSD, or alcohol is harmful to one, both physically and mentally. Many of these addictive substances permanently impair our cognitive functions. As a matter of fact addiction falls under the category of mental disorder. So this can never be conducive to psychological wellbeing rather it goes against the wellbeing of a person. In the words of Russell:

...Drunkenness, for example, is temporary suicide; the happiness that it brings is merely negative, a momentary cessation of unhappiness...<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Kraut, R., (1979), ‘Two Conceptions of Happiness’, *The Philosophical Review*, 88(2), p.187

<sup>44</sup> Russell, B., (1930), *The conquest of happiness*, London, England: Allen and Unwin, p.23

<sup>45</sup> Russell, B., (1930) , op. cit., p. 25

What this illustrates is that whether having positive affect is the happiness we desire will depend on how positive affect is induced in us. It will also depend on how it affects one not only cognitively but also on our overall health. The notion that one is happy or is in a state of psychological wellbeing because one has high positive affect as a consequence of substance abuse goes against all common notions of happiness. On this issue Richard Kraut comments that if intensity of feeling is made the “sole guide to judgments about well-being”, then this guide has no integrity<sup>46</sup>. Kraut maintains that “a high induced by a drug might be one of the most intense pleasures a human being can experience”<sup>47</sup> but it would be groundless to infer that this means there is a high level of psychological wellbeing.

Another argument that may be levied against focussing solely on positive affect as the major component of happiness to the exclusion of any other criterion fails to provide a basis for comparison between achieving happiness in the short term versus that in the long term. An artist who has been working on his painting for three months might find these three months extremely depressing and frustrating because of his inability to paint according to his idea of perfection. After he has completed his painting to his satisfaction he may feel ecstatic. If one is to evaluate his happiness in terms of frequency of positive affect during his times of labour, then one would conclude that he is unhappy. So if one were to struggle to achieve a life long goal, one might spend a lot of his life being agonized to accomplish his aspiration. So working hard for something worthwhile does not ensure that each day of that effort will be blissful. In a similar vein we may argue that, conducting a long term project involving scientific experiment may not guarantee frequent positive affect for a lengthy period of time. Building a house might warrant more negative affect than positive affect during the process of completion. These instances go on to show that we usually willingly sacrifice present happiness in the expectation that we would enhance a deeper satisfaction from achieving something worthwhile in the future. If we constantly focus on gaining happiness in the present then very few long term endeavours would be accomplished.

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<sup>46</sup> Kraut, R. (1979), *What is Good and Why*, Harvard University Press: London, 2009, p.125

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

So it is just not the excess of positive affect over negative affect that bodes happiness but perhaps how that positive affect is gained is more important. That is unless the reason for being happy is known it is difficult to say whether the positive affect will translate to psychological wellbeing or not. So we see that positive affect alone fails to constitute psychological wellbeing or happiness.

Let us examine the other component of happiness that were developed to augment this theory. Other studies in this period also characterised happiness in terms of wellbeing viewed subjectively. Although they characterised happiness in a different way they subscribed to the claim that an increase in happiness will lead to an increase in wellbeing. These studies measured happiness in terms of the overall satisfaction with life<sup>48</sup>. Apart from using the “affect balance” scale, to check the validity of affective scores, Bradburn asked the respondents two questions about their feelings of overall satisfaction with life but he did not use a separate questionnaire for this. Many other surveys on happiness that were being conducted in this period were using questions on global satisfaction with life<sup>49</sup>. Studies on happiness were gradually increasing from the seventies. Psychologists also became aware of the limitation of having only “affect balance” as an indicator of happiness or psychological wellbeing. Around the middle of eighties a need for a concrete concept of happiness was dearly felt. To give a specific structure to the concept of happiness, a “scientific” definition of happiness as subjective wellbeing was first conceptualised by Ed Diener in his seminal article “Subjective Well-being”, published in 1984<sup>50</sup>. Leading researchers in positive psychology Martin E. P. Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi say that:

Subjective wellbeing is a more scientific-sounding term for what people usually mean by happiness<sup>51</sup>

Prior to this concrete conceptualisation of happiness as subjective wellbeing, researches in the field of happiness were being conducted by measuring either the affective component of overall positive affect balance or the cognitive evaluation of satisfaction with life as a whole.

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<sup>48</sup> Bradburn, N. M., (1969), op. cit., p.256

<sup>49</sup> Bradburn, N. M., (1969), op. cit., p.266

<sup>50</sup> Diener E., (1984), ‘Subjective well-being’, *Psychology, Bulletin*, 95, p-544

<sup>51</sup> Seligman, Martin E. P. and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2000) ‘Positive Psychology,’ *American Psychologist* , 55, pp.5-14

The structure of subjective wellbeing in terms of three separate components was first formally put forward by Diener, in his above mentioned article<sup>52</sup>. In this article subjective wellbeing was **defined** to be composed of three distinct aspects –an abundance of positive affect, low levels of negative affect and cognitive evaluation of one’s satisfaction with life as whole. The area of research in psychology which is concerned with the subjective feelings and evaluations of one’s life as a whole have termed happiness as subjective wellbeing to make it distinct from other researches on psychological wellbeing. Psychologists subscribing to the view that happiness is subjective wellbeing feel that:

... to capture what lay people mean by ‘happiness’, psychologists pioneering the scientific study of happiness proposed the term subjective well-being...SWB refers to people’s evaluations of their lives and encompasses both cognitive judgments of satisfaction and affective appraisals of moods and emotions<sup>53</sup>.

It is to be noted that the term “subjective wellbeing” was coined, to denote happiness in a specific sense, in order to identify happiness with psychological wellbeing. The particular term “subjective wellbeing” is used to avoid unnecessary confusions that may arise from various senses of happiness. Not only this but “happiness” or “wellbeing” the two terms are used interchangeably<sup>54</sup>. Further similar identification is found in many disciplines like economics and in some branches of psychology. Clarifying this point Diener observes:

In the literature, the term "happiness" is sometimes used synonymously with subjective well-being. Most authors, however, avoid the use of the term "happiness" because of its varied popular meanings. For example, happiness may refer to the global experience of well-being, to the current feeling of joy, or to the experience of much positive affect over time. In contrast, the terms used in this field now possess more specific meanings. Subjective well-being refers to the global experience of positive reactions to one's life, and includes

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<sup>52</sup> Diener E., (1984), p.544

<sup>53</sup>P Kesebir, E Diener, (2008), ‘In pursuit of happiness: Empirical answers to philosophical questions’, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3 (2), p.118

<sup>54</sup>Kahneman, D., (1999) ‘Objective Happiness,’ in Kahneman et al, *Well-being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, pp. 3-25



all of the lower-order components such as life satisfaction and hedonic level. Life satisfaction refers to a conscious global judgment of one's life<sup>55</sup>.

Conceptualisation of happiness as subjective wellbeing implies two significant aspects. This view gives the notion of subjectivity embedded in happiness and also considers that an individual can best judge whether he is happy or not. Actually the concept that happiness is primacy of positive affect and paucity of negative affect is claimed to have been “directly traceable to the hedonist tradition in philosophy”<sup>56</sup>. In happiness studies of psychology, the term “hedonic” is used for the affective component of subjective wellbeing because this approach evaluates subjective wellbeing with respect to measures of pleasure and pain. In other words, according to the hedonistic psychological approach the evaluation of subjective wellbeing is an overall index of happiness. Hedonism in this context shares the notion that a part of subjective wellbeing or happiness consists of the presence of positive mood and the absence of negative mood in an individual<sup>57</sup>. Firstly since it is subjective it is assumed to be an experience of an individual. It is assumed that this hedonic component of subjective wellbeing includes both the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect. The affective part is described in the following manner

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...the pleasantness experienced in feelings, emotions, and moods...Other things being equal, pleasant experiences are perceived as desirable and valuable. Thus, a person who has pleasant emotional experiences is more likely to perceive his or her life as being desirable and positive<sup>58</sup>.

So the hedonic component is a comparison between the pleasantness of life experiences over experience of unpleasantness.

The other component of subjective wellbeing in this approach is life-satisfaction that describes happiness in terms of having a favourable attitude towards one's life as a whole. This idea involves a holistic judgment and an affirmation of life as a whole. This holistic assessment of subjective wellbeing or happiness has a cognitive

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<sup>55</sup> Diener, E. (1994), 'Assessing subjective well-being: Progress and opportunities', *Social Indicators Research*, 31, p. 108

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

<sup>57</sup> Diener, E., (1984), 'Subjective well-being', *Psychology Bulletin*, 95, p.543

<sup>58</sup> Diener, E., (1994), 'Assessing subjective well-being: Progress and opportunities', *Social Indicators Research*, 31, p.- 106

component as it involves an evaluation of one's life, taken as a whole. It must be remembered that none of these are complete definitions in themselves but are part of an ongoing process to have a better understanding of subjective wellbeing. Both the affective and the cognitive components of subjective wellbeing can be decomposed into smaller constituents. The constituent parts of life- satisfaction may refer to the various domains of one's life such as work, family life, friendship etc. whereas emotions can be identified as specific emotions such as anger, frustration etc.

So we can say that subjective wellbeing or happiness is comprised of two distinctive components: an *affective* part, which refers to both the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect, and a *cognitive* part. The affective part is a hedonic evaluation guided by emotions and feelings, while the cognitive part is an information-based appraisal of one's life for which people judge the extent to which they perceive a discrepancy between aspiration and achievement. This divergence between goal and its realization can range "from total fulfillment to deprivation"<sup>59</sup>. Lesser the discrepancy between expectations and envisioned 'ideal' life more of satisfaction will be reported. So according to this theory happiness is composed of a felt aspect involving affect and cognitive experience or judgement involving satisfaction.

Before proceeding further it will be useful at this point if we can formulate a working distinction between subjective and objective theories of happiness. We will call those theories of happiness as subjective when what matters as happiness or wellbeing, depends entirely on the subjective perspective of the person involved. Now by this definition we can clearly categorise the hedonist psychological approaches as subjective. Here happiness or psychological wellbeing is seen as a composite of feelings of positive emotion and life satisfaction. An individual's hedonic experiences are measured by a given scale for evaluating emotions and this information combined with the cognitive evaluation of how well one's life is going, together measure the overall subjective wellbeing or happiness. Both the entities that are measured depend on the subjective evaluation of a person, so it is a subjective theory of wellbeing.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid

Let us examine the theory of subjective wellbeing in more detail. Human beings continuously appraise their environments and experiences. These appraisals give rise to pleasant or unpleasant emotional reactions. If other things remain same, pleasant experiences are perceived as more valuable and desirable than unpleasant experiences. So a person with frequent pleasurable emotional experiences is likely to perceive his/her life in a more positive manner. Thus in this approach a person is said to have low subjective wellbeing if she or he is dissatisfied with life, experiences little joy and affection and frequently feels negative emotions such as pain, anger or anxiety and vice versa.

The structure of subjective wellbeing given as comprising of an affective and a cognitive component has been used in almost all the studies that have been conducted in this area since the conception of the idea of happiness as subjective wellbeing. It is now a standard custom that happiness has become almost synonymous with the term “subjective wellbeing”.

The cognitive component of evaluation of global satisfaction with life was primarily added to subjective wellbeing to provide a more reliable and stable measure. We have seen that just “affect balance” by itself appeared to be an unrepresentative measure of happiness. So in this connection we may explore what role satisfaction with life plays in understanding subjective wellbeing or happiness. Does it have a restrictive role, such that the limitations that were present when a high positive affect balance did not ensure happiness are overcome by addition of the cognitive component? How has supplementing the concept of subjective wellbeing with satisfaction with life become more complete?

There have been numerous studies on the relation between the affective and the cognitive components of subjective wellbeing. It has been found that there tends to be positive association between the two components of subjective wellbeing or happiness. Diener and others have explained that since both the cognitive and the affective levels of wellbeing are usually influenced by the same factors underlying

their evaluations, so both will tend to correlate positively<sup>60</sup>. Now if satisfaction with life and the “affect balance” are positively, correlated, i.e., a positive “affect balance” will be associated with a high level of satisfaction with life and vice versa. Then the question is whether a high positive affect balance ensures high level of satisfaction with life or vice versa. If high positive affect balance means high level of satisfaction with life, then we have to explore the role of satisfaction with life in measuring subjective wellbeing or happiness. We have seen that high positive affect balance by itself was inadequate to ensure a high level of subjective wellbeing. The cognitive component, satisfaction with life was added to overcome this lacuna and enrich the concept of subjective wellbeing. But if high positive affect balance is enough to ensure high level of satisfaction with life, it is difficult to understand what role satisfaction with life plays in determining subjective wellbeing or happiness. Several studies have stated that not only “The cognitive component and the affective component of subjective wellbeing correlate positively with each other<sup>61</sup>”, but it might be of the magnitude of 0.8<sup>62</sup>. What this means is that 80% of the level of happiness of a person can be determined by knowing the level of positive affect. If this be the case, then, it is difficult to assess the rationale for adding the former as a separate component of subjective wellbeing. So it is of utmost importance to explore what function satisfaction with life plays in determining subjective wellbeing.

We see that when we are looking at the relation of satisfaction with life combined with a positive “affect balance”, then many research findings exist to show high satisfaction with high positive affect balance or the opposite, i.e., low life satisfaction and low affect balance<sup>63</sup>. The interesting fact is that we also find in our lived experience something of the opposite and that needs to be explained by subjective wellbeing theory. Consider the cases where a low affect balance is associated with a high level of satisfaction with life. The well known philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein

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<sup>60</sup> Diener, E., (1994), op.cit. , p.107

<sup>61</sup> Schimmack, U. (2006d). ‘The structure of subjective wellbeing: Personality, affect, life satisfaction, and domain satisfaction’ in *The Science of Subjective Well-Being*,( ed) Eid, M., & Larsen, R., pp. 97 - 123

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Singh, K., & Jha, S. D., (2008), ‘Positive and Negative Affect and Grit as Predictors of Life Satisfaction and Happiness’, *Journal of Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, April, Vol 34, Special Issue pp. 40 - 45

was known to have a bad temper and he hardly spoke to anyone outside his class.. Ray Monk has quoted Rudolf Carnap as reminiscing about Wittgenstein in the following words:

...toward the end of my time in Cambridge, I ventured to speak to him...I decided that he was a charlatan using outrageous behavior...I hated him for his rudeness. Fifty years later...I found that ... He was no longer an ill-tempered charlatan. He was a tortured soul, the last survivor of a family with a tragic history, living a lonely life among strangers, trying until the end to express the inexpressible<sup>64</sup>.

However if we are to take the views held by Wittgenstein about his life there is a gross contradiction. His last words to his doctor's wife on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1951 were:

Tell them I've had a wonderful life<sup>65</sup>.

The fact that most of his life he felt quite miserable and lonely, yet managed to change the course of philosophy is incredible. So it might be that in these cases, being happy means having something other than positive affect or a positive affect balance. If we were to say that Wittgenstein led a happy life, it would decidedly be something other than his affect balance. A holistic evaluation of one's life might help to explain such phenomena. What would this mean for subjective wellbeing? Would it be difficult to negate subjective wellbeing as a measure of happiness?

All the studies mentioned above are assumed to give us a better comprehension of the subjective wellbeing which in turn may help us to attain higher levels of happiness. However a surprising finding from these studies has raised several issues. One significant outcome from subjective wellbeing studies is related to the fact that there is a given level of happiness for each individual and this level is stable for the lifetime of the person. Several important empirical studies on subjective wellbeing have shown that researches on happiness may not be very fruitful because each individual remains more or less fixed on a certain level of happiness. Philip Brickman and Donald Campbell studied the relationship of happiness with respect to human nature and society<sup>66</sup>. They found that there is a tendency of the level of happiness to stay

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<sup>64</sup> Monk R., (1991) , *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, London: Vintage

<sup>65</sup> Malcolm, N., (1966), *Ludwig Wittgenstein : A Memoir*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>66</sup> Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Scollon, C., (2006), 'Beyond the hedonic treadmill: Revising the adaptation theory of well-being', *American Psychologist*, 61, p.305

unchanged after a given level is reached. This level is different for different persons but for the individual it remains more or less the same throughout life. This feature in human nature is termed “hedonic adaptation”. This implies that even though income or wealth may increase, happiness remains almost same because of this basic feature. They came up with the concept of “hedonic treadmill”. This concept has heavily influenced research on subjective wellbeing. The term “hedonic treadmill” may be better understood if we first look at the concept of hedonic adaptation.

Hedonic adaptation is the propensity of humans to stay at or if disturbed, to return to a relatively stable level of happiness. This view states that when income and wealth of an individual increases, the expectations and desires of the individual also steadily rise so that there is no permanent gain in happiness. This happens because if a highly pleasurable event say, E1 occurs in time T1, then for an individual to be happier at any future time Tn, the pleasantness of the future event En is compared to the pleasantness of the previous one (E1). For the future event to be even more pleasurable than the first, it has to yield more pleasure than the first. This happens because individuals become adapted to any gain in happiness and thus further gains have to offset or overpower the previous gains for the present gain to have any effect. Thus overall positive changes in life circumstances, such as being promoted, having a child or getting admission to a reputed institution etc., seem to have no effect in increasing subjective wellbeing or happiness. In short Brickman explains this neatly as -

The most general principle of adaptation level theory is that people's judgments of current levels of stimulation depend upon whether this stimulation exceeds or falls short of the level of stimulation to which their previous history has accustomed them. Adaptation level theory offers two general reasons for believing that recipients of an extreme stroke of good fortune will not be generally happier than persons who have not been dealt such good fortune. The first is contrast. The second is habituation.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Brickman, P. & Cambell, D.T., (1971), “Hedonic Relativism and Planning the Good Society”, in M.H. Appley, (ed) *Adaptation Level Theory: A Symposium*, London : Academic Press, pp. 267 - 302

Brickman goes on to explain that happiness remains at a relatively stable state even though our lives and our life goals are constantly changing because of external forces. He refers to this as the **hedonic set point**. Humans have a tendency to adapt and adjust to changes in events in their life hence their goals, aspirations and needs will also alter according to such changes. Demographic and environmental factors affect happiness at varying levels but personal reactions to life's circumstances are more important than the events themselves.<sup>68</sup> Brickman's research suggests that life events do not affect stability and that people inevitably adapt back to their temperament-based wellbeing set points.

This concept is presently known as the "hedonic treadmill theory" and it compares the pursuit of happiness to exercising on a treadmill. The person on a treadmill, no matter how fast he runs, does not reach any destination and stays at the same place like the Red Queen in Lewis Carol's fantasy novel "*Through the Looking-Glass*<sup>69</sup>". Other researchers have also supported this idea and have concluded that:

... adaptation is quick, complete, and inevitable and that most of the long-term stable variance in SWB can be accounted for by personality and genetic predispositions rather than by life circumstances.... Some researchers have gone so far as to argue that adaptation processes are so strong that trying to change one's happiness is futile because an individual inevitably returns to a genetically predetermined state.<sup>70</sup>

These researchers have concluded that long-term levels of happiness and life satisfaction are more or less fixed at a given set point for an individual. So it is implausible that people can change their level of happiness. If it is accepted that the pursuit of happiness is like being on a hedonic treadmill, then it must be admitted that however one's situation in life changes, one adapts to that situation so as to return to the level of happiness he or she had before the change. In other words human adaptation ensures that changes in life for the better or for worse do not affect one's level of happiness. It follows that no life event can permanently change a person's

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<sup>68</sup>Brickman, P., Coates, D. & Janoff-Bulman, R., 'Lottery Winners and Accident Victims: Is Happiness Relative?', (1978), *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 36, No. 8, p. 918

<sup>69</sup> Carroll, L., *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, Penguin Books: 1994

<sup>70</sup>Lucas, R. E., Clark, A.E., Georgellis, Y., & Diener, E., (2003), "Reexamining adaptation and the set point model of happiness: Reactions to changes in marital status", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, p. 528.

subjective wellbeing<sup>71</sup> or happiness. The theory of hedonic set point has been supported by quite a few notable psychologists such as Daniel Kahneman, Sonja Lyubomirsky who proposed that happiness is heritable and determined by specific genetic correlates<sup>72</sup>.

...The reason appears to be that happiness levels tend to revert toward what psychologists describe as a "set point" or "baseline" of happiness that is influenced by personality and genetic predispositions<sup>73</sup>. ..

Leading psychologists like Ed Diener also state that the level of subjective wellbeing or happiness which "emerge early in life are stable over time"<sup>74</sup>. He states that happiness is "primarily determined by inborn predispositions<sup>75</sup> or has a "moderate to strong genetic component"<sup>76</sup>. This genetic correlate of happiness varies from 50% to 80%. In other words the happiness or unhappiness that one experiences is primarily determined by the genetic make-up of the person<sup>77</sup>. If the only way to change happiness level is mediated through genes, then genetics has to progress to the level where it is possible to customize our gene. Present experts in the field say "there is little we can do change our happiness"<sup>78</sup>. This is why neither a happy nor sad life circumstances will change one's happiness in the long run. Rather we might try to explore conditions that have the potential to change our dispositions. So happiness of a person can be said to be more or less independent of life circumstances in the long run. This is an important finding for wellbeing research because there is further scope for studying the causes of such stability in levels of happiness. If the process underlying the set-point of happiness can be gauged, then these might come useful for

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<sup>71</sup>Diener, E., Lucas, R.E., & Scollon, C. (2006), *op. cit.*, p.308

<sup>72</sup>Diener, E., & Ryan, K. (2009), 'Subjective well-being: a general overview', *South African Journal of Psychology*, 39(4), pp.391-406

<sup>73</sup>De Neve, J-E; Christakis, NA; Fowler, JH; Frey, BS, (2012), 'Genes, Economics, and Happiness', *Journal Of Neuroscience Psychology and Economics* , 5 (4) p.197

<sup>74</sup>Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. E., (2003), 'Personality, culture, and subjective well-being: Emotional and cognitive evaluations of life', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, p. 408

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> Walker, M. (2011), 'Happy-people-pills for all', *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 1(1), p.1, Retrieved 15.04.2013

<sup>77</sup>David Lykken, (1999), *Happiness: What studies on twins show us about nature, nurture, and the happiness set-point*, New York: Golden Books, p.168

<sup>78</sup> Walker, M. (2011), 'Happy-people-pills for all', *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 1(1), p. 2, Retrieved 15.04.2013.



looking into how it can be modified for people with low set-points of happiness. But accepting this concept has a downside also.

If we accept this notion, then its implication on psychological wellbeing will depend on the relation between happiness and the former. If subjective wellbeing or happiness is a constituent of or a contributor to psychological wellbeing, then this finding will imply that our level of psychological wellbeing may also be stable at a given point and it may not be possible to bring any change in the level of psychological wellbeing. The degree of difficulty in changing psychological wellbeing will depend on how far psychological wellbeing is dependent on subjective wellbeing. If subjective wellbeing or happiness accounts for a greater part of our wellbeing, then improving the state of psychological wellbeing may be very difficult. The concept of “hedonic treadmill” seems intuitively to be unacceptable given common sense knowledge and experience. Is it plausible to assume that a person who has been permanently rendered disabled will have the same satisfaction with life in his present state compared to the one he had when he was perfectly healthy and in no way impaired? Can we accept that his wellbeing, subjective or otherwise, has not been reduced as a result of such an unfortunate event? Numerous such issues may be cited to question the plausibility of the notion of hedonic treadmill. Findings from these researches lead one to look more carefully at the procedures used to reach such findings.

The above question was raised within the field of psychology. As a result further longitudinal researches were conducted. The results from these researches are quite surprising. Although the hedonic treadmill theory received some support in the classic study of lottery winners and paraplegics by Brickman et al.<sup>79</sup>, later longitudinal research contradicts the findings of earlier hedonic set points. Recent research findings challenge the idea that life events might have little to no effect on well-being. New evidence confirms that life events do seem to affect the stability of well-being measures, as has been shown by Diener and others -

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<sup>79</sup>Brickman, P. ,Coates, D. & Janoff-Bulman, R., (1978), “Lottery Winners and Accident Victims: Is Happiness Relative?” in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 36, No. 8, p. 918

The original treadmill theory suggested that people return to a neutral set point after an emotionally significant event. However, decades of research show that this part of the hedonic treadmill theory is wrong.<sup>80</sup>

In particular negative life events seem to permanently affect well-being in a negative way. In a study by Diener and Lucas it was found that adaptation to widowhood is much slower than adaptation to marriage. Adaptation to marriage takes about a couple of years but adaptation to widowhood is much slower and takes about 8 years. The effect on widowhood is very much varied. For some persons, widowhood was associated with large drops in satisfaction and very little recovery over time. Other showed no recovery at all. They write -

For the event of widowhood, there appear to be long-lasting effects. Both the simple within-subject change model and the reaction–adaptation model suggest that widows and widowers were less satisfied with life after the event than they were before the event. This apparent decline in average satisfaction was due to strong initial reactions followed by relatively slow adaptation....Although adaptation occurs, we do not believe that the process can be described as a hedonic treadmill. The treadmill analogy implies that adaptation is inevitable. However, our results show that there is quite a bit of variability around the average trajectories. There were many individuals who exhibited linear trends that were in the opposite direction to that predicted by adaptation theory and many who reported substantial long-term changes in life satisfaction following these marital events. Thus, our results show that although adaptation does often occur, it can be slow and partial, and there are many people who show no evidence of adaptation.<sup>81</sup>

A study by Richard Lucas using data from a 15-year longitudinal study (from 1980 – 1995 and over 24,000 individuals) examined the effect of major life events on happiness levels.<sup>82</sup> They show that significant events indeed do have strong and

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<sup>80</sup>Diener, E., Lucas, R.E., & Scollon, C. (2006), “Beyond the hedonic treadmill: Revising the adaptation theory of well-being”, *American Psychologist*, 61, pp.305-314

<sup>81</sup>Lucas, R. E., Clark, A.E., Georgellis, Y., & Diener, E. (2003), “Re examining adaptation and the set point model of happiness: Reactions to changes in marital status”, in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, pp.527-539

<sup>82</sup>Lucas, R. E. (2005, June), “Time does not heal all wounds: A longitudinal study of reaction and adaptation to divorce”, *Psychological Science*, 16, pp.945-950

lasting effect on people's happiness. Studies by Lucas and fellow researchers on unemployment and happiness level showed that unemployment has lasting effects on happiness<sup>83</sup>. Lucas says -

The experience of unemployment did, on average, alter people's set point levels of life satisfaction. People were less satisfied in the years following unemployment than they were before unemployment, and this decline occurred even though individuals eventually regained employment. Furthermore, the changes from baseline were very stable from the reaction period to the adaptation period—individuals who experienced a large drop in satisfaction during unemployment were very likely to be far from baseline many years after becoming reemployed. There was also no indication that satisfaction levels would eventually return to baseline if the study were continued for many more years, thus, unemployment seems to have had a lasting effect on individuals' life satisfaction.

It was also found that in the long run divorce has a permanent effect on the happiness of a person<sup>84</sup>. There are now substantial research findings to believe that long-term disability has a lasting negative effect on measures of life satisfaction. They reported:

Participants in this study (who were followed for an average of seven years before and seven years after onset) reported moderate to large drops in satisfaction and very little evidence of adaptation over time.... although people with paraplegia and other individuals with disabilities usually are not subjectively miserable, happiness levels do seem to be strongly affected by this important life circumstance<sup>85</sup>.

Another aspect of criticism of the earlier studies of happiness and life events is deficit in the methodology of the studies. Taking into account the recent advanced methodologies and research data Diener et al. (2006) have found that most of the

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<sup>82</sup>Lucas, R. E. (2007, June), "Long- term disability is associated with lasting changes in subjective well-being: Evidence from two nationally representative longitudinal studies", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, pp.717-730

<sup>83</sup>Lucas, R. E., Clark, A.E., Georgellis, Y., & Diener, E. (2004), "Unemployment alters the set point for life satisfaction", *Psychological Science*, 15, pp.8-13.

<sup>84</sup>Lucas, R. E. (2005, June), "Time does not heal all wounds: A longitudinal study of reaction and adaptation to divorce", *Psychological Science*, 16, pp.945-950

<sup>85</sup>Lucas, R. E. (2007, June), op.cit., pp.717-730

researches on the effects of disability and happiness have been misconstrued. The original hedonic treadmill theory is in need of revision. They claim that modern studies conducted on the hedonic treadmill have used much more refined procedure. Their finding is that in contrast to small scale cross-sectional studies of earlier researchers, the present researches rely on very large samples and conduct longitudinal studies. They have been able to collect pre-event data of life satisfaction of each individual as well as keep track of the data over a large period of time sometimes for many years<sup>86</sup>.

In the light of these data it is plausible to say that there is no given “set point” of happiness. Individual levels of happiness can “re-set” at different points depending among many factors, important life events like widowhood, divorce, unemployment, and the onset of disability. Thus many negative life events such as unemployment, incidence of disability, divorce or widowhood does seem to have permanent or even lasting effects on a person’s happiness.

In the light of the findings several revisions of the hedonic treadmill theory are proposed that counters the tenet that people’s happiness level are set at a fixed point and that one cannot increase one’s happiness level. The counter argument given by Diener et al is -

If adaptation results from automatic and inevitable homeostatic processes, then all individuals should return to neutrality or at least to their own unique baseline. But we have found individual differences in the rate and extent of adaptation that occurs even to the same event. In our longitudinal studies, the size and even the direction of the change in life satisfaction varied considerably across individuals...The fact that substantial individual differences in these effects exist argues against this type of inevitable habituation model...Our revisions to the hedonic treadmill model suggest that interventions to increase happiness can be effective, and research supports this conclusion.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Diener, E., Lucas, R.E., & Scollon, C. (2006), ‘Beyond the hedonic treadmill: Revising the adaptation theory of well-being’, *American Psychologist*, 61, p.-311

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

Another important revision to the existing hedonic treadmill theory proposed by them is that individuals differ in their rate and magnitude of adaptability to a life event. This means that two individual may differ and even may adapt in diverse directions to the same life event and thus follow two different ways of adaptation. They say

...perhaps most important, well-being set points can change under some conditions.... individuals differ in their adaptation to events, with some individuals changing their set point and others not changing in reaction to some external event.. An implicit assumption of the hedonic treadmill theory is that adaptation to circumstances occurs in similar ways for all individuals. If adaptation (is same)... then all individuals should return to neutrality or at least to their own unique baseline. But we have found individual differences in the rate and extent of adaptation that occurs even to the same event. In our longitudinal studies, the size and even the direction of the change in life satisfaction varied considerably across individuals.<sup>88</sup>

So we see that a very important finding by leading stalwarts about human happiness has been totally rejected by later studies on the same issue. This reversal of research finding on a significant aspect of human condition makes it difficult to form any philosophical analysis based on these findings. One might wonder whether the current data showing set-point to be flexible might not be again reversed in studies 15 or 20 years later. This problem with research procedures in subjective wellbeing has led to other important negative consequences. A survey of researches in subjective wellbeing clearly demonstrates this fact.

Innumerable researches on subjective wellbeing have been conducted, but most of them are quite haphazard, incomplete and unreliable<sup>89</sup>. All of these studies claim to have done research and survey on subjective wellbeing but in reality a high number of studies have been done with only one or two components of subjective wellbeing or happiness. It might be that one study has assessed positive affect leaving out negative affect and life satisfaction. Another study may have conducted research on life satisfaction but had left out the affective component. A very large percentage of

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<sup>88</sup> Diener, E., Lucas, R.E., & Scollon, C. (2006), op.cit., pp.305-308

<sup>89</sup> Pavot, W., 'The Validity and Utility of Global Measures of Subjective Well-Being', *Polish Psychological Bulletin*, 44, 2, p.56.

studies have not assessed all of the three components of subjective wellbeing, but all reported the results as findings on subjective wellbeing. This has contributed to the discrepancies in data of empirical research and has become a source of great confusion in interpreting results of subjective wellbeing<sup>90</sup>. Actually an analysis of 2,158 publications on subjective wellbeing revealed that out of these publications, only 93 publications had included life satisfaction. The rest have assessed only positive affect. In another analysis of 3,520 publications, life satisfaction was mentioned only 107 times while all of them were on negative affect. Ed Diener, one of the founding fathers of hedonic psychology and leading proponents of subjective wellbeing, in an article states:

Current findings are based almost entirely on the work of individual researchers, who address their own questions, usually using relatively small, accidental samples of respondents...different investigators measure different concepts ... and it is rare for a broad range of concepts to be assessed in a single study... Current researchers usually assess one or two well-being variables, but rarely measure the broad range of concepts that are relevant to well-being... many findings are based on respondents' answers to a single question, and such single-item measures can be unreliable and easily influenced by the testing situation... This is the nature of the current data—a haphazard mix of different measures of varying quality, usually taken...from nonrepresentative samples of respondents<sup>91</sup>.

There are two fundamental criticisms raised regarding the methodology of the studies. Life satisfaction is a central component in global assessment of subjective wellbeing. William Pavot mentions that many discrepancies may arise in self-report questionnaires due to potential memory and contextual bias. When measuring positive affect it has been found that respondents use their present mood to evaluate a past event. The respondents have a propensity to recollect as best their most recent intense and memorable event<sup>92</sup>. The concern is that very trivial contexts may influence the

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004), 'Beyond money: Toward an economy of well-being', *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5, p.3.

<sup>92</sup> Forgeard, M. J. C., Jayawickreme, E., Kern, M. & Seligman, M. E. P. (2011), 'Doing the right thing: Measuring wellbeing for public policy', *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 1(1), p.97

response of a participant. In some cases it has been shown that domains of global evaluation of subjective wellbeing or happiness, was very highly influenced by the fact whether it was a sunny day or a cloudy day<sup>93</sup>. This would imply a ludicrous conclusion -- that one's overall satisfaction with life, depends on whether it is sunny today or cloudy. Another odd interpretation might follow if we take into account some of the research findings on happiness. Subjective wellbeing has been found to be associated with higher earning potential, that is people who are happy have the possibility to achieve higher levels of income. Taking the research finding about happiness and income along with the discrepancy mentioned by Pavot, one may arrive at the odd conclusion that one's potential to earn more will depend on whether today is cloudy or sunny. So when the same global evaluation of subjective wellbeing or happiness was repeated, after a period of say two weeks, the mood of the respondent predisposed the person to contradictory reports on the different occasions. Apart from memory failures and mood biases, it was found that the order in which questions were asked influenced the cognitive process of evaluation and this was evident from the responses given by the participants.<sup>94</sup>.

...A number of studies have indicated that potential memory failures, biases, ...influence these processes...Empirical evidence indicates that the cognitive process used by a respondent can be influenced by the context of the question(s) requiring them to make a judgment of their overall SWB... The vastly different results would lead to far different conclusions regarding the importance of dating to SWB, and have obvious implications for the measurement of global SWB<sup>95</sup>.

Actually it was noted in several studies that when the order of questions regarding the romantic life of the respondent was asked in relation to the global life satisfaction, the

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[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49615198\\_Doing\\_the\\_Right\\_Thing\\_Measuring\\_Well-Being\\_for\\_Public\\_Policy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49615198_Doing_the_Right_Thing_Measuring_Well-Being_for_Public_Policy), accessed on 16.10.2015.

<sup>93</sup> Schwarz, N., & Clore, G. L.,(1983), 'Mood, misattribution, and judgments of well-being: Informative and directive functions of affective states', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45, p. 520

<sup>94</sup> Forgeard, M. J. C., Jayawickreme, E., Kern, M. & Seligman, M. E. P. (2011), 'Doing the right thing: Measuring wellbeing for public policy', *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 1(1), p.85  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49615198\\_Doing\\_the\\_Right\\_Thing\\_Measuring\\_Well-Being\\_for\\_Public\\_Policy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/49615198_Doing_the_Right_Thing_Measuring_Well-Being_for_Public_Policy) [accessed 10.10.2015].

<sup>95</sup> Pavot, W., (2013), The Validity and Utility of Global Measures of Subjective Well-Being', *Polish Psychological Bulletin*, 44: 2, p.54

correlation of romantic domain with life satisfaction was reversed. When the dating frequency was asked, the correlation with life satisfaction was significantly positive ( $r= 0.66$ ), but when the order was reversed, i.e., question on global life satisfaction preceded the dating frequency, the relation became inverse ( $r= -0.12$ ). So unless the surveys are not done more precisely and accurately, nothing much can be reliably gained. The extent of the potential influence of transient mood states and contextual factors remains immeasurable thereby giving rise to inconsistent and unreliable results. So when presenting the results of a study it should be imperative that the researchers clearly state the characteristics and context of the specific measure.

Life satisfaction is a central concept of subjective wellbeing or happiness. Evaluation of life satisfaction forms the highest number of large-scale international surveys on subjective wellbeing. But in most of these surveys, very often only one question is asked in order to evaluate the wellbeing of the individual. These one-item surveys are most problematic being prone to the above errors. Exploratory examination of the psychological measures of happiness reveals that there are several methodological criticisms that might be raised against the hedonic measures of wellbeing. One important limitation of the standard hedonic measure of life satisfaction is about the scales used for measuring subjective wellbeing. To be specific the criticisms are levied regarding the number of items in the scale and the number of responses to those items.

Let us examine some of the most used scales. Probably the majority of surveys have been listed in the World Database of Happiness by Ruut Veenhoven. These are single item surveys on Satisfaction with Life One Leads and Satisfaction with Life-as-a-Whole<sup>96</sup>.

#### **Satisfaction with Life one leads**

Self-report on single question:

"On the whole how satisfied are you with the life you lead?"

4 very satisfied

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<sup>96</sup> Veenhoven, R., *World Database of Happiness*, Erasmus University Rotterdam. Available at: <http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl>. Accessed 02.11.2015



- 3 fairly satisfied
- 2 not very satisfied
- 1 not at all satisfied

This survey is being used in all the EU member countries since 1973<sup>97</sup>. The other scale is :

### **Satisfaction with Life-as-a-Whole**

Self-report on single question:

"We have talked about various parts of your life, now I want to ask you about your life as a whole. How satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days.....?"

- 7 completely satisfied
- 6
- 5
- 4 neutral
- 3
- 2
- 1 completely dissatisfied

Preceded by questions on satisfaction with domains of life<sup>98</sup>. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), was developed by Ed Diener and Emmons<sup>99</sup>.

The scale consists of five questions, rated on a 1-7 scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree:

1. In most ways my life is close to ideal.
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
3. I am satisfied with my life.
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in my life
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development has given a guideline to standardize Life satisfaction studies. In most cases is measured by the following questions<sup>100</sup>:

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<sup>97</sup> Website Eurobarometer: [www.za.uni-koeln.de/research/eurolabor](http://www.za.uni-koeln.de/research/eurolabor) , Accessed 02.11.2015

<sup>98</sup> Andrews, F.M. & Withey, S.B., (1976), ' Social Indicators of Well-being: Americans' Perceptions of Life Quality', Plenum Press, New York, USA

<sup>99</sup> Diener, E., Emmons, R.A., Larsen, R.J., Griffin, S., (1985), 'The Satisfaction with Life Scale', *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49, 1, p.72

1. Overall how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?
2. Overall to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

The responses to both these questions are to be given in a number between [0 – 10].

The positive and negative affect are measured by three questions given below, for just the previous day, in a similar response category<sup>101</sup>.

1. How about happy?
2. How about depressed?
3. How about worried?

The problem that is raised here is, if there are substantially few responses, then some respondents may not be able to fully express themselves and thereby some meaningful variations in data might be lost. Also the respondents might feel demotivated that may lower the quality of sampling. It is indeed questionable as to how meaningful it is to measure happiness or life satisfaction from any of the above scales consisting of 1 to maximum of 5 questions with just these 5-7 response options.

We have seen above the extreme unreliability of these scales that is acknowledged by the leading proponent and one of the authors of these scales. To quote from Diener:

The unsystematic nature of the existing data point to the importance of developing ... a rigorous and systematic set of well-being indicators<sup>102</sup> ...

The many ways that a self-report may be influenced have been elucidated. Briefly recapitulating them, we find that when evaluating life satisfaction, if a happy incident is remembered, it tends to increase the overall sense of wellbeing. Conversely, if a happy event in the past is taken as a standard to compare the present feelings, then this tends to decrease the level of satisfaction felt. Likewise, the present transient mood evoked by present incidents, might have a similar heightening and constricting effect on the sense of wellbeing. This influence on the outcome of a measure is called the assimilation effect. It has also been seen that the data from evaluation drastically

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<sup>100</sup> OECD (2013), *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being*, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264191655-en>, p.253, accessed, 25.06.2014

<sup>101</sup> OECD (2013), op.cit, p.254, accessed, 25.06.2014

<sup>102</sup> Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004), 'Beyond money: Toward an economy of well-being', *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5, p.4.

varies with the variation in the order of questions asked. Also responses to the questions about evaluations of life satisfaction are highly susceptible to social comparisons with others. These are grave constraints that have to be dealt with if the hedonic wellbeing measures are to be meaningful.

Apart from the limitations of the scale and measurement, another fundamental argument against it was, about the importance of positive emotion in subjective wellbeing or happiness. A contention arises from the fact that introverts are most likely to experience much less positive emotions than extraverts<sup>103</sup>. So even if an introvert person is extremely satisfied with his life, it might not translate to an abundance of positive affect. In these cases, the status of the person in relation to subjective wellbeing becomes dubious.

The above pose a fundamental methodological criticism against subjective wellbeing or happiness measures, because of the fact that all currently prevalent research on subjective wellbeing depend on measures of self-report nature. It is a fact that any measure based on self report may not be completely reliable, because an individual may claim to be happy even when he is not because he might not have understood the questions in the survey properly, or the wording has not been correctly framed to capture the relevant information or other such methodological issues. Even if we were to obtain absolutely reliable data from self reports from individuals having high levels of happiness, wellbeing and life satisfaction, it may be quite possible for people to reliably report these in very bad situations. An individual may experience and report high levels of life satisfaction or happiness even when he does not have the basic amenities of life such as food health, sanitation etc. This very fact that they report high levels of satisfaction with life and are happy is debatable; that is to identify this reported experience as an experience of subjective wellbeing is a debatable issue. This concern is a concern about adaptive preferences of people. In recent times the theories of adaptation have been revisited and current research has confirmed that even in

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<sup>103</sup> Hills, P., & Argyle, M. (2001), 'Happiness, introversion-extraversion and happy introverts', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 30, pp.595-608. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(00\)00058-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(00)00058-1) , accessed on 01.10.2015

adverse environments and negative life events, a person may adjust to his present condition to attain a certain level of happiness<sup>104</sup>.

Psychologists like Deci and Ryan and other notable authors have doubted the validity of the rationale behind suppressing negative emotion in favour of positive affect. There may be many life situations where feeling unhappy is a natural response to that circumstance. It may do more harm than good in trying to repress negative feelings and maintain high positive affect in the face of such adversity. The author Eric Wilson argues that melancholy is an essential part of life. To try to replace it with positive affect may be counterproductive to meaningful living. In fact he goes as far as to state that happiness may prevent a person from critical self reflection which is necessary for a profound authentic life. He says:

I for one am afraid that ... overemphasis on happiness at the expense of sadness might be dangerous, a wanton forgetting of an essential part of a full life. I further am wary in the face of this possibility to desire only happiness in a world undoubtedly tragic is to become inauthentic<sup>105</sup>.

Frank Furedi, the eminent sociologist also expresses his view on more or less the same vein of arguments. He recalls that a happy life does not necessarily imply wellbeing. Rather discontent and ambition have been the driving force behind many of the challenges that has been overcome by humanity<sup>106</sup>. Research has corroborated the fact that a person will be living more functionally and eventually with greater wellbeing if he experiences sadness or negative affect rather than avoiding it, when faced with certain unfortunate life circumstances<sup>107</sup>. A society geared towards happiness as its goal, should have a concrete model what this happiness consists of, whether it is worth pursuing as the only goal and if found suitable how to pursue the goal.

This brings us to consider how and why a person is happy. One may ask whether someone can be considered happy if he feels a lot of negative affect, but is overall

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<sup>104</sup> Diener, E., Lucas, R.E. & Scollon, C. N., (2006), 'Beyond the hedonic treadmill: Revising the Adaptation theory of Well-being', *American Psychologist*, 61, pp.305—314

<sup>105</sup> Wilson, E.G., (2008), '*Against happiness: In Praise of Melancholy*', Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, p.6

<sup>106</sup> Furedi, F., Can we teach people to be happy? *The Guardian*, (2008, February 19), accessed, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/feb/19/highereducation.uk1>, 12.09. 2014.

<sup>107</sup> Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L., (2001), 'On Happiness And Human Potentials:A Review Of Research On Hedonic And Eudaimonic well-Being', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, pp.150-151

satisfied with life, i.e. whether a person can feel frustrated, sad or depressed yet be happy with his or her life. It will be interesting to find out that when experience of frequent negative affect or emotion and life satisfaction exist together whether that state can be called happiness. In this instance, we may think of a frustrated writer, who is not being able to perfect his novel, but is satisfied with his life. We might also think of a mother who experiences a lot of negative affect in bringing up her child, who when asked about her satisfaction with life as a whole answers that she is satisfied or largely happy with life. So it seems that overall satisfaction with life may co-exist with frequent experience of negative affect.

Another line of argument would be to examine whether there might be cases in which goals, challenges, and accomplishments important to wellbeing can be reduced to feelings of positive affect and satisfaction with life. Many people would disagree with the view that life satisfaction and happiness are the most important aspects of a good life. There may be situations where a person may have to choose between subjective wellbeing and some other value such as justice or duty<sup>108</sup>. Amartya Sen has put forward the claim that people often pursue a plurality of values – “structured diversity of joys”<sup>109</sup>. Research has shown that people often do favour other values over happiness in their life<sup>110</sup>. There is well documented evidence that having children significantly lowers marital satisfaction<sup>111</sup>. Although having children is instrumental to the survival of a species and so from evolutionary perspective, should have a positive influence for parents but the opposite is recorded. Even more paradoxical is the phenomenon that although being a parent is associated with low hedonic indicators, yet this does not prevent people from having children<sup>112</sup>. Thus it cannot be

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<sup>108</sup> Kenny, A. & Kenny, C., (2006), *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Utility*, Exeter : Imprint Academic, pp. 35-36.

<sup>109</sup> Sen, A., ‘Rationality, Joy and Freedom’, *Critical Review*, 10:4, 1996, p. 490

<sup>110</sup> Frey, B.S., & Stutzer, A., ‘Should National Happiness be Maximized?’, Working Paper No.306, (Zurich :IEER), 2007

<sup>111</sup> Glenn, N.D., & McGlanaham, S., (1982), ‘Children and Marital Happiness: Further Specifications of a Relationship’, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 44, pp.63 – 72

<sup>112</sup> McGregor, I., & Little, B. R., (1998), ‘Personal projects happiness and meaning: on doing well and being yourself’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, pp.494 - 512

logically explained why a person should value happiness over other values and more so when there are abundant research findings to corroborate this fact.

An interesting point that may be discussed is whether it is possible to attain subjective wellbeing or happiness if one does whatever is possible and through any modus operandi to be satisfied in the separate spheres of life. Let us see whether addition of satisfaction with one's life in measuring happiness accrues if one feels satisfied in the various domains of life such as work, relationship, etc. We have seen that subjective wellbeing is characterised as having an excess of positive affect over negative affect and being satisfied with one's life as a whole. So a positive evaluation of the various dimensions of one's life such as, social life, recreation, family, finances, romance, work, housing etc., is sufficient to guarantee that the person is subjectively well. Let us examine this view to assess its merits. If a person is satisfied with his life then arguably our common sense tells us that he is strongly likely to lead a subjectively well life. This claim should hold for all persons who are satisfied with their life. It would be interesting to explore whether there can be instances where this may not hold.

In this context we can think of a person who is very domineering and has his family and romantic partner absolutely under his control so that for him his personal life is going extremely well— just as he wants it to. Let us also suppose that he holds a very high position in his office, so in his workplace also he dominates and his word is the last word for any decision. Here too then he is very satisfied. Through his keen acumen and unscrupulous methods he has amassed a fortune, so that he is enormously wealthy. His social standing is quite high, owing to his wealth and high position at work. So the person in our example is a dominating, abusive individual who is exceedingly affluent on account of his devious methods and also is high up the social ladder. Such a person when asked says that he is very satisfied in each of the spheres of his life. But can we definitely evaluate the person as being really subjectively well?

If we do accede to the fact that of course there is subjective wellbeing, then we might wonder as to where that wellbeing is. Can we conceive of wellbeing when one is attaining wellbeing by means of exploiting others? We know of many such real life examples. Take the example of any dictator in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, like Idi Amin or

Francisco Franco or Francois Duvalier and such others, who were very successful in their career and each had a personal life which they enjoyed according to their wish till the end of their life without any repentance or repercussion whatsoever. History tells us that as a result of their satisfaction with their lives, thousand and millions of people suffered and died.

In cases where satisfaction with life is achieved through decadent and vicious means are permitted to be instances of subjective wellbeing, then the claim becomes highly debatable as to its validity. It can be reasonably expected that the happiness level of the society will proportionately increase if the subjective wellbeing of its individual members increase. But if we sanction that destructive means are allowed to attain individual happiness, then this will affect the prospect of improvement of societal happiness level.

So it is important to examine the content of satisfaction when one attains high levels of subjective wellbeing or happiness. Let us try to explore this with an example. Suppose one has been grossly wronged, say like *Karna*, who was the illegitimate child of *Kunti* in the *Mahābhārata*. He was abandoned by his unmarried mother for fear of public disgrace. He was adopted by a person of low caste and to all he belonged to the lower rung of society because his father belonged to a low caste. He suffered many humiliations at the hands of royalty, due to this seemingly low status of his birth. *Draupadi* refused to have him as her suitor, he was barred entry into archery competition although he was fully qualified for such a match. Now he had a burning desire for revenge on the *Pandavas* for several reasons. Reasons that we would feel are quite justified. So what happened when he satisfied his feelings of revenge?

What consequences did this motive for revenge had on *Karna* himself and on others in his society? Can we say that *Karna*'s feelings of vengeance were partly responsible for the great battle of *Kurukshetra*? True, his feelings of retribution were partially satisfied in the indecent attempt to disrobe *Draupadi*. They were gratified to a degree in the ignoble killing of *Abhimanyu*, the warrior son of *Arjuna*; and also in numerous other petty acts like the attack on the unprepared Kingdom of *Virat* etc. But where did all these acts to satisfy his desire lead? We may think or conjecture that he was somewhat satisfied in his personal and professional life after each such exploit. But

can we indisputably say that these accomplishments bode subjectively well for him? Richard Kraut has put this very succinctly:

...when we take ourselves to have been injured or insulted by another person, we want to strike back. Our aim, then, is to inflict harm on a certain person, or on those close to him, merely for the sake of making him worse off. In fact, we can devote our lives to taking revenge...The desire for revenge propels us into a course of action that is single-mindedly devoted to causing harm, and has nothing to do with our own good. That project may in fact carry a terrible price, absorbing all our resources and resulting in the loss of much that we love<sup>113</sup>...

If then one is bent on doing an action that is not good for oneself, then whatever may that goal be can we say that the accomplishment of such a goal if it brings satisfaction to life is subjectively well for the person?

Moreover the claim that the satisfaction with life can be attained regardless of the content of that satisfaction, may run counter to some of the present claims of positive psychology. The emerging field of Positive Psychology may have a lot to contribute in this regard. The field of Positive Psychology is comparatively a new branch in psychology and it emphasizes on building certain qualities that may help one to attain psychological wellbeing. Moreover this branch focuses on the flourishing of human beings. Some of the qualities that Positive Psychology seeks to understand and promote are Gratitude, Forgiveness, strengths of temperance, courage, strengths of justice, altruism and several more<sup>114</sup>. According to positive psychologists such as Snyder, Lopez, Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi and others, cultivation of these strengths in a person makes the person psychologically healthy and enriches the person<sup>115</sup>. It might be interesting to discuss what might have been the results if say, *Karna* or *Duryodhan* had such qualities. We will discuss about human flourishing and the qualities given in positive psychology in much greater detail in the following chapter. Just as the *Mahābhārata* is well known in Indian literature, a similar analogy can be found in the legendary character of Faust in European literature. Faust is a highly

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<sup>113</sup> Kraut, R. (1979), “*What is Good and Why*”, Harvard University Press: London (2009), pp.102-103

<sup>114</sup> Snyder, C.R. & Lopez, S.J., (2006), *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strengths*. New Delhi: Sage

<sup>115</sup> Linley, P.A. & Joseph, S., (2004), (eds.) *Positive psychology in practice: From research to application*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley



accomplished and successful scholar. He has all that one can ask for, yet he is extremely dissatisfied with life. This dissatisfaction drives him to enter into a contract with the Devil. In the contract he agrees to give his soul to the Devil after his death, in exchange for boundless worldly pleasures and unlimited knowledge during his life. This legend has been the source of a great many musical, theatrical, literary and cinematic creations. It was depicted in stories, dramas, movies, ballads and other public media. From this legend we get the term “Faustian” referring to an instance where the lure of power and success induces an ambitious person to compromise his moral integrity. In lieu of earthly gratification, Faust agrees to be forever damned irretrievably. The legend of Faust has been immortalised in the work of the famous German author Goethe. Now, in instances similar to these and the others cited above, where we find that satisfactions with life may yield something other than wellbeing, it becomes questionable whether subjective wellbeing as taken in terms of positive affect and subjective feelings of satisfaction with life can be regarded as psychological wellbeing or any wellbeing at all.

This raises the question about the adequacy of only psychological measures for studying happiness. Suppose we take the oft cited study of Biswas-Diener and Diener’s findings about homeless pavement dwellers in Calcutta<sup>116</sup>. Their findings suggested that the homeless seemed to believe that they were better off than what they really are and that they reported a high level of satisfaction with food. The explanation given by the researchers in their own words are :

One possibility is that the expectations of these groups are so low that any amount or quality of food is appreciated. Another possible explanation is that these groups are actually hungry, so that they truly enjoy the food they eat<sup>117</sup>.

If this is accepted then one may conclude inaction against poverty as a justification that a low level of expectation of the populace will give them high levels of satisfaction with food and if people are hungry because they cannot afford food, it will make them “truly” enjoy their food. Nothing can be more absurd or preposterous. Their conclusive finding on the general level of life satisfaction actually poses an

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<sup>116</sup> Biswas-Diener, R., and Diener, E., (2006), The subjective well-being of the homeless, and lessons for happiness, *Social Indicators Research* 76:2, pp. 200 -202

<sup>117</sup> Ibid

even more serious scepticism about studies on subjective wellbeing research. Quoting the conclusion from the data:

Despite poorer access to food, clean water, medical care, opportunities for employment, and adequate shelter ... the pavement dwellers in Calcutta reported higher levels of life satisfaction. Not only was the general life satisfaction among the Calcutta sample higher ... but it was in the positive range! This is consistent with our past research, in which impoverished groups in Calcutta reported surprisingly high life satisfaction, given their environmental conditions<sup>118</sup>.

Now if one interprets the above data by saying that food, clean water, medical care adequate shelter, employment opportunities are not necessary for a person's wellbeing, would that claim be justified? An even more absurd suggestion can be put forward by proposing that slum dwelling then may be a means of promoting wellbeing for a person whose wellbeing is negative! Actually even Biswas-Diener acknowledges that people have "extraordinary ability to adapt"<sup>119</sup>, so the standard of judgement of one's satisfaction is contextual. It is precisely for this reason that subjective measures of wellbeing lack normativity. As we have seen wellbeing measures that are only subjective in nature are not sufficient for two reasons. Firstly people adapt to the states they live in. and secondly people judge their condition to be better than what it actually is even in dismal living conditions. The very fact that we are using the term "dismal" to denote the condition of such people is a proof that there is some other standard against which we are measuring their condition.

This grave problem was first raised by Amartya Sen, in his criticism against the subjective theories of wellbeing or happiness. He pointed out that a basic human survival strategy as shown by psychologists themselves is that human beings adapt to their circumstances whether they are good or bad as best as they can<sup>120</sup>. He has observed that people who are deprived become so habituated and reconciled to their circumstances that their perception of even a slight development to their condition seems much. Empirical study by Sen on widows in two parts of India has

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid

<sup>119</sup> Ibid

<sup>120</sup> Valiant G. E., (1977), *Adaptation to Life*, Boston: Little Brown

corroborated this. The widows in Kerala where literacy rate is high, gender disparity low and life expectancy high, reported a lower satisfaction with health compared to widows in Bihar where literacy rates are abjectly low, gender disparity much higher and life expectancy also lower. The widows in Bihar are not aware of their condition and have adapted and accepted their condition so they reported satisfaction with their health<sup>121</sup>.

According to Sen, A person is always situated in a given context of gender, age, culture, opportunities, social class, position in community and others. All of these contexts have implicit and explicit within them some ideas, images and messages about how to be. These contextual ideas and messages define the world of the person, like what feels right, what feels good and what it is to experience wellbeing. So being well is context specific and a collective concept. In his own words:

A person, who has had a life of misfortune, with very little opportunities, and rather little hope, may be more easily reconciled to deprivations than others reared in more fortunate and affluent circumstances. The metric of happiness may, therefore, distort the extent of deprivation, in a specific and biased way. The hopeless beggar, the precarious landless labourer, the dominated housewife, the hardened unemployed or the over-exhausted coolie may all take pleasures in small mercies, and manage to suppress intense suffering for the necessity of continuing survival, but it would be ethically deeply mistaken to attach a correspondingly small value to the loss of their well-being because of this survival strategy<sup>122</sup>.

Although psychologists measure wellbeing from a merely subjective perspective, even a leading hedonist psychologist like Diener explicitly insist for including other measures of wellbeing

So we see that a limitation of the theory of subjective wellbeing is lack of objectivity in evaluating one's life as a whole. Here one is evaluating one's life according to his own standard, so we have to examine how far this individual's standard can be a reliable measure of wellbeing. Absence of any objective criterion give rise to certain

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<sup>121</sup> Sen, Amartya, (2002), 'Health perception versus observation', *British Medical Journal*, 324: 7342, pp.860 - 861

<sup>122</sup> Sen, Amartya (1987) *Commodities and Capabilities* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press). pp. 45-46

questions, such as when the assessment of a person is founded on mistaken beliefs then how far does that count as true happiness, i.e., what can we say about his state of happiness? It is possible that a person having erroneous ideas about the significant spheres of life is feeling happy and satisfied. But how do we validate this evaluation? Can we say that his life is going well? There are innumerable everyday experiences where this claim about one's life going well is doubtful. It is possible for a person composing poetry to think that he has written a classic poem, an extraordinary feat, something path breaking comparable with perhaps to poems written by Tagore. This in turn has made him evaluate his life as being fulfilled. Or someone might think that his paintings are so good as to be comparable to those of Pablo Picasso. A person's subjective evaluations cannot be an indicator of his real achievements unless the evaluation is verifiable in terms of some objective standard.

This point is very powerfully illustrated by the experience machine described by Robert Nozick. He contends that it is desirable to supplant measures of subjective wellbeing by components other than pleasure or pain. That we need to add something more than pleasure or satisfaction in discussing subjective wellbeing is shown by Nozick through a thought experiment. He says:

Suppose there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduperneuropsychologists could simulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book.... Would you plug in?<sup>123</sup>

Nozick explains that there is a distinctive difference between actually doing something versus just seeming to do and thinking that one knows. A subjective account gives the measure of what one thinks one knows. It does not validate the knowledge of the person against any other criteria. A significant reason for the unwillingness to plug into the machine is the thought of losing one's agency. Once a person is inside the machine, he is in a virtual world leading an inauthentic life. He does not have agency in any of the things that he thinks of. The machine does the work of providing him with the feeling of pleasure. He thinks that he is doing something whereas in reality he is not. He might be compared to being an automata in

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<sup>123</sup>Nozick, Robert, (1974), *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Oxford: Blackwell

which a program of feeling agency has been coded. The robot thinks that he is the agent of the activities done by him, but in reality the program makes him think so. There is no actual agency involved here. Had there been an agency involved, we would have been able to consider the robot as a moral agent. But clearly we would not do that. So actually doing something and feeling pleased because of the effort spent are vastly different from just feeling the pleasure without any accompanying action.

It is precisely for this reason that subjective measures of wellbeing have to be perhaps supplemented with other indicators to include criterion that would overcome this gap. Objective measures of health, food, shelter, sanitation, education and other such markers would go a long way in filling this gap. To have an accurate picture of how well a person is doing one should have data regarding how much food is available to the person, how far he is able to avail of education, what the status of his health is, and other markers of standard living. Can we say that any wellbeing is possible when people are deprived of such basic amenities? If there is happiness in such living conditions, would any person opt for that happiness? These questions have to be addressed if we are to get at the relation between happiness and psychological wellbeing. Sen forcefully argues in support of this view saying:

...the well-being of a person must be thoroughly dependent on the nature of his or her being, i.e....Whether a person is well-nourished, in good health, etc., must be intrinsically important for the wellness of that person's being.

The above expositions give us some important insights with regard to different psychological states, their nature, kinds and suggest some useful instruments for measuring these states. However the above discussions about subjective wellbeing fail to give us an adequate and satisfactory understanding of psychological wellbeing or happiness or their relationship.

## Chapter III

### Hedonic Happiness and Psychological Wellbeing : A Quest for Objective Markers

In the last chapter we have discussed about the notion of happiness in psychology where happiness is assumed to be identical to psychological wellbeing. We found that in psychology happiness was defined and measured solely in subjective terms. We also discussed about the problems that rose because only subjective criteria are used to measure happiness. To overcome this problem we may explore other disciplines where happiness has been discussed yet has been measured in different ways. Happiness has been a subject of interest and importance in another major discipline. Economics has a history of evolving as a discipline in which happiness is discussed. Starting from Bentham and Mill, happiness has been a much studied subject in conventional economics. Psychology started discussion on happiness and psychological wellbeing from the 60's to early 70's. Economics on the other hand has devoted much interest and attention to happiness or wellbeing from the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Actually psychology till the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century had focussed on cause and management of abnormality and mental illness<sup>124</sup>. The overwhelming trend in research on happiness in psychology has probably been triggered from the surge in interest in happiness in positive psychology<sup>125</sup>.

We saw that in psychology happiness was first defined as affect balance, i.e., the positive balance between positive affect and negative affect. In 1969 the psychologist Norman Bradburn published a seminal paper regarding the structure of psychological wellbeing and defined happiness to be identical with psychological wellbeing<sup>126</sup>. He defined happiness of an individual as “the degree to which pleasure predominates

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<sup>124</sup>Seligman, Martin P., (2002), 'Positive Psychology, Positive Prevention, and Positive Therapy' in *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, (eds), C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Pp.3-9

<sup>125</sup>Seligman, Martin E. P. and Csikszentmihalyi, M., (2000), 'Positive Psychology,' *American Psychologist*, 55: pp.5-14

<sup>126</sup> Bradburn N.M., (1969), *The structure of psychological well-being*, Chicago: Aldine; p.7

over pain in his life experiences”<sup>127</sup>. In 1789 the British economist, jurist and moral philosopher Jeremy Bentham, considered to be the founder father of Utilitarianism in economics proposed that happiness is the sum of pleasures over pain. He used the term “util” as a measure of happiness. According to Bentham:

The quantity or degree of *well-being*, experienced during any given length of time, is directly as the *magnitude* of the sum of the pleasures, and inversely as the *magnitude* of the sum of the *pains*, experienced during the same length of time. In so far as the sum of the *pleasures* of all kinds, experienced by the person in question, during the length of time in question, is regarded as *considerable*, -- the sum of the *pains*, of all kinds, experienced by him during the same length of time, being, moreover, laid out on the account, -- the state in which in that respect he is regarded as being in, is termed a state of *happiness*.<sup>128</sup>. (italics given by Bentham)

In economics happiness has traditionally been studied in terms of utility. Jeremy Bentham used the term utility for measuring pleasure or happiness. He stated that if each individual seeks to maximise his happiness, then the sum total happiness of the society would be maximised. He maintained that public policies should be planned and implemented with the aim of maximising total happiness in the society. This would ensure wellbeing or welfare for everyone. So when authors are discussing about happiness or wellbeing or welfare in economics it implies that they are talking about the same concept.

Bentham’s concept of social welfare is given by the sum of maximum utility of each person in the society. Bentham considered economics as a political theory for formulating public policies. From the very first, three assumptions have permeated all economic literature. The first is human beings are rational (and only rational) animals, so all choices made by the individual are rational choices. The second, given by Bentham is that all living beings desire pleasure over pain. Human beings are no exception and everyone prefers happiness over unhappiness i.e., given a choice anyone would choose to act in ways that would make him happy and avoid the actions that bring unhappiness. The third is that every rational person will always choose to

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<sup>127</sup> Bradburn N.M.,1969, op.cit., p. 9

<sup>128</sup> Bentham, J., (1952), ‘The Philosophy of Economic Science’, in Stark, W., (eds), *Jeremy Bentham’s Economic Writings Volume I*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, p.84

have more of a good he wants than less of it. Hence the rational man will always prefer more happiness over less happiness. From the above assumptions it follows that being rational, a person would always try to maximise his happiness. If all individuals maximise their happiness then total wellbeing in society will be maximised. To formulate a public policy one will have to choose the policy by which maximum happiness in the society is ensured. To do this one would have to compare the quantity of happiness from each policy. This comparison will be possible when something is measurable. It is here that the necessity of measuring wellbeing arose and Bentham introduced the term utility to measure wellbeing. Utility as given by Bentham and Mill represented the tendency or property of an object or action to increase happiness or to decrease pain<sup>129</sup>.

Bentham realised very early that economic concepts would have to be quantified for them to be useful in public policy formulation. He clearly relates precise quantities of happiness to be measurable in terms of exact quantities of wealth. He says:

...to every particle of matter of the wealth corresponds a particle of the matter of happiness. Accordingly hence so far as depends upon wealth, of two persons having unequal fortunes, he who has most wealth must by a legislator be regarded as having most happiness<sup>130</sup>.

He clearly states that a given quantity of wealth generates a given amount of happiness—“quantity of happiness produced by a particle of wealth (each particle being of the same magnitude)”<sup>131</sup>, is his measure of happiness. he goes so far as to say that “Money is the instrument of measuring the quantity of pleasure or pain”<sup>132</sup>. Various methods were proposed to calculate utility for an individual but it gradually became apparent that measurement of happiness of an individual in quantifiable terms of utility was extremely difficult or impossible. The difficulty in measuring utility for an individual was compounded many times when utility was to be aggregated to calculate the maximum wellbeing for the whole society. John Stuart Mill further refined Utilitarianism in many ways and Utilitarianism is regarded as one of the important theory till this day. However the insurmountable problem to measure

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<sup>129</sup> Bentham, J., (2000), *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Batoche Books, Kitchener, p.15

<sup>130</sup> Bentham, J., (1952), op. cit., p.113

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Bentham, J., (1952), op. cit., p.117



utility was the principal reason for the loss of popularity in this theory in economics. It is important to note that Utilitarianism considered utility to be a mental state.

After Mill, a major change in the definition of economics was made by Alfred Marshall. He changed the focus of economics from a subject of public policies dealing with distribution of wealth to a discipline that studied human behaviour. Marshall regarded economics as the study of production, distribution and consumption of wealth on the one hand and the study of the ordinary man on the other hand. To him both were equally important for the purpose of economic studies. According to Marshall:

Economics is a study of mankind in the ordinary business of life; it examines that part of individual and social action which is most closely connected with the attainment and with the use of the material requisites of wellbeing<sup>133</sup>.

In 1932, almost a century and a decade later, Lionel Robbins revised the definition of economics that has remained the currently accepted view of economics. He defined economics as the study of a particular aspect of human behaviour with respect to certain constraints. According to Robbins, economics analyses the aspect of human behaviour that is governed by scarcity of resources as a means to an end. Resources are scarce and a given resource can have many alternative uses. So it is judicious to compare the costs and benefits of all the activities in which these resources can be used. This necessitates a cost benefit analysis for optimal utilization of the resource for one use compared to its various alternatives.

In all of these definitions, one aspect becomes clear and it is that economics has been a discipline where quantitative analysis is involved. Actually the quantification or measure of wellbeing by money had started much earlier, from the period of Marshall. The concept of utility however had remained but it simply represented the satisfaction derived from the consumption of a resource. Till now utility of a good denotes satisfaction gained from the resource but economists no more measure the pleasure derived from a good or a bundle of goods by a measure of utility as described by the

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<sup>133</sup> Marshall, A., *Principles of Economics*, <http://www.econlib.org/library/Marshall/marP1.html#Bk.I.Ch.I>, accessed on 12. 02.2012

Utilitarians. Instead most economic measures are now translated into monetary equivalents.

To quote Sen:

The term utility does, of course, have meanings of its own, defined by utilitarians...as satisfaction or happiness...But in...modern economics 'utility' serves other purposes too, standing for whatever the person maximizes (or can be seen maximizing), or simply for the person's well-being or advantage no matter how that is judged<sup>134</sup>.

One thing to be noted here is that economics has not been concerned with the precision of a term and the specific choice of words to denote a concept. The use of the same term for explaining multiple notions and the opposite, that is using various terms to define one concept has lead to quite a lot of confusion when economic concepts are discussed and analysed. The primary requirement of any technical discipline should be that the basic concepts and terms be precise and specific. But like psychology, economics also suffers from the same lack of precision. In philosophy each word is chosen with exactitude. So when analysing concepts from a different discipline this is one of the grim problems that is faced by a student of philosophy. In economics, this problem has started at the outset of the beginning of the subject from Bentham himself. In explaining the factors on which happiness depends, he also uses wellbeing and pleasure interchangeably. He writes:

In the present period of existence, a man's being and wellbeing, his happiness and his security; in a word, his pleasures and his immunity from pains, are all dependent...upon his *own person*; ...upon the *exterior objects* that surround him. These objects are either *things*, or other *persons*<sup>135</sup>.

So we see that this problem lies at the very root of the subject. Economists of later ages have not shown any concern to rectify this situation. Sen has been writing against this practice for the last forty years. In his book with Bernard Williams he writes about the terms utility and "prefer":

There is by now a well-established tradition in modern economics of defining utility entirely in terms of choice, and at the same time insisting that It must

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<sup>134</sup> Sen, A., (1999), *Commodities and Capabilities*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-2

<sup>135</sup> Bentham, J., (1952), op. cit., p.160

also have a particular content in terms of what is maximised... The ambiguity of the term 'preference' facilitates this dual picture of utility, since linguistic convention seems to permit the treatment of 'preferring' as choosing as well as taking what a person (really) 'prefers' as what would make him better off<sup>136</sup>.

This is why it becomes extremely difficult to deal logically and systematically with a concept like “utility” or “happiness”. Not only are the terms different, but as Sen has said above, utility refers to a multitude of concepts. It refers to happiness and also a measure of happiness and sometimes as an indicator to happiness and it is not just happiness; utility may be substituted for wellbeing, welfare, and happiness – all of these concepts. This is mentioned at the very outset so that we can deal with the possible confusions which might arise later.

In this way the term ‘utility’ and hence ‘happiness’ or ‘satisfaction’ has come to denote a quantifiable entity and they can often be easily measured in monetary terms. Marshall established quantitative analysis in understanding economic concepts and also the quantification of utility in terms of money. He states:

We have seen that economics is...that part of the Social Science of man's action in society, which deals with his Efforts to satisfy his Wants, in so far as the efforts and wants are capable of being measured in terms of wealth, or its general representative, *i.e.* money<sup>137</sup>.

A significant outcome of this quantification in terms of money was that it enabled economics to be a value free, objective, scientific discipline. Until quantitative analysis was introduced to understand economic concepts, economics was a compendium involving wealth, philosophy, moral theories and other issues regarding liberty, political system etc and many others. The subjectivity involved in these areas prevented economics from being a “truly objective and value-free” scientific discipline. Marshall introduced the notion of quantification of happiness or desires through monetary concept. He states:

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<sup>136</sup> Sen, A. K., & Williams, B. (1982) (eds.) *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.12

<sup>137</sup> Marshall, A., *Principles of Economics*,  
<http://www.econlib.org/library/Marshall/marP1.html#Bk.II.Ch.I> , accessed on 12 02 2012

...desires cannot be measured directly, but only indirectly by the outward phenomena...which...is...found in the price which a person is willing to pay for the fulfilment or satisfaction of his desire<sup>138</sup>

Starting from this period, economics has become more and more mathematical and parsimonious in its definitions. This has led to a gradual divorce of economics from subjective notions and for economics to be a purely positive discipline bereft of normative conditions. Economists have zealously guarded against any sort of inclusion of subjectivity in their discipline that has the potential to make it imprecise and unscientific. Till now economics has been very cautious about maintaining the sanctity of objectivity in economic measures. Quoting Amartya Sen,

...the economist . . . keeps the motivations of human beings pure, simple and hard-headed, and not messed up by such things as goodwill or moral sentiments...<sup>139</sup>

At this point it may be interesting to look into the gradual changes that have taken place in economic measures of welfare or happiness. We started with measuring actual happiness obtained in terms of util or utility. After this the real income i.e., the resources available from a given quantity of money became the measure of happiness. Regarding this change Sen has commented:

It is...certainly true that no mental metric is, in fact, involved in determining the *existence* of some utility in the sense of desire-fulfilment—all we need to check is whether the desired object has or has not been achieved.

Comparison of utility from different sets of resources was done by comparing the costs of the resources in monetary terms. Although measuring wellbeing in monetary terms have been in use from the time of Marshall, but it was difficult to compare individual preferences or utility for different sets of goods when both sets were of the same monetary value. To overcome this difficulty, economic theory came up with the idea of ordinal comparison of preferences. Difficulties remained in mathematical modelling of both individual and aggregate measures because preferences were not directly quantifiable. Only a hierarchical ordering of preferences was possible.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Sen ,A., (1987), *On Ethics and Economics*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 1-2. Sen does not subscribe to this view he states this as a criticism against the erosion of normativity in economics.

A new concept involving direct quantitative measure of preferences was developed by Paul Samuelson<sup>140</sup>. He proposed the Revealed Preference approach. He proposed that rational individuals have a stable set of preferences and this preference is reflected in all choices actually made by the individual. So when individuals choose a certain set of resources, they reveal their preferences. Being rational, these choices always reflect utility maximisation. So when a person chooses X over Y, it can be inferred that X must necessarily yield a higher utility and hence more satisfaction than Y. This behaviour will be revealed in all economic decisions of the individual and can be measured in terms of money or the bundle of goods that money can buy.

So wellbeing of an individual depends to the degree of satisfaction of preferences of the individual. Thus, we can see that even when a new approach is developed, the basic assumptions of rationality and maximization of happiness has remained the same. We can say that, individuals are well off to the extent that their preferences are satisfied. The measure of wellbeing of a person is based on whether or not he can choose what he/she prefers. In terms of the Revealed Preference Theory this would mean that people reveal their preferences by choosing (bundles of goods and services) so as to maximize their welfare. Welfare economics thus identifies an individual's welfare with satisfaction of preferences that can be measured by money<sup>141</sup>.

It is important to note that on this point one may say that the economists are concerned with a particular type of wellbeing viz., economic wellbeing. This may be interpreted in a way that economic wellbeing like physical wellbeing is a type of wellbeing different from psychological wellbeing altogether. Our submission on this point would be that if we go through the history of development of economics, starting from Bentham and Mill, we can see that wellbeing was conceptualised as a psychological state of being.

The gradual evolution of economics inclined towards defining or analysing concepts in objective and quantifiable terms; consequently happiness or psychological wellbeing were also analysed in terms of measurable entities only. It does not mean

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<sup>140</sup> Samuelson, P. A., (1938), 'A Note on the Pure Theory of Consumer's Behaviour', *Economica*, 5(17), pp.61-71

<sup>141</sup> Hausman, Daniel M. and Michael S. McPherson, (1997), 'Beware of Economists Bearing Advice,' *Policy Options*, 18, pp.16-19

that economists of the twentieth century were not at all concerned with psychological wellbeing in some sense or the other. This would become evident if we take into consideration the views of the later day and recent critics within the fields of economics itself. Critics like Richard Layard and J. Oswald could meaningfully point out that increase in income does not readily mean increase in happiness. This criticism would have been absolutely pointless unless the economists were not throughout concerned with psychological states of being.

If we were to go by Robbins as given above, then it can be stated that wellbeing or welfare is determined by optimal use of scarce resources giving maximal utility. Edward F. Denison explains this in the following passage:

The output available to satisfy our wants and needs is one important determinant of welfare. Whatever want, need, or social problem engages our attention, we ordinarily can more easily find resources to deal with it when output is large and growing than when it is not<sup>142</sup>.

The fundamental idea is that a higher income (or greater output) makes it possible for us to satisfy our wants and needs ---- “that is, our preferences ---to a greater degree”<sup>143</sup>. If income is the marker of wellbeing and it can be measured, then it follows that welfare between individuals can be compared by comparing their income. So for almost a century, wellbeing in economics is represented by real income, whether for an individual, society or a country.

In economics, the quest for an idea of wellbeing is motivated by the purpose to bring in better socio-economic conditions for overall flourishing of the society by formulation of appropriate public policies leading to collective wellbeing. Social welfare is a composite of the maximum achievable satisfaction of the desires and preferences of all the individuals in society. Rise in output of a country is assumed to increase the quantity of goods and services available to its citizens. This indicates that they would be able satisfy more of their preferences. For an individual, access to larger quantity of output is assumed to make him happier. Economic growth (i.e., the change in real income over a period of time and change in welfare) of a country

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<sup>142</sup>Denison, Edward F., (1971), ‘Welfare Measurement and the GNP,’ *Survey of Current Business*, 51, pp. 13-39

<sup>143</sup> Ibid

signifies expansion in production of goods and services; in other words the output of the country is growing. Based on the above concepts of welfare we can say that economic growth brings about increased happiness. So the more goods and services a country produces, the happier its citizens will be. The extensive and prevalent interest with economic growth measured by the change in real income over a period of time is an evidence of the importance of real income as a measure of wellbeing; the implicit assumption being more income leads to more happiness. Economic growth gives leads to rise in the total happiness for the whole country.

From the above discussion we can say that a country's wellbeing can be measured in terms of the gross domestic product of the country. Even hundred years after Mill, economists view of the use of national income (“... income of the community, including, of course, income derived from abroad, which can be measured in money”)<sup>144</sup> to measure the welfare of a country. Real income or gross domestic product commonly called GDP (i.e., the total volume of goods and services available in a country over a given period), is used to measure the social welfare of a country. The extensive and prevalent interest with economic growth (the change in real income over a period of time) is an evidence of the importance of real income as a measure of wellbeing; the implicit assumption being more income leads to more happiness.

The importance of income as an index of economic growth has several benefits. If complete break-up of total income, expenditure and population of a country is known, several measures of wellbeing can be calculated from this. We can say how much of income and hence purchasing power is available to its citizens, i.e., how much of goods and services, each citizen of the country can command. From the GDP, an estimate of production of food, energy, infrastructure etc can be calculated. From the data on domestic product, it is possible to have a knowledge of per capita consumptions of various entities such as food, energy etc. If details of government expenditure are computed, it is possible to calculate how much is spent on education, health, sanitation, housing, etc. Given the population of the country one can say how

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<sup>144</sup> Pigou, A. C., (1960), *The Economics of Welfare*, Fourth ed. London: Macmillan, (First ed., London: Macmillan, 1920), p. 31

much is spent on each of the above for an individual i.e., the per capita expenditure for each index. This will give an idea of the degree of welfare of the citizens. Actually I have mentioned only a few economic indicators. In reality, there are hundreds of such figures that provide information about the wealth and its distribution in the country.

Since all the data are in quantifiable terms, it is possible to compare the welfare of different countries in different spheres. The fact that these measures are objective, accurately defined and calculated reduces the chances of subjective misinterpretation. The economic measures of welfare are used to estimate the wealth and resources of a country and its citizens. The higher the per capita of a country in terms of health expenditure, literacy funds etc., it is expected that higher will be the welfare of the citizens.

Now according to economic theory, increase in income is supposed to reflect a rise in the levels of happiness. This relation is so obvious that “economics textbooks do not even make an effort to come up with a reason, but simply state that utility is raised by income<sup>145</sup>”. If the goal of economics is to raise levels of wellbeing of its citizens which in turn depend on the total quantity of preferred resources available, then economic growth will obviously be geared towards policies that would increase production of goods and services. So increase in levels of income ensures a higher level of preference satisfaction via availability of a larger basket of goods and services.

Let us examine whether a rise in gross domestic product in a country necessarily ensures a rise in happiness levels of all its citizens. It might happen that the GDP of a country has risen but the extra goods and services have increased the happiness of a majority of the population because the additional produce is available only to them. So there is a rise in income of the majority while a minority of the population is no better off. This implies that although GDP may rise but it cannot ensure that the happiness levels of all individual citizens will necessarily increase. Let us examine this with an example.

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<sup>145</sup> Bruno, S. Frey, (2002), *Happiness and Economics: How the Economy and Institutions Affect Human Well-Being*, p.73



Suppose there is a population of 100 people, and GDP rises by say 800 units. If this increase in GDP is equally distributed between 80 people, enabling them to get 10 units each, then the income of only those 80 people has increased by 10 units and the rest have the same income level as before. So although the benefits of economic growth have improved the condition of the majority of the population, it has not improved the situation of the remaining 20 persons. Thus the benefits from economic growth are not equally distributed among all the citizens. Even though GDP has risen, this increase fails to ensure an increase of happiness for all citizens.

In a similar line of argument, we may say that it may even be possible that the benefits of economic growth are limited to a minority while the majority is no better. In this case there will be an enormous rise in the income of a few but the income levels of rest of the population does not improve. Let us go back to our economy of 100 people where a growth of GDP by 800 units has taken place. This time the extra 800 units have been equally divided between 10 people, where each gets 80 units. The rest 90 individuals remain at the same level of income as before. Thus only 10 people, a minority of the population have benefited from economic growth and their happiness has increased. The rest 80 people have not experienced any change in income, so their happiness level is the same as it was before growth had taken place. Here not only does a rise in GDP fail to ensure increase happiness for all citizens, instead gross income inequality among the population has occurred. Only a few people have a high rise in income while the rest are no better off.

A more radical claim may be made by saying that it is possible for the GDP of a country to raise the happiness levels of a majority at the cost of deterioration in happiness level of the minority. Let us see how this may come to be. Suppose in our 100 people economy GDP rises by 800 units, but policies of economic growth are such that the income of 20 people has increased each by 100 units. This total increase in income of the 20 people is 2000 units. But GDP has increased by only 800 units. So the extra 1200 units increase in total income of the 20 persons has to be accounted for. The increase in income of 20 individuals has to come from the total income available in the country. This can happen only if total income of the rest of the

populace of 80 people decrease. If the income of the rest 80 people decreases by 15 units each, then the shortfall of 1200 units can be accounted. In this way the total increase of 2000 units of income accruing to the 20 people can be explanation. In this scenario, GDP of the country has increased by 800 units which is the same increase as given in the previous example. Since income has increased by the same amount in both the cases, so it is expected that the increase in happiness would also be the same in both cases. The difference in this case is that the decrease in income of 15 units each from the rest 80 people will imply that the happiness of these 80 people have decreased as a result of economic growth. So the increase in income hence increase in happiness of the 20 people has come at the cost of a decrease in happiness of 80 people.

It is not difficult to see what has happened in this extremely minimal model of economic growth. Firstly, increase in GDP does not ensure rise in happiness levels of all. Secondly GDP does not ensure equal rise in income for all and thirdly the rise in GDP actually reduces happiness levels for some, though this would not be evident just by looking at the amount of rise in GDP. A simple explanation for this can be that GDP has increased, i.e., production has increased, but the distribution is faulty.

The question that comes to the mind then is that how should the distribution be to ensure an equal share of happiness from increase of a given amount of GDP. Several possibilities exist. One is that there may be policies for egalitarian distribution, so that everyone gets an equal share of the additional GDP. In other words there is no inequality in terms of distribution of the benefits of economic growth. Assuming that this is possible; will the egalitarian distribution of the extra GDP ensure equal levels of happiness for all?

For simplicities sake let us assume that the extra GDP is constituted of bananas only. Suppose in our 100 people economy, 800 bananas have been produced and equally distributed among the 100 individuals. So each person is given 8 bananas. Can we now say that a certain increase in GDP if distributed equally will necessarily ensure the equal rise in happiness level for all? We have seen previously, that each individual has a specific set of stable preferences. According to economic theory, wellbeing or happiness of an individual will increase if the individual can satisfy his preferences.

So even in this ultra-simple economic model unless the set of preferences of the 100 individuals is exactly the same (at least in relation to bananas) increase in happiness levels will not be equal. Sen has argued in similar lines against the modern welfare economists. According to Sen, even if all goods are equally distributed among all the members of a society, everyone would not be equally well-off. People differ in various ways, starting from external features, internal characteristics, and diverse environmental situations. Human beings are born with different endowments of inheritance and liabilities<sup>146</sup>. Nussbaum strongly supports Sen in this context. She says:

Equality of resources falls short because it fails to account for individuals' having differing needs for resources...a child needs more protein than an adult to achieve a similar level of healthy functioning, and a pregnant woman more nutrients than a nonpregnant woman...in a nation where women are traditionally discouraged from pursuing an education, it will usually take more resources to produce female literacy than male literacy<sup>147</sup>.

A pertinent question here is: can it be possible such that aggregate growth or increase in GDP will make all individuals either better off and not make even a single person worse-off.? To find this out first we would have to find out whether it is feasible to formulate any public policy so as to ensure that implementation of the policy makes at least one individual better off and no one worse off. Actually to have a situation where any increase in GDP will increase the happiness of all individuals equally, the individuals would have to be clones of each other having the same tastes and preferences, same physical attributes, same upbringing and also same life circumstances. Otherwise, if even one person is different in any aspect it is likely that his preferences will differ from others. We may think of a hypothetical situation to find out how the above question may be answered. Suppose we do have an economy of clones with all the conditions given above. In this economy a person has become permanently blind because of an accident. Now in this economy a highly developed modern device has been developed – a photosensitive lightweight laptop with a

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<sup>146</sup> Sen, Amartya (2010), *Inequality Reexamined*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (first published 1995), pp. 19 -20.

<sup>147</sup> Nussbaum, M. C., (2006), 'Poverty and Human Functioning: Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements', in *Poverty and Inequality*, (eds), (Grusky, D. B., and Kanbur, R), Stanford University Press, Stanford, p..51

flexible screen whose size can be changed according to the viewer to allow the user to see movies of any screen size anytime anywhere is produced. It is produced in such quantities that everyone in our economy gets a piece of the item with life time guarantee for the product. Since everyone has more of a good, then the happiness of all is supposed to increase. But this item will be useless for our blind person. It is unlikely that his happiness will rise. This aberration will make the increase in happiness levels of the individuals unequal. So we realize that the conditions needed to have equal increase in happiness for all citizens for any increase in GDP is unattainable. Amartya Sen comments on the diversity of human beings as:

...differences...are particularly important because of extensive human diversity. Had all people been exactly similar, equality in one space (e.g. incomes) would tend to be congruent with equalities in others (e.g. health, well-being, happiness)<sup>148</sup>.

It will be interesting to find out whether wellbeing for all can be ensured in the presence of inequality. That is at least some wellbeing for all can be ensured in relation to an increase in GDP. But we have already shown this to be implausible in the economy with 100 people. So given that there exists inequality in wealth among individuals in an economy even this claim cannot be accepted. So we find that it is difficult to accept the claim that economic growth is an indicator of wellbeing. In this regard Nussbaum says:

Growth is a bad indicator of life quality because it fails to tell us how deprived people are doing; women figure in the argument as people who are often unable to enjoy the fruits of a nation's general prosperity<sup>149</sup>.

From the above discussion we gather that economic growth will not necessarily produce wellbeing for all members of the community if we acknowledge the presence of inequality of wealth, faulty distribution and diversity of preferences in the economy. It follows that economic growth as such cannot always be regarded as a contributory factor of wellbeing. This statement merits some further attention, but before that we need to mention one important aspect of economic growth. We have been doing thought experiments with an imaginary economy. The reality is we know

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<sup>148</sup> Sen, Amartya, (2010), *Inequality Reexamined*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (first published 1995), pp.19 -20

<sup>149</sup> Nussbaum, M. C., (2006), op. cit., p.49

infinitesimally complex. To make policy decisions for redistribution of income involves decision making at the societal level for all individuals. Here it is important that the policy makers be sensitive about issues of “paternalism<sup>150</sup>”. What paternalism implies is that policies to make people happy might invite coercion to follow values that the people do not endorse. This should be kept in mind during planning for happiness policies. For example, policies to make people happy might be geared towards making individuals more extroverts, since research has shown strong correlation between extraversion and happiness. But this may exclude activities like reading, fishing, etc typically pursued by introverts. Introvert individuals might have to adjust to activities valued by extroverts. To quote Tiberius:

...we will be acting for their own good, but against their wills... if the notion of well-being we promote on behalf of others does not accord with their conceptions of their own well-being, then our actions will undermine subjective authority in a morally objectionable way<sup>151</sup> ...

But research evidence does not conclusively prove that introvert people are incapable of being happy. Rather, forcing activities on them that they do not value, might make them further unhappy.

Within a framework of economics where each individual is assumed to be rational and can be happy only if they maximize their own utility, it is not possible to ensure equal increase or even any increase in happiness for all individuals through economic growth. It may however be interesting to explore under what conditions it would be possible to ensure increase in happiness for all members in spite of unequal distribution of benefits from economic growth. Let us assume an imaginary economy where every member feels happy only if the total wellbeing of the economy increases. According to this assumption, here a person who does not experience increase in own income but knows that the total income hence happiness of the economy has increased will feel happy. Now let this economy have an increase in GDP so that the wellbeing of a few people increases in terms of goods and services. In this situation,

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<sup>150</sup> I thank Dr. Bidisha Chakrabarty of the Economics department, Jadavpur University for inputs related to this concept.

<sup>151</sup> Tiberius, V., & Hall, A., (2010), ‘Normative theory and psychological research: Hedonism, eudemonism and why it matters’, *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, Volume 5 Issue 3, (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17439761003790971>) accessed on 17.10.2012

the rest of the members of the society whose income has not increased will also feel happy, because the total wellbeing of the economy has increased. So we see that one of the ways in which it is possible to ensure an increase in happiness for all the members of an economy if we revise the assumption about the members of the economy. But in the existing immensely complex framework of reality and the present assumptions about the nature of a person, viz., all individuals are rational decision makers and act so as to maximise their satisfaction, this claim that any economic growth will ensure the happiness of all members of the economy seems implausible. Neither can it be ensured that no individual will be worse-off as a result of economic growth. It is only when we modify the assumptions regarding human nature happiness for all can be ensured. Later in the chapter we will discuss in detail whether such an economy is conceptually viable.

Till now we have been concerned with the conceptual notions about the relation between collective income and individual wellbeing. A very important empirical study can be cited to explore the relation between collective income and collective happiness level and also individual income and individual wellbeing. After World War II, most European countries experienced huge increase in income. So it was expected that aggregate national wellbeing level of those countries would also increase manifold. Researches in this area have shown a very surprising result. The increase in GDP during this period was not reflected in the levels of happiness. To quote Richard Layard:

People in the West have got no happier in the last 50 years. They have become much richer, they work much less, they have longer holidays, they travel more, they live longer, and they are healthier. But they are no happier<sup>152</sup>.

The above research findings were published in 1974 by Richard Easterlin. His seminal paper showed that in most developed countries, although the gross domestic product i.e., GDP had increased substantially over time but aggregate national happiness over time remained at the same level as it had been earlier. In the same study Easterlin also found that for an individual also, relationship between income

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<sup>152</sup> Layard, R., (2002), 'Happiness: Has Social Science A Clue?', in Lionel Robbins Memorial Lectures 2002/3 delivered on 3, March 2003, at the London School of Economics, website: <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/events/lectures/layard/RL030303.pdf> , accessed 27.05.2010

and happiness was flat at higher levels of income implying that increase in income has no effect on happiness after a certain level of income is reached<sup>153</sup>. The unresponsiveness of happiness with respect to increase in real income is known as “Easterlin’s Paradox”<sup>154</sup>.

Easterlin’s Paradox is also strongly supported by researches in psychology. Several large scale studies report that

As developed nations have become wealthier, mental health has either dropped sharply or stayed the same...a massive international study showed...dramatic increases in risk for depression across the 20th century, despite tremendous economic growth in almost all of these locations<sup>155</sup>.

If we consider the reasons for encouraging economic growth, we would find that growth is required for a country to become prosperous, so that the people become happier. The very goal of welfare economics is to increase societal wellbeing. Economic growth is the facilitator to increase happiness. Easterlin’s research however shows that economic growth in terms of GDP has little or no effect on happiness. Since Easterlin’s finding, numerous studies have shown this effect to hold true<sup>156</sup>. Easterlin’s own update of his original study has also shown this relationship to hold true.<sup>157</sup>

We might ask why Easterlin's observation seems to be a paradox. The results of Easterlin’s study appear to be paradoxical because of the given relationship between utility and income. We know that utility is a measure of happiness and any increase in utility will always result in a rise in happiness and hence wellbeing. But Easterlin’s observations do not reflect such a relationship. This finding brings into question, the

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<sup>153</sup>Easterlin, R., (1974), ‘Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence’, in (eds), P. David and M. Reder., *Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honour of Moses Abramovitz*, New York: Academic Press

<sup>154</sup> A point of note: Easterlin’s observations were found to be true in industrially developed nations (Diener, E., & Oishi, S. (2000). At lower levels of income where people are deprived of food, health, physical security, education and job opportunities, increase in income enhances their wellbeing (Cummins, R. (2002). It is only when the basic necessities are affordable, then happiness seems to be impervious to changes in income

<sup>155</sup> Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004), op. cit., pp.15-16.

<sup>156</sup> Frey, Bruno S. and Alois Stutzer., (2000), ‘Happiness, Economics and Institutions’, *The Economic Journal*, 110: (October), pp. 918-938.

<sup>157</sup>Easterlin, R., (1995), ‘Will Raising the Incomes of All Increase the Happiness of All?’, *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 27:1 (June), pp.35-48.

fundamental principle of economics – that happiness will rise if real income increases. Let us analyse this further.

Critical evaluation of the assumptions that for wellbeing to occur, maximization of utility should be the sole aim of economic policy may provide an insight into the unacceptability of the fundamental economic principle regarding the relation between income and happiness. We will start by first exploring the validity of the claim that for wellbeing to occur, maximization of utility should be the sole aim of economic policy. Our next exploration will be on the applicability of utility as a measure of happiness or wellbeing. Finally the justifiability of defining preference satisfaction as wellbeing or welfare will be discussed.

We have seen earlier that the doctrine of utility maximization is the dominant and prevalent view in the scientific discipline of welfare economics. It is strange that despite the fact that utility maximization holds such an important position in measuring wellbeing, yet there are neither scientific nor philosophical arguments to support the claim that it is better to implement policies that maximize the aggregate preferences of a society (that are quantifiable and hence measurable in monetary figures) rather than focussing on maximizing individual preferences. Let us try to analyse this doctrine of maximising happiness for maximum people.

Suppose in a society of predominantly super-rich people, the policy of spending huge government funds on the entertainment industry will make maximum members of the society happy barring a few poor people who would have benefited from that fund being spent on improving living standards such as health, education, housing and other such amenities. Economics is a value-neutral scientific discipline. All economic policies will be based on objective decisions without being diverted in any way by subjective concerns. Then it is clear that the decision of the state to implement a policy for spending funds should be to ensure “welfare” or “wellbeing” for the majority of members of the society. Here the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people will be achieved by spending most funds on the entertainment industry. To do otherwise will be unscientific because according to the maximisation doctrine, policies should be geared towards providing the largest number of its



members with wellbeing. Diversion of funds towards areas such as health, housing etc., for improving the socio-economic conditions would go against the doctrine of maximization because that would increase the welfare of only a minority of people. Since this goes against the maximization principle, so there would be no rational objective criterion to spend money on matters that would not increase aggregate benefits.

Perhaps to most people the decision to channel expenditure towards entertainment would not be acceptable as a good policy in terms of common social values. But “the self-consciously ‘non-ethical’ character of modern economics<sup>158</sup>” this is not a rational decision. Since economics is committed to rationality, the best possible rational decision would be to channel funds to the entertainment industry. However it is hard to believe this rational non-ethical character of theoretical economics if we remember “the historical evolution of modern economics largely as an offshoot of ethics<sup>159</sup>”.

Economics evolved as a theory of morality and the primary focus of economic decisions and more importantly economics itself was to find out what would be the good thing to do. It is then clear that the principle of maximization of social utility does not hold well in formulating welfare policies. To improve the socio-economic conditions of the masses the principle of rationality would have to accommodate moral sentiments. But since the 1930’s after Robbins’s views started to dominate economic theory, most economists thought that “it does not seem logically possible to associate the two studies [economics and ethics] in any form but mere juxtapositions<sup>160</sup>”. As modern economics has progressed the significance of ethical approach has gradually decreased. Sen categorically reiterates:

“The methodology of so-called ‘positive economics’ has not only shunned normative analysis in economics, it has also had the effect of ignoring a variety of complex ethical considerations which affect actual human behaviour

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<sup>158</sup> Sen ,A., (1987), *On Ethics and Economics*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 2.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Sen (1987), quoting Lionel Robbins in his book , *On Ethics and Economics*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 2. This is not the view Sen subscribes to. He is pointing this out as a criticism.

and which, from the point of view of the economists studying such behaviour, are primarily matters of fact rather than of normative judgement<sup>161</sup>.

Thus modern economic theory has turned its back on discussions of influence of ethical issues and other normative concerns that are part of the real world of human actions and behaviours.

Another shortcoming of the doctrine of maximizing total utility, might be due to the fact that since economic growth indicates the aggregate of wellbeing in the economy, individual wellbeing is not accurately reflected. The aggregation of individual wellbeing to arrive at total social wellbeing may pose a theoretical problem. Here it might be helpful to examine the mathematical procedures used for computing the aggregation of utilities.

We have seen that utilities, desires or preferences are quantifiable in terms of money or bundle of goods. Quantifiable variables will very easily lend themselves numerical analysis. So it is possible to formulate a precise mathematical utility function for an individual by which one can precisely calculate the utility of a person given a certain amount of resource. This means that individual preferences can be precisely given from each utility function. Since individual utility functions represent the quantifiable preferences for each individual, so the comparison of preferences between different members of the society is possible. It is then also possible to aggregate the individual utility functions to arrive at a precise mathematical formula for representing the sum total of social utility.

This function is called the social utility function. Utilities and costs can thus be objectively measurable and mathematically calculated to formulate net social utility or social cost. Social utility function enables one to calculate the aggregate utility in a society, so welfare economics can make prescriptions of good policy in terms of the difference between social utility and social costs. Whether a given public policy will be prescribed or not will depend on the relative amounts of net utilities of all the other policies calculated from the social utility function. But the important information that is missed out is that preferences and utilities are subjective. The quantification of a subjective entity involves modifying it to an objective one that can be mathematically

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<sup>161</sup> Sen ,A., (1987),op. cit., pp. 7

manipulated. This conversion is bound to leave out certain features of the original entity. Yet in welfare economics, the subjective utilities are made objectively measurable mathematical functions to arrive at net social utility. This aggregation of subjective individual utilities is most likely to exclude important information about preferences of an individual. Breaking away from the standard economic models, Murray Rothbard mentions:

... Modern welfare economics is particularly adept at arriving at estimates (even allegedly precise quantitative ones) of "social cost" and "social utility". But economics does correctly inform us that utilities and costs are indeed subjective: individual utilities are purely subjective and ordinal, and therefore it is totally illegitimate to add or weight them to arrive at any estimate for "social" utility or cost<sup>162</sup>.

Even if the feasibility of calculating net social benefits from an objective, precise mathematical social utility function is possible; this whole exercise of aggregation is highly abstract and can occur only at the theoretical level. Application of such theory to real world will have to be compromised in many ways. The problems in economic notion of wellbeing do not rest only with having real income as an indicator of wellbeing or that economic theory has become highly abstract. Some questions about the adequacy of preference satisfaction as a definition of wellbeing have risen.

This discussion is not related to the methodological issue relating to the social utility function raised above but something far more basic. It is about the feasibility of using as indicator a notion that may turn out to be conceptually problematic. So apart from the above methodological issue of developing and relying on the highly mathematical social utility function, another difficulty might be present in the characterisation of wellbeing in economics. This is because economic theory assumes that preferences are "fixed" or given which means that they are not affected by changes in life circumstances or in the context of culture<sup>163</sup>. Seen in this context it is desirable to explore how far it is acceptable that preferences are indicators of welfare. The

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<sup>162</sup>Rothbard N. Murray, (1988), *The Ethics of Liberty*, New York University Press, New York, p. 203

<sup>163</sup> Grusky, D. B., and Kanbur, R., (2006), 'Conceptual Foundations of Poverty and Inequality Measurement', in *Poverty and Inequality*, ( eds) Grusky, D. B., and Kanbur, R, Stanford University Press, Stanford, p. 10

preference satisfaction view of wellbeing in economic theory has been strongly opposed by Martha Nussbaum:

...deprived people frequently exhibit “adaptive preferences,” preferences that have adjusted to their second-class status. Thus, the utilitarian framework, which asks people what they ... prefer and how satisfied they are, proves inadequate...(because) people happen to have—preferences shaped, often, by unjust background conditions<sup>164</sup>...

Actually Nussbaum is also vociferous about the insensitivity of economic theory to acknowledge individual differences in terms of context. She argues that people come to have the preferences that they think they can have. Their decisions are shaped by the socio-economic and cultural background they are adapted to<sup>165</sup>. Let us examine this notion of preference satisfaction of an individual in relation to welfare.

It has been mentioned that the identification of utility and subjective desires and preferences with monetary quantities lies at the root of all branches of economics and has become so automatic that economics as a discipline seldom realise how ubiquitous it has become. We find that choices or preferences of an individual are assumed to be directly assessable through their economic decisions. So satisfaction of these preferences in terms of real income is approximated as a measure of happiness. Thus wellbeing is defined as preference satisfaction. Amartya Sen has pointed out the fact that the concept of preference in economic analysis does double duty. He writes:

In economic analysis individual preferences seem to enter in two different roles: preferences come in as determinants of behaviour and they also come in as the basis of welfare measurements...This dual link between choice and preference on the one hand and preference and welfare on the other is crucial ...All the important results in this field depend on this relationship between behaviour and welfare through the intermediary of preference<sup>166</sup>.

We have seen that satisfaction of preferences constitute welfare in economics, that is, at the individual level satisfaction of one’s preference provide wellbeing for a person. In this context, the classification offered by Derek Parfit is quite appropriate in his

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<sup>164</sup>Nussbaum, M. C., (2006), op.cit., p. 48

<sup>165</sup> Nussbaum, M. C., 2006, op. cit., p..51

<sup>166</sup>Sen, A.K., (1982), *Choice, Welfare and Measurement*, Blackwell, Oxford, , pp. 66-67

seminal book *Reasons and Persons*<sup>167</sup>. The book has significantly influenced theories of welfare economics and so it would not be unreasonable to use his categorization in examining the notion of wellbeing in economics. Following Parfit we can say that the economic notion of wellbeing would fall into preference-satisfaction accounts<sup>168</sup>. Preference-satisfaction theories vary in different ways. The most elementary preference-satisfaction theory involves satisfaction of all the desires and preferences that a person actually has.

It is easy to see that in this account of wellbeing we will find innumerable situations where it is difficult to find the relation of welfare with satisfaction of a preference. These cases will mostly be eccentric, nonsensical or ridiculous preferences. Since no claim is made by economists about being rational except that he will prefer more of what gives him happiness, we can think of countless examples of preference satisfaction that would seem useless and ridiculous, such as spending one's money on a project with the goal of counting the number of grains of sand in a beach.<sup>169</sup> The satisfaction of preferences of an individual might be based on erroneous information<sup>170</sup>, or the individual might be manipulated into having certain desires or preferences. Another important difficulty faced by the preference satisfaction theory will include cases where the satisfaction of preferences is repugnant or obscene, or say, brutal such as an individual inflicting harm on another individual<sup>171</sup>.

In spite of such grave objections, the interpretation of utility as actual preference is used in the vast majority of economic models. But the above objections that show actual preference of an individual might be based on false or incomplete information, injudicious inferences and abhorrent desires have been explicitly and strongly raised from among economists themselves. Hausman and McPherson note:

Economists recognize that this [theoretical world depicted in many standard economic models] is not the real world, and the fact that welfare is preference

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<sup>167</sup> Parfit, Derek, (1984), *Reasons and Persons*, Clarendon Press: Oxford

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Hausman and McPherson, (2009), "Preference Satisfaction and Welfare Economics", *Economics and Philosophy*, 25, p. 8

<sup>170</sup> Parfit, Derek, (1984), op. cit., p.500

<sup>171</sup> Hausman and McPherson, (2009), op. cit., p. 8

satisfaction in standard models does not imply that welfare is [actual] preference satisfaction in real life<sup>172</sup>

Much earlier John C. Harsanyi had seriously tried to explain the issue of approximation of real world preferences by theoretical models of preference. He argues that economists should differentiate between at least two different kinds of preferences, the “true preferences” and the “manifest preferences” or “actual preference”, because manifest preferences might be based on incorrect or inaccurate information or flawed judgement. One might behave in such irrational ways due to causes or factors that can obstruct one’s rational choices. A person having incorrect belief about certain facts or someone who is extremely emotional or simply a misinformed person may not be able to make perfect rational choices due to the lack of complete information.<sup>173</sup>

Harsanyi differentiates the true preferences and the manifest preferences of an individual. According to him, the preferences that can be observed by an individual’s behaviour are manifest preferences in contrast to true preferences of the individual which would have been made “if he had all the relevant factual information, always reasoned with the greatest possible care, and were in a state of mind most conducive to rational choice”<sup>174</sup>. So what Harsanyi clearly indicates is that the manifest preferences of an individual or agent might differ from true preferences due to the gap in information. He contends that a person who satisfies his preference based on incomplete information may choose something that he would not have chosen if complete information had been available to him. But this claim is actually counterproductive. If the “true” preferences of people are not their “actual” preferences, then this fact has to be incorporated while formulating welfare policy on the basis of true preferences. How this can be incorporated is the question that Sen and Williams have raised<sup>175</sup>. Economic theory states that manifest preferences are those that people actually desire. Now if policies are based on preferences that should

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<sup>172</sup>Hausman, Daniel M. and Michael S. McPherson, (1996), *Economic Analysis and Moral Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

<sup>173</sup>Harsanyi, J., (1982), ‘Morality and the Theory of Rational Behaviour’, in Sen, A. K., & Williams, B. (eds.) *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.55.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid

<sup>175</sup> Sen, A. K., & Williams, B., (1982) (eds.) *Utilitarianism and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 10

be rationally desired by people then implementing such a correct policy based on true preferences has the strong likelihood that if people may never actually want what they should rationally want, they will be unsatisfied. But the aim of welfare economics is to increase the satisfaction of the people. So this argument undermines the promise given in the outset of welfare economics.

If the concept of welfare be based on inaccurate “actual preference satisfaction”, then the evaluation of public policy for welfare becomes faulty. Hausman and McPherson have tried to overcome this problem in an innovative way: They describe this idea in the following manner:

Regardless of what human wellbeing truly is, the best measure of wellbeing is the extent to which [actual] preferences are satisfied...Whatever welfare may be, there is no better indicator of welfare than people’s preferences....<sup>176</sup>

So their position is that welfare economics does not claim that welfare consists in preference satisfaction and they concede that welfare truly might consist in something else and not preference satisfaction. However actual preferences provide best indication of welfare. So they reject the view that welfare of an individual is constituted by satisfaction of his preferences. Their postulate is merely to assert that satisfaction of actual preferences of a person, though fallible, nevertheless provides an ostensive connection to the welfare of the person under certain conditions. In their words,

[o]ur claim is that when preferences are self-interested and people are well informed, then their preferences will be a good (though fallible) guide to what will make them better off<sup>177</sup>.

Their proposal does not entail a theory of wellbeing simply because they do not advocate that satisfaction of preferences constitute wellbeing. Their claim is actual preferences merely provide an indication of wellbeing subject to certain conditions. Thus even when satisfaction of some preferences may not increase wellbeing, the actual preferences can be still regarded as a useful source of information about wellbeing.

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid

<sup>177</sup> Hausman and McPherson, (2009), op. cit., p. 8

There will be another advantage from using actual preferences just as an informational source of wellbeing. If it is established that actual preferences are a stable benchmark of wellbeing, then it would not matter what the true theory of wellbeing is. So it would enable welfare economics to be free from subscribing to a particular theory of wellbeing. So welfare economics will be independent of any theory of wellbeing.. According to Hausman and McPherson, this approach will show that “welfare economics does not rely on any theory of welfare.”<sup>178</sup>

Hausman and McPherson have based their claim on two postulates. Their first assumption is that for actual preferences to be a good guide of wellbeing of an individual, the individual should be self-interested. The second postulate is that this individual has to be well informed. If these two conditions are fulfilled then according to them, it is not important what wellbeing really is, the actual preferences may be taken to be the best indicator of wellbeing. Now if we look at the first postulate some interesting questions arise. Here Hausman and McPherson do not clarify what they mean by “self-interest”. If this is meant to be self-regarding as opposed to other-regarding, then it may pose a serious problem because distinguishing between the above two is extremely difficult or sometimes impossible. It also remains to be examined as to how plausible the postulate of self-interest is in approximating real life human motivations.

If, say a father buys his daughter a harmonium because she likes to sing, then will this be regarded as self-regarding or other-regarding? This question arises because it might be the father’s preference that he give his daughter a gift and this preference is satisfied when he really does so. At the same time getting the harmonium satisfies the daughter’s preference for a good musical instrument. Now if the father had to work extra hours in a boring job, to earn the money then would this still be self-regarding? In this case also his preferences are satisfied, but at the cost of hard work. So how do we distinguish between self-regarding and other-regarding? A person’s welfare may very well be dependent on the flourishing of one’s offspring. A majority of our choices fall into these categories because our lives are usually contingent on the lives of other people around us. It is hard to accept that rationality is manifested through the

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<sup>178</sup>Ibid, p. 2



pursuit of self-interest as the only motive for human actions “to the exclusion of everything else<sup>179</sup>”. This is not to say that it is irrational to pursue self-interest, but it is to object to the view that anything other than self-interest is irrational. In this respect Sen argues:

The real issue is whether there is a plurality of motivations, or whether self-interest *alone* drives human beings<sup>180</sup>.

When we come to the second postulate, an ambiguity arises. It is not at all clear what is meant by the phrase “well informed”. If well informed means that one has true knowledge of what one’s preferences are, that is, one knows all alternative options even then satisfaction of his preferences may not ensure his wellbeing. If we assume that the expression “well informed” refers to full knowledge about all the preferences one has, then according to Hausman and McPherson, one is more or less able to decide what might be best for him with prudence. In fact this condition is explained by them as a person being a good judge of one’s welfare<sup>181</sup>. But this may not make the person a good judge as we will see. We will try to find out what will be the criterion for a person to be a good judge.

Hausman and McPherson say that since preferences are a good guide for determining welfare, so if one knows what their preferences are it is not required that one have knowledge of what welfare is comprised of. From this it would follow that also knowledge of wellbeing is not needed to increase happiness or wellbeing. If we know what the preferences are, since preference satisfaction is an indicator of wellbeing so when a person satisfies his preference by following self-interest he will achieve wellbeing. We may assume that the phrase “well-informed” means the person knows what he desires; and also he knows how he can satisfy those desires, i.e., he knows the ways to satisfy his desires. If he knows his preferences then he can express his preferences and thereby attain wellbeing. But one question that arises here is that the person may be well-informed but does he have complete information? He is well-informed about his own desires and preferences, but does he have complete knowledge about the goods and services which he desires to satisfy his preferences?

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<sup>179</sup> Sen ,A., (1987), *On Ethics and Economics*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 15

<sup>180</sup> Sen ,A., 1987, op.cit., p.19

<sup>181</sup>Sen ,A., (1987), op.cit., p.18

What would accurately represent the meaning of “well-informed”? This is one question that may arise here but another more significant issue is at stake.

Suppose a person has a preference for drinking coffee because he enjoys the drink. Let also assume that he chooses to drink coffee (thereby expressing his desire to enjoy the coffee), and thus he satisfies his preference. Can we say that this satisfaction of his preference will without doubt ensure that he will attain wellbeing? We may presume that if a person fails to attain wellbeing even after satisfying his preferences, then this may happen because of the fact that he does not have knowledge about what is required for his wellbeing. An example may aptly convey the point here.

Suppose there is an addict of brown sugar who wants to give up his habit of addiction. It is found that whenever he tries to abstain from taking brown sugar he experiences severe pain which he is unable to withstand so he goes back to his habit. Now the addict prefers to take brown sugar so that his desire to avoid the pain produced by withdrawal symptoms would be satisfied. But this satisfaction of his preference does not contribute to his wellbeing. He is well-informed about the fact that if he does not take brown sugar he will suffer pain. But he does not have the knowledge that by satisfying this preference, he will not be well off because this desire will occur repeatedly and will ultimately not be of wellbeing for him. He is well informed about his preference, but satisfaction of his preference in this instance does not give him wellbeing. So preference satisfaction will not lead to wellbeing if he does not have knowledge of what will be well for him.

This person wants to satisfy his preference for avoiding withdrawal symptom by taking brown sugar, but since he does not have knowledge of what will actually be of wellbeing for him to get rid of the withdrawal symptoms, he may have ineffective or erroneous preferences, the satisfaction of which does not ensure wellbeing.

Based on his knowledge he takes brown sugar to avoid the withdrawal symptom, but he does not seek the help of a psychiatrist to get rid of his withdrawal symptom. He does not have the knowledge that for him to attain wellbeing, he needs the help of a psychiatrist. He is incognizant of the fact that a detoxification procedure is required for him to attain wellbeing. So we see that he simply cannot have the preference to

seek the help of a psychiatrist, because he does not have knowledge that it would give him wellbeing. If he knows that this alternative will give him wellbeing then he will satisfy the alternative preference. Just having information about one's preferences is not sufficient to ensure wellbeing through preference satisfaction. There has to be knowledge about what will constitute wellbeing for one. So by being well-informed about one's own preference will not ensure that satisfaction of preferences will give him wellbeing. The information he has for being well-informed has to contain knowledge of wellbeing or information about wellbeing. So the claim that a person can know what is best for him even if he does not possess knowledge of what true wellbeing is seems to be a dubious one. To be a good judge of what will be most wellbeing producing, one needs first to have a conception of what one's true wellbeing consists in; that is what constitutes welfare. To have a concept of what welfare is one must subscribe to a theory of wellbeing. So we see that the claim made by Hausman and McPherson that given their postulates one need not subscribe to any theory of wellbeing cannot be tenable. Both the postulates made fail to establish their assertions. We find that the standard definition of wellbeing in economics -- preference satisfaction does not ensure wellbeing. Not all wellbeing depends on preference satisfaction and neither does satisfaction of all preferences lead to wellbeing. This view is supported by Harsanyi as he states, "a person may...want something which is very 'bad for him...his own preferences at some deeper level are inconsistent with what he is now trying to achieve"<sup>182</sup>. The preferences a person has and the preferences that contribute to his wellbeing may very well differ.

We have mentioned that economic theory considers individual preference satisfaction as wellbeing and also maintains that utility is measured in monetary terms. In the above discussion we have found that preference satisfaction as an indicator of wellbeing raises certain questions. It is becoming clear from recent researches in other disciplines that it is difficult to find out levels of wellbeing solely by objective indices. From the beginning, economic research has rigorously excluded subjectivity in economic analysis and has an extreme reliance on objective measures. It may be

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<sup>182</sup> Harsanyi, J., (1982), 'Morality and the Theory of Rational Behaviour', in Sen, A. K., & Williams, B. (eds.) *Utilitarianism and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.55

pertinent at this point to explore the assumption about having utility in monetary terms as an account of happiness or wellbeing.

Utility as an indicator of wellbeing was first conceptualised as a psychological state. In this regards Sen traces the initial concept of utility:

With regard to utility Sen says “...utilitarianism...see ...individual utility... in terms of some mental characteristic, such as pleasure, happiness, or desire<sup>183</sup>”.

But gradually wellbeing in economics came to be completely separated from any subjective criterion. As economists and philosophers Philippe Mongin and Claude d’Aspremont write:

... The utility of a thing or an action reflects the extent to which that thing or action is preferred to others, and has no meaning beyond that. Thus, the modern technical sense of “utility” not only excludes the common sense notion of utility as usefulness, but also supersedes the old technical sense of utility as being related to pleasure and pain<sup>184</sup>.

It must be noted that economic doctrines had been careful to be independent of subjective values and to uphold this discipline as a value free science. So economics as a discipline consciously tried to avoid any subjective notion of measures<sup>185</sup>. It is clear that a major part of research on wellbeing in economics is done by implementing a utility or preferences satisfaction account of well-being. So we find that in economics, the evaluation of wellbeing has been gradually divorced from subjective notions. Sen while rejecting this objective view says:

...utility...is defined in terms of some mental condition, such as pleasure, happiness, desires. The 'desire-fulfilment' interpretation of utility is...quite distinct from a 'mental state' view...here utility is achieved through the objective realization of a desired state...<sup>186</sup>

In fact this was noted a long back by Bernard Williams and Amartya Sen. They argued that utilitarianism sees individual persons as solely as locations of utilities. The only interest economic theory has of the person is that activities such as desiring

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<sup>183</sup> Sen, Amartya, (2010), *Inequality Reexamined*, Oxford: Oxford University Press(first published 1995), p. 21

<sup>184</sup> Mongin, Philippe and Claude d’Aspremont, (1998), ‘Utility Theory and Ethics,’ in Barberà et al., pp. 371-48

<sup>185</sup> Hausman, Daniel M. and Michael S. McPherson, (1997), ‘Beware of Economists Bearing Advice,’ Policy Options, 18, pp.6-19

<sup>186</sup> Sen, Amartya (2010), op.cit., p.55

or having preferences and satisfying them. After this is noted, any other information about the person is irrelevant to economics<sup>187</sup>. To quote the authors:

Persons do not count as individuals in this any more than individual petrol tanks do in the analysis of national consumption of petroleum<sup>188</sup>.

Economic research has rigorously excluded subjectivity in economic analysis in favour of an extreme reliance on objective measures. So in economics, there is almost no connection between subjective experiences and measures of wellbeing. Sen finds it extraordinary that economics has completely cut off its root from lived experience. According to him this delineation of economics from reality has narrowed down human motivation significantly. It is all the more surprising because the birth of economics started with the question how one should live.<sup>189</sup> That utility, as understood presently, solely in quantifiable terms, fails to include a significant part of information about individual beings is very evident. Quoting Sen, Nussbaum writes:

...utility, Sen argues, is inadequate to capture the heterogeneity and non-commensurability of the diverse aspects of development. Because it fails to account for adaptive preferences, it also biases the development process in favor of the status quo, when used as a normative benchmark<sup>190</sup>.

Current researches in psychology strongly agree with this claim. Leaders in the fields of happiness studies and many others have criticized conventional economic measures for being indirect. They write:

Money...is a means to an end, and that end is well-being. But money is an indirect surrogate for well-being... it is assumed that money increases well-being...wellbeing needs to be assessed more directly, because there are distressingly large, measurable slippages between economic indicators and wellbeing<sup>191</sup>.

Another important point that might be raised is that in economic theory one's desires and preferences are revealed by one's choice of consumption of goods and services.

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<sup>187</sup> Sen, A. K., & Williams, B. (1982), in (eds.) Sen, A. K., & Williams, B., *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.4

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Sen, A., (1987), op. cit., pp.1-2

<sup>190</sup> Nussbaum, M. C., (2006), p.50

<sup>191</sup> Diener, Ed and Martin E. P. Seligman, (2004), 'Beyond Money: Toward an economy of well-being', *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5:1, p.31.

The satisfaction gained from the choosing of a given set of commodities is utility. Since maximisation of satisfaction is the indicator of a rational person, so utility is always to be maximised. Anything that stands to be maximised at all times is called a maximand, so utility is the maximand in economic theory. But utility is also an indicator of wellbeing. Utility thus stands for both the choices revealed by a person which is all the time maximised and utility also indicates welfare. This means one's happiness, desires, and preferences as well as whatever a person chooses all are one and the same entity. No distinction is made between what constitutes one's welfare, wishes, needs and that which is actually chosen. So the implicit assumption underlying choice behaviour becomes -- anything that is maximised provides welfare to a person. Sen explains this saying:

...one's view of one's own welfare and the maximand in choice behaviour may each be respectively called 'utility' and treated as the same, it would have been implicitly assumed that what one always maximized is indeed one's own welfare. This bemusing use of utility fits in well with good deal of modern economic theory which, it can be argued, is well disposed to regards human beings who are unable to distinguish between perfectly distinguishable questions about one's own happiness, one's desires, view of one's own welfare, one's motivation, one's maximand in choice and behaviour...<sup>192</sup>

Just as the fact that it is obviously that real income as an indicator of wellbeing is quite deficient, similarly other purely objective notions of wellbeing also seem quite inadequate. The time has come to take into consideration other significant psychological characteristics. Sen contends that well-being of a person has to be "seen in terms of the quality (the 'well-ness', as it were) of the person's being"<sup>193</sup>. Sen forcefully argues against having utility as measures of wellbeing. A serious argument raised by Sen is:

A person who is ill-fed, undernourished, unsheltered and ill...the destitute thrown into beggary, the vulnerable landless labourer precariously surviving at the edge of subsistence... all tend to come to terms with their respective

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<sup>192</sup>Sen, Amartya., (1999), *Commodities and Capabilities*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 2-3.

<sup>193</sup> Sen, Amartya (2010), *Inequality Reexamined*, Oxford: Oxford University Press(first published 1995), p. 35

predicaments. The deprivations are suppressed and muffled in the scale of utilities...<sup>194</sup>

These considerations pose a critical question to economists. If what Sen contends is true, then objective characterisation of wellbeing is likely to be quite unsatisfactory to capture other significant aspects of human life. It is true that goods and commodities are essential for survival but it can neither buy fulfilment nor happiness. Had it been so, then no one rich would be depressed or suicidal or unhappy. This is cogently put by David G. Myers:

Happy people ... are strikingly energetic, decisive, flexible, creative, and sociable. Compared to unhappy people, they more trusting, more loving, more responsive.... Happy people tolerate more frustration....Evidence also accumulates that.... our body's immune system fights disease more effectively when we are happy rather than depressed...So, human happiness is both an end – better to live fulfilled, with joy – and a means to a more caring and healthy society<sup>195</sup>.

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<sup>194</sup>Sen, Amartya,, (1999), op. cit., pp. 1-2

<sup>195</sup> Myers, David G. (1993) *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is happy and why?* (New York: William Morrow).

## Chapter IV

### Happiness as eudaimonia and its relation to psychological wellbeing

#### Section I – Psychological Approaches

Connections of happiness, well-being as hedonic pleasure dates back to ancient times. We have discussed the hedonic indicators of happiness coupled with a cognitive component as given by subjective wellbeing. We have also seen the relationship of subjective wellbeing with personality traits, income, wealth and other demographic variables. To briefly recapitulate the view of happiness as subjective wellbeing -- we find that in recent years Daniel Kahneman and others have defined a new branch of psychology called hedonic psychology as the study of “what makes experiences and life pleasant and unpleasant”<sup>196</sup>. The renowned volume titled, *Well-being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, claims that in this new branch of psychology, hedonism and wellbeing are virtually equivalent. Ed Diener, a leading psychologist in the field of happiness research holds the view that well-being is characterised by the experience of positive emotions over negative emotions and includes judgements about the whole life.

Psychologists who have adopted the hedonic view have tended to focus on a broad conception of hedonism that includes the preferences and pleasures of the mind as well as the body<sup>197</sup>. Indeed, the predominant view among hedonic psychologists is that well-being includes subjective happiness and concerns the experience of pleasure versus displeasure broadly construed to contain all judgments about the good/bad elements of life. Happiness is thus not reducible to physical hedonism, for it can be derived from attainment of goals or valued outcomes in varied realms<sup>198</sup>. So this tradition of psychology has clearly defined wellbeing in terms of pleasure versus pain and life satisfaction and has as its goal maximising happiness in human life. In most researches of this tradition subjective wellbeing is taken to consist of three components: life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood, and the absence of

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<sup>196</sup> Kahneman et al, (1999), *Well-being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, p. ix

<sup>197</sup> Kubovy M., (1999), ‘On the pleasures of the mind’, in (eds) Kahneman et al, (1999), *Well-being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, pp. 134–54

<sup>198</sup> Diener, E, (1984), ‘Subjective well-being’, *Psychological Bulletin*, 95, p.544



negative mood. We have discussed in detail in the last chapter. Despite the fact that subjective wellbeing consists of three components: life satisfaction, the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect but in a large number of surveys, subjective wellbeing is often defined and operationalized in terms of pleasure versus pain<sup>199</sup>.

Like the hedonic versus eudaimonic debates in philosophy about happiness, in psychology also, substantial dispute has been raised about the degree to which measures of subjective wellbeing satisfactorily explain psychological wellness<sup>200</sup>. The two most significant issues that have been raised, concern the validity of subjective wellbeing as an operational definition of happiness or wellbeing and about the types of goals, achievements and other social pursuits recommended to facilitate happiness. Whatever the debates may be, there seem to be three positions that may be endorsed. We may accept the eudaimonic view of happiness and argue against the hedonic view of happiness and reject subjective wellbeing as a definition of happiness. Secondly we may endorse the eudaimonic view of happiness but use subjective wellbeing as an indicator of happiness. Thirdly we might accept subjective wellbeing as happiness and thereby accept the hedonic view of happiness.

Although a large number of ongoing researches in happiness is based on the hedonist approach, the eudaimonic view of happiness emerged as a major challenge to define and measure happiness and wellbeing. Similar to the fact that the hedonic theory of happiness has a long tradition, the eudaimonic view of happiness is replete with theories from ancient Western philosophical thoughts. We will discuss in this chapter the eudaimonic tradition that can be traced back to Aristotle. We will discuss about the view of Aristotle later in this section. Eric Fromm asserted that it is only by distinguishing between satisfying those needs that give momentary gratification and are subjectively felt from the ones that facilitate growth and are rooted in human nature can we attain optimal wellbeing (*vivere bene*)<sup>201</sup> or eudaimonia.

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<sup>199</sup> Ryan, R. M. & Edward L. Deci. (2001), 'On Happiness and Human Potential : a Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being' *Annual Review of Psychology* 52, p. 144.

<sup>200</sup> Ryff CD, Singer B., (1998), 'The contours of positive human health', *Psychological Inquiry* 9, pp.1-28

<sup>201</sup> Fromm, E., (1981), 'Primary and secondary process in waking and in altered states of consciousness', *Academic Psychological Bulletin*, 3, p. 32 – 38.

The importance of the term eudaimonia is the fact that here happiness is distinguished from pleasure. If we consider happiness and wellbeing to be equivalent, then all desires when fulfilled may not produce wellbeing or happiness. For example, the intake of an addictive substance such as cocaine might gratify momentary pleasure but will be detrimental in the long run to achieve either happiness or wellbeing. Eudaimonic theories state that although a person might value an outcome, still there are possibilities when the desired outcome is achieved, will not be conducive to wellbeing even though the outcome may be pleasure producing. Thus from this perspective subjective pleasure cannot be equated with happiness or wellbeing. The conception of eudaimonia requires people to lead their lives in harmony with their *daimon* or true self.

According to Alan Waterman, when people are engaged in life activities that are congruent with their strongly held values they feel authentic and deeply alive and they feel who they really are<sup>202</sup>. Waterman termed this state as personal expressiveness (PE). He showed that hedonic enjoyment and personal expressiveness are two distinct types of experiences although there is a strong correlation between the two. He found that hedonic enjoyment is more associated with trying to be relaxed and being away from problems, whereas PE was strongly associated with activities that afforded challenge and exerting effort that led to personal growth<sup>203</sup>. Eudaimonic researches on happiness or wellbeing focus on the way a person functions, rather than how a person feels. Functioning well is usually defined as fulfilling basic needs<sup>204</sup>, having self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose, positive interpersonal relations, and mastery over the environment<sup>205</sup>.

Several eudaimonic theories have been proposed but most intensive research has been conducted based mainly on two theories of eudaimonia. The two important eudaimonic theories that have challenged hedonic views in the last three decades are

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<sup>202</sup> Waterman, A.S., (1993), 'Two conceptions of happiness: Contrasts of personal expressiveness (eudaimonia) and hedonic enjoyment', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 64(4), pp. 678-691.

<sup>203</sup> Waterman's model of happiness is another eudaimonic theory of happiness which is close to the ones we have discussed in this chapter.

<sup>204</sup> Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000), 'Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being', *American Psychologist*, 55, p.68

<sup>205</sup> Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995), 'The structure of psychological well-being revisited', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, pp.719-727

the Self-determination Theory and a theory proposed by Carol Ryff. The professors Richard M. Ryan and Edward Deci (2008) are the proponents of the theory of Self-determination (SDT). Self-realization or eudaimonia is a central definitional aspect of wellbeing in the Self-determination this theory. SDT conceptualises that wellbeing is a process and not a consequent or end result. It is concerned with living well or actualizing one's potentials and psychological well-being refers to living an enriched life in a deeply satisfying manner. They have endeavoured to specify what is meant by self-realization and have attempted to show how it may be achieved.

Carol Ryff developed an alternative approach to wellbeing as a critique to the researches on subjective wellbeing which she felt had impoverished theoretical basis<sup>206</sup>. Drawing upon the concepts of wellbeing prevailing since ancient times to modern existential and humanistic psychology, she incorporated in her theory, the ideas of wellbeing given by Aristotle, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Victor Frankl among others. She proposed that psychological well-being is a complicated structure of positive psychological functioning having different dimensions.

Ryff constructed a measure of well-being around six subscales which include-- the feeling of personal growth and continuous development as a human being (personal growth), the individual's belief that life is meaningful and purposeful (purpose in life), positive evaluation of his or her present life and past history (self-acceptance), establishing and sustaining positive interpersonal relationship (positive relations with others), the capacity of the person to have control of her life and world (environmental mastery) and the ability to make personal decisions (autonomy).

Deci and Ryan have clarified explicitly about the definition and functionality of *need* as given in their Self Determination Theory (SDT) –

...human needs specify the necessary conditions for psychological health or well-being and their satisfaction is hypothesized to be associated with the most effective functioning and that... there are not instances of optimal, healthy development in which a need for autonomy, relatedness, or competence was neglected, whether or not the individuals consciously valued those needs. In

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<sup>206</sup> Ryff, C. D. (1989), 'Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), p.1070

short, psychological health requires satisfaction of all three needs; one or two are not enough<sup>207</sup>.

At the core of SDT lies the postulate that a person has three inherent and basic psychological needs that are universal namely those for competence and relatedness and autonomy<sup>208</sup>. *Competence* refers to the need to feel effective and to have control with respect to one's environment. It concerns one's propensity to face challenges and feelings of efficacy. Competence refers to the feeling that one has the ability to have an effect on the "environment as well as to attain valued outcomes within it"<sup>209</sup>. It encompasses feelings of curiosity, effectance and self-confidence and is facilitated by both optimal challenges and effectance supportive feedback. *Relatedness* concerns the need for belongingness. It refers to the need for human connection, warmth, acceptance, and emotional responsiveness. It is a longing to feel connected to others—to love and care, and to be loved and cared for<sup>210</sup>. Relatedness is the tendency to have meaningful connections with intimate others and social groups, and is facilitated by, caring and sense of significance.

*The need for autonomy* has been most extensively researched in SDT. Autonomy refers to *a sense of choice* and freedom from external pressure in one's actions, behaviours and thoughts. It is the organismic desire to self-organize experience and behavior<sup>211</sup>. Autonomy is concerned with being involved in activities that are congruent with an individual's integrated sense of self. It refers to the experience of self-endorsement of one's action and true volition.

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<sup>207</sup> Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000), 'The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior', *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, p.229

<sup>208</sup> Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000), op. cit., p.75

<sup>209</sup> La Guardia, J. G.; Ryan, R.M.; Couchman, C.E.; Deci, E., (2000), 'Within-person variation in security of attachment: A self-determination theory perspective on attachment, need fulfillment, and well-being', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 79(3), Sep, p.368

<sup>210</sup> Anderson, S. M., Chen, S., & Carter, C. (2000), 'Fundamental human needs: Making social cognition relevant', *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, p.270

<sup>211</sup> Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1991), 'A motivational approach to self: Integration in personality', in Nebraska symposium on motivation, Vol. 38 (1991), p.243

It must be noted that autonomy does not refer to the idea of individualism and being independent in the sense that interpersonal relations are not valued<sup>212</sup>. In SDT autonomy refers to the experience of integration and freedom and it is central to healthy human functioning. The satisfaction of these three needs is manifested in a wide variety of activities among different individuals in different cultures. However satisfaction of all the three basic needs is the essential nutriment for wellbeing, growth and healthy development of a person.

In SDT needs are defined at the psychological level rather than at a physiological level. Needs specify “innate psychological nutrients that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being”<sup>213</sup>. Optimal satisfaction of these needs lead towards health, vitality, integration and actualisation of one’s potential, but when need satisfaction is deprived and thwarted, significant negative consequences will occur. It should be further noted that each need is a vital part of optimal functioning and growth and that there is no structural organization in a hierarchical sense between these needs. No one single need is more basic than another. Thus SDT hypothesizes that maximal and effective human functioning can be achieved only when all the three needs are optimally satisfied<sup>214</sup>

The basic psychological needs posited in SDT are not comparable with physiological needs with respect to the aim of need satisfaction. Physiological need satisfaction involves replenishing of a deficit. It is concerned with bringing homeostasis to the body when such deficiencies occur. So satisfaction of physiological needs is related with a passive waiting for disequilibria and human behaviour serves the purpose of fulfilling the deficit. Action on the part of an individual is initiated only when

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<sup>212</sup> Ryan, R. M., La Guardia, J. G., Solky-Butzel, J., Chirkov, V., & Kim, Y. (2005), ‘On the interpersonal regulation of emotions: Emotional reliance across gender, relationships and cultures’, *Personal Relationships*, 12, p.146

<sup>213</sup> Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M., (2000), op. cit., p.229

<sup>214</sup> Patrick H, Knee CR, Canevello A, Lonsbary C., (2007), ‘The role of need fulfillment in relationship functioning and well-being: a self-determination theory perspective’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 92, no. 3, p. 435

required. Comparing this aspect of physiological needs with the basic psychological needs, the fundamental difference lies in the fact that need satisfaction occurs naturally when an individual engages himself in activities that they find interesting. So given an environment which allows the satisfaction of the basic needs, a person will engage himself in activities that he finds important. The human organism does not have to be goaded for action. Most importantly the purpose of these activities is not satisfaction of the needs but achievement of a significant goal of the person. However if the context of these goal-directed activities do not allow satisfaction of the needs, then sub-optimal or maladaptive consequences will occur. For example a child whose satisfaction of the need for autonomy is blocked in some way, might gradually become desperate. Since the child cannot exert control on various things even if he wishes to (due to lack of authority or maturity) might express his need for autonomy by refusing food. If the child persistently goes on doing this then later on she might become anorexic.

SDT proposes that the inherent tendency of the human organism is towards vitality and mental health, and as such human behaviours are explained by growth oriented activity. This implies an interesting viewpoint. For physiological needs, deprivation and deviation is the motivating factor for any behaviour, so any action is based on drive reduction process. A person when hungry will search for food, when in pain will seek to relieve his pain; all actions are aimed at producing equilibrium and stem from disequilibria. But SDT advocates that innate life processes involving growth oriented behaviours occur naturally. SDT suggests that -

... it is inherent in people's nature to act in the direction of increased psychological differentiation and integration in terms of their capacities, their valuing processes, and their social connectedness. These inherent integrative tendencies require the nutriments of need satisfaction to be sustained and for positive consequences to follow, but need satisfaction is not necessarily the aim of these actions<sup>215</sup>.

So when children spontaneously engage in playing, exploring a new place, reading a book, etc., they do not act with the conscious goal to satisfy their need for

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<sup>215</sup> Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M., (2000), op.cit., p.230

competence. The spontaneity and optimal outcome of such activities require the context that satisfies the basic needs, although these activities are not aimed directly at need satisfaction. People engage in behaviors that promote growth and wellbeing out of interest, enjoyment, and inherent satisfaction. Such behaviours are called intrinsically motivated behaviours.

Intrinsically motivated behaviors are those that are freely engaged out of interest ...and, to be maintained, they require satisfaction of the needs...Intrinsically motivated activities are not necessarily directed at satisfaction of these needs per se, and behaviors that are directed at satisfaction of these needs are not necessarily intrinsically motivated<sup>216</sup>.

As long as a person is in an environment that promotes optimal satisfaction of needs, he or she will not engage in behaviours with the aim of satisfaction of a need. The activities of such a person will be regulated by interest, enjoyment and inherent sense of fulfilment. But this is not to say that a person never behaves with the goal of specific satisfaction of a need. What this means is that a person deprived of autonomy, may explicitly seek freedom, a person feeling incompetent may intentionally engage in activities that bring sense of achievement and a person feeling lonesome might try to find a friend. So engaging in intrinsically motivated activities require prior experience of need fulfilment compared to activities that are intended explicitly towards need satisfaction.

Being deeply engaged in playing a sitar or painting a landscape, a person might become engrossed and go through a profound aesthetic experience. A person swimming in a pool or a bodybuilder in a gym might feel invigorated by his activity. But these same people will not enjoy their activities had they been forced to do them under external pressure or if they felt that they were not up to it. This indicates that experience of autonomy and competence are essential for an activity to be rewarding<sup>217</sup> although none of these people engaged in the above activities to satisfy their need for autonomy or competence. So as long as a person finds an activity

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<sup>216</sup> Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M., (2000), op.cit., p.233

<sup>217</sup> Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1991), op. cit., p. 242

enjoyable and interesting or suitably challenging, he will continue to spontaneously pursue it.

This implies that when an activity is valued consciously and is of personal importance to an individual, then it is concordant and integrated with his sense of self.

Another difference between physiological needs and basic psychological needs is the behaviour of an individual when he or she is deprived of a need. The deficiency of physiological need prompts a person to exert more towards its satisfaction. Increase in deficiency or duration of the deprivation results in making satisfaction of the need substantially significant. When a person is deprived of sleep, after a while, he or she will not be able to concentrate or do on anything and will eventually fall asleep. A hungry person will be solely preoccupied in his search for food regardless of any other activity. In case of psychological need deprivation, there also is a tendency to behave in ways that satisfy the given need, but the failure in experiencing optimal satisfaction of psychological needs may lessen the chance of direct satisfaction of the need because it renders a person to be more accommodative. The suboptimal satisfaction of any one or more need may give rise to need substitutes and defenses which can further hinder the satisfaction of the need<sup>218</sup>. For example a person denied of autonomy may become overly complying or defying, which will lead to further deprivation. Thus the deficit becomes self-perpetuating. Even if it appears that such behaviours are valued by the individual, the resulting consequences will be negative for the person's healthy psychological development, wellbeing and growth. Thus an extremely passionate desire for companionship does not imply an innate intense need for relatedness just as an unnatural desire to be in control of a situation might not imply innately strong needs of autonomy or competency.

Optimal satisfaction of these three needs also prescribe the familial and social nutriments necessary for people to grow and flourish psychologically<sup>219</sup>. They posit that for people to experience vitality, psychological flexibility and a deep sense of inner wellness, it is necessary that the social environment must be such that it is able

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<sup>218</sup> Reis, H T., Sheldon K. M, Gable, S. L., Roscoe, J., & Ryan, R. M. (2000), 'Daily well-being: The role of autonomy, competence and relatedness' *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26, p.421

<sup>219</sup> Grolnick, W. S., & Ryan, R. M., (1989), 'Parent styles associated with children's self-regulation and competence in school', *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81, pp.143-154



to satisfy the three basic needs of the people that live in it. Numerous studies have been conducted to study the relation between need satisfaction and psychological wellbeing<sup>220, 221</sup>. These predictions have been explored in studies of daily experiences of autonomy and competency with psychological wellbeing measures<sup>222</sup>.

Findings from various studies support the propositions forwarded by SDT<sup>223</sup>. Autonomy support is likely to enhance efforts given to a task compared to lack of support. People are likely to be engaged even in uninteresting activities for a longer period of time in the presence of an environment that met satisfaction of all the basic needs<sup>224</sup>. Much of research on SDT has been in educational settings<sup>225</sup>. It has been found that an environment supportive of the basic needs is likely to result in higher levels of subjective wellbeing and vitality among other positive outcomes<sup>226</sup>. These researches can facilitate and foster greater levels of integrity, growth and wellbeing thereby improving academic performance or productivity at workplace and educational institutions through applying the above findings.

The proponents of SDT acknowledge subjective wellbeing to be one out of several indicators of wellbeing, but at the same time they emphasize that different types of positive experiences exist. It is possible that there may be conditions that promote subjective wellbeing but do not harbour eudaimonic wellbeing. There are some research findings supporting the fact that if a certain goal is achieved under external pressure, then the person might attain subjective wellbeing but not eudaimonic

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<sup>220</sup> Ryan, R. M., & Frederick, C. M., (1997), 'On energy, personality, and health: Subjective vitality as a dynamic reflection of well-being', *Journal of Personality*, 65, pp.529-565

<sup>221</sup> Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L., & Grolnick, W. S., (1995), 'Autonomy, relatedness, and the self: Their relation to development and psychopathology', in D. Cicchetti & J. Cohen (eds.), *Developmental psychopathology*, New York: Wiley, Vol. 1, pp. 618-655)

<sup>222</sup> Sheldon, K. M., Ryan, R. M., & Reis, H. T., (1996), 'What makes for a good day? Competence and autonomy in the day and in the person.', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, pp.1270-1279

<sup>223</sup> Deci, E. L., Eghrari, H., Patrick, B. C., & Leone, D. R., (1994), Facilitating internalization: The self-determination theory perspective, *Journal of Personality*, 62: 119, p.142

<sup>224</sup> Zuckerman, M., Porac, J., Lathin, D., Smith, R., & Deci, D. L., (1978), 'On the importance of self-determination for intrinsically motivated behavior', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 4, pp.443-446

<sup>225</sup> Deci, E. L., Vallerand, R. J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991), 'Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective', *Educational Psychologist*, 26, pp.325-346

<sup>226</sup> Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L., (2000), 'Self-Determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being', *American Psychologist*, 55, pp. 68-78

wellbeing. While the same activity done autonomously resulted in both subjective wellbeing and eudaimonic wellbeing<sup>227</sup>. For example if an unemployed person gets a job, the very fact of getting employment takes him to a better position so he might feel happy. But it might happen that the job he is doing is not the one where his potential is utilised. So we cannot say that he is well eudaimonically.

One of the recurring controversies have been about the role of dialectic between the socio-cultural context of a person and the satisfaction of his need, in particular the need for autonomy. According to Deci and Ryan, it is not the nature of the environment that is important, but its interpretation or functionality with regard to supporting the basic needs of its members. They have stressed that optimal outcomes are achieved when satisfaction of all the three needs are equally satisfied. There has not been much focus on the outcome when one or more need satisfaction is thwarted. SDT claims that people continuously strive to harmonise their values and preferences into a coherent whole within themselves. This experience of integration is autonomy. The process of harmonisation of one's values and beliefs with those of one's culture also contribute to wellbeing. At the interpersonal level it is a sign of psychological health. SDT also states that those who function more autonomously have more positive social experiences<sup>228</sup>. It has been found that people tend naturally to internalise the values and regulations of their social groups and this tendency is facilitated by the feeling of relatedness with others<sup>229</sup>. Some of their studies have given empirical support to the "proposition regarding the positive relation between the internalization of cultural practices and well-being."<sup>230</sup> Other studies in SDT have found that

The security provided by satisfaction of the need for relatedness is seen in

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<sup>227</sup> Nix G, Ryan RM, Manly JB, Deci E.L., (1999), 'Revitalization through self-regulation: the effects of autonomous versus controlled motivation on happiness and vitality', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 35:266, p.84

<sup>228</sup> Patrick, H., Knee.,C.R., Canevello, A., Lonsbary,C.,, (2007), 'The Role of Need Fulfillment in Relationship Functioning and Well-Being: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 92, No. 3, p.435

<sup>229</sup> Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000), op. cit., p- 238.

<sup>230</sup> Chirkov. I. , Ryan, M. R., Willness, C. , (2005), ' Cultural context and psychological needs in Canada and Brazil :Testing a Self-Determination Approach to the Internalization of Cultural Practices, Identity, and Well-Being ', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 36 No. 4,( July), p.424

Self-Determination Theory as an important influence on the ability of persons to engage in the pursuit of autonomy and competence...<sup>231</sup>.

But it must be noted that this contention seems to deeply contradict the very program of human culture. Cultural reform would never have taken place if the above claim is true. The biographies of great reformers such as Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar or Raja Rammohan Roy show us that their actions, values and beliefs were radically contrary to the prevailing cultural norms. But their life and deeds have shown them to be highly eudaimonic individuals with a high level of psychological wellbeing. Actually the proponents of SDT have unequivocally stated :

SDT, ...explicitly differentiates independence from autonomy: The former concerns being separate from or not relying on others, whereas autonomy concerns being volitional or endorsing one's goals and actions ...Similar to the notion of individualism, which is seen as the system of cultural representations and practices where the priority is given to the individuals' needs, goals, and preferences rather than to the collective's needs and goals, SDT unequivocally separates it from the concept of autonomy<sup>232</sup>...

It seems that further research on this issue is important in understanding the nature of the need for autonomy.

Criticisms related to the research methodology have been levied against SDT. There have been a vast body of research on SDT and the researches have been placed as empirical proof of the theory. But an important limitation of these studies is that almost all the subjects involved in these studies were Caucasian university students of average income. A lot of surveys have been done online or through phone with incentives of cash prizes or credits in the participant's field of study. There is an overwhelming body of researches that suggest that surveys have been conducted with an extremely biased sample in SDT. This is evident from the examples of the samples shown below. In their survey for autonomy support 144 participants were selected who were enrolled in a university and

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<sup>231</sup> Ryan, R. M., & LaGuardia, L. G. (2000), 'What is being optimized over development? self-determination theory perspective on basic psychological needs across the life span', in S. Qualls & R. Abeles (eds.), *Dialogues on psychology and aging*, Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, pp. 145-172

<sup>232</sup> Chirkov. I., Ryan, M. R., Willness, C., (2005), p. 425

...Most participants were Caucasian White...recruited from an undergraduate educational psychology course and received extra credit for their participation<sup>233</sup>.

A major study on motivation was based on the sample of 511 undergraduate and graduate degree programs students<sup>234</sup>. The oft cited survey on emotional regulation was conducted on 195 undergraduates who “received extra course credit for their participation.<sup>235</sup>” in studying the influence of cultural context on need satisfaction. The participants were :

... 142 students ... from the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada, and 127 students ... from the University of Belo Horizonte, Brazil<sup>236</sup>.

Another line of criticism levelled against SDT is that SDT claims that perception of satisfaction is important rather than stressing whether actually the need is satisfied or not. Because of this when research findings say that the satisfaction of autonomy, relatedness or competency is high satisfied, in reality what is measured is that the perception of the satisfaction is expressed. One point of caution here is that since the satisfaction of the need is given through self report type, so whether need satisfaction takes place is not known. For example when assessing the satisfaction of need for autonomy for school children, it is possible that the perception of a child might be quite divergent with the actual facts. The danger is all the more because if in actuality the relationship of the child with his parents is strained, then even if his satisfaction of autonomy need in actuality is high, i.e., the child is not forced or controlled, he might perceive it to be so. In this case if the child perceives a deprivation of need for autonomy, then the maladaptive effects that may be expected due to this deprivation may occur here also. To show his autonomy, the child might defy any sort of parental guidance and may engage in risky behaviours like staying out late at night, the rate of smoking, substance abuse or etc. This defiance might be generalised against teachers

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<sup>233</sup> Reeve, J & Jang, J. H., (2006), ‘What Teachers Say and Do to Support Students’ Autonomy During a Learning Activity’, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 98, No. 1, p.212

<sup>234</sup> Hagger, M. S., Chatzisarantis, N. L., & Harris, J., (2006), ‘From psychological need satisfaction to intentional behavior: Testing a motivational sequence in two behavioral contexts’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32, p.137

<sup>235</sup> Ryan, R. M., La Guardia, J. G., Solky-Butzel, J., Chirkov, V., & Kim, Y, (2005), ‘On the interpersonal regulation of emotions: Emotional reliance across gender, relationships and cultures’, *Personal Relationships*, 12, p.148.

<sup>236</sup> Chirkov. I. , Ryan, M. R., Willness, C. , op. cit., p.429

and later onto any authority figure. Even Oppositional Defiance Disorder might occur. All of these are detrimental to psychological health. So despite the satisfaction of a need or all of the needs, psychological health or optimal functioning is not ensured as claimed by SDT.

Another criticism that may be raised against SDT is that, in this theory it is explicitly stated that there exists a high level of correlation between the needs. The satisfaction of any one of the needs is expected to increase the satisfaction of other needs. But in reality there is always the possibility of a conflict between the satisfactions of different needs. For example, it may happen that a brilliant individual who has a warm and close relationship with his ailing parents, has got an offer from an institution which is of global repute. This offer provides an excellent opportunity for continuing his research in a highly equipped infrastructure. But since his parents are ill and he is close to them, leaving them may lower the satisfaction of relatedness. On the other hand, refusing the offer to work goes against the satisfaction of competency. So the possibility of optimal satisfaction of all the three needs becomes questionable. SDT admits strong correlation between optimal satisfaction of three needs and subjective wellbeing. But it does not explain the relation between need satisfaction and happiness. The conceptual framework adopted here for characterising wellbeing is designed carefully so that there remains a scope for making the claim that one can be in a state of wellbeing without being happy at the same time. But this conceptual position gets challenged by the fact of correlation between need satisfaction and happiness.

In favour of SDT it may be said that this theory emphasises on wellbeing and happiness as being related phenomena and yet conceptually distinct. The relation between them is a factual relation and not a necessary one. This argument can explain why the presence of positive affect does not necessarily imply wellbeing. However it fails to explain why the need for being happy should not be included as a basic need. As a matter of fact one may claim that the need for attaining happiness is a far more basic need than the above mentioned needs. It is not difficult to formulate arguments in favour of this view.

It is important to note against SDT that despite emphasising on the requirement of need satisfaction it has failed to notice that there are certain dimensions of

psychological wellbeing which cannot be met only by the satisfaction of these three basic needs. The dimension of self-acceptance can be cited an example. An individual who cannot accept both his positive and negative qualities and thus who is not in a state of 'poise' with what he is, can hardly be considered to be in a state of wellbeing. SDT ignores this aspect and thus a charge of offering a narrow view of wellbeing can be brought against it since it ignores other necessary dimensions of wellbeing.

Moreover a possible argument against SDT may be raised regarding an individual's defensive behaviour even when his three basic needs are satisfied. If there are several unconscious wishes that a person has to handle through his defences then he may suffer neurotic anxieties. But while measuring psychological wellbeing, SDT would consider this person at par with another individual who does not have these defences. This would be conceptually unacceptable. However it must be said that the existence of unconscious wishes has not been conclusively validated. But if it does exist, then this claim would hold.

It is not clear why SDT proposes only these three particular needs as basic and not more. Till now we have discussed SDT as one of the psychological theories that is engaged in the eudemonic concept of wellbeing. Another important theory of psychological wellbeing in this perspective having more than three factors of psychological wellbeing is advocated by Carol Ryff and her colleagues<sup>237</sup>. Ryff's theory of Psychological Wellbeing is comprised of six dimensions. Ryff has defined wellbeing as –

..the striving for perfection that represents the realisation of one's true potential<sup>238</sup>.

Ryff's model of psychological wellbeing encompasses the following factors – autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relations and

self-acceptance. Ryff has shown this model to be feasible in clinical psychology<sup>239</sup> and psychotherapy<sup>240</sup>. This model was based on eudaimonic concepts found in Aristotle and the higher order needs of Abraham Maslow, viz., self actualization<sup>241</sup>.

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<sup>237</sup> Ryff, C. D., (1989), 'Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, pp.1069-1081

<sup>238</sup> Ryff, C. D., (1995), 'Psychological Well-Being in Adult Life', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, (August): 4, p.100

In her theory of psychological wellbeing, Ryff has extensively explained what is meant by the six subscales. As noted earlier Ryff has drawn heavily from Greek philosophy, Humanistic Theories and Existentialist philosophies while formulating her model. Accordingly she has conceptualised *self-acceptance* as one of the key factors of mental health<sup>242</sup>. She conceives self-acceptance as the striving to know one's self. This includes the effort to accurately perceive one's thoughts, behaviours and actions. More importantly self-acceptance emphasizes on the need to have positive self-regard. She states that having self regard is one of the central features of positive mental health. In this connection she stresses that having affirmative feelings towards one's self is a key contributing factors behind optimal functioning and self-actualization. The eminent pioneer of Client-centered Therapy, Carl Rogers describes self-regard as a positive attitude towards one's self. It is the perception of one's self in a way that does not view any experience of the self as less worthy of self regard. He states that having positive self-regard facilitates optimal functioning of a person<sup>243</sup>. Ryff states that positive self regard endorses self-actualization. She further asserts that having self-acceptance means that one is able to integrate one's past history with her concept of self. She stresses that self-acceptance involves having self awareness and acceptance of one's positive qualities and personal limitations. Ryff stresses that positive self regard is significantly richer than standard notions of self-esteem. Hence self-acceptance emerges as one of the central characteristics of positive psychological functioning<sup>244</sup>.

Many of the major theories in philosophy and psychology emphasize that a core feature of optimal living is meaningful ties with other human beings. Ryff states that *positive relations with others* is a core component of psychological wellbeing<sup>245</sup>. She

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<sup>239</sup> Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. H. , (1996), 'Psychological well-being: Meaning, measurement, and implications for psychotherapy research', *Psychotherapy & Psychosomatics*, 65, pp.14-23

<sup>240</sup> Rafanelli, C., Park, S. K., Ruini, C., Ottolini, F., Cazzaro, M., & Fava, G. A., (2000), 'Rating well-being and distress', *Stress Medicine*, 16, pp.55-61

<sup>241</sup> Maslow, A. H., (1954), *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper

<sup>242</sup> Ryff, C. D., (1989, ' Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological wellbeing', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, p.1071

<sup>243</sup> Rogers, C., (2003), *Client-Centred Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory*, Constable: London

<sup>244</sup> Ryff, C. D. & Singer, B. H., (2006), 'Know thy self and become what you are: A eudaimonic approach to psychological well being', *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9, .p- 21

<sup>245</sup> Ryff, C. D. (1989), op. cit., p.1071

also mentions that Aristotle stressed the importance of friendship in leading the good life and Bertrand Russel declared love as one of the three sources of happiness<sup>246</sup>. All of the views mentioned above give emphasis on empathic, warm, caring and trusting interpersonal relationship to be central to mental health. One of the distinguishing characteristics of a self-actualized person is the ability to be genuinely empathic and affectionate to others. A self actualised person will have a greater capacity to love, form deep friendships and care for another human being. Ryff refers to Allport's view of a mature person as having compassion, respect and appreciation of others and also having the capacity to engage intimately in a loving relationship<sup>247</sup>. She proposes that the ability to love is the fundamental criterion of positive mental health. Thus the primacy of love, empathy and affection seem to be universally endorsed as key features of wellbeing<sup>248</sup>.

Ryff views *personal growth* as one of the important dimensions of psychological wellbeing. *Personal growth* involves the constant effort to be a fully functioning person by striving to actualise one's potential. This urge for self actualisation is dynamic and it involves a continual enrichment of one's self indicating personal growth According to Ryff a person high in personal growth possesses the following characteristics:

Has a feeling of continued development; sees self as growing and expanding; is open to new experiences; has sense of realizing his or her potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; is changing in ways that reflect more self knowledge and effectiveness<sup>249</sup>.

The endeavour to face new challenges at different stages of one's life involves the capacity of a person to develop himself. According to Rogers, the fully functioning individual is open to new experiences in his perceptual world. He is continually developing and becoming so that this positive functioning of the self is dynamic and not fixed. This dimension of wellbeing is closest to the Aristotelian notion of

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<sup>246</sup> Ryff, C. D. & Singer, B. H. (2006), op. cit., p. 21

<sup>247</sup> Ryff, C. D. & Singer, B. H., (2000), 'Interpersonal Flourishing: A Positive Health Agenda for the New Millennium', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, Vol. 4, NO. 1, pp.30-31

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Ryff C.D., (2014), 'Psychological Well-Being Revisited: Advances in Science and Practice', *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 83(1), p.31



eudaimonia that is explicitly involved with human flourishing, excellence and self realization of an individual<sup>250</sup>.

*Purpose in life* is the dimension of psychological wellbeing that relies greatly on existential philosophical concepts involves having a clear sense of direction and intentionality in life that provides purpose and sense of meaning to the life one is leading<sup>251</sup>. Ryff refers to Frankl's search for meaning as expostulated in his logotherapy that facilitates one to find purpose and meaning in the face of adversities and suffering<sup>252</sup>. She notes that Satre's views on authentic living are based on creating and finding meaning in life. She mentions the concept of zest as forwarded by Russel in which he emphasized on actively engaging and reflecting in life<sup>253</sup>. In this context Ryff also refers to the definition of mental health as emphasizing on having beliefs that provide a sense of purpose in life<sup>254</sup>. Purpose in life in terms of direction and purposefulness makes living more meaningful. It gives one the feeling that the past and the present life both carry meaning and existence has a meaning because of having clear goals and objectives.

Ryff mentions that *environmental mastery* is the ability of an individual to select or create environments suitable to his or her psychic conditions. She also states that being flexible in different contexts is defined as an important part of mental health. Ryff also states that life-span theories refer to maturity as the ability to influence and control complex environments and thereby creatively changing the world by one's physical and mental activities, particularly in midlife. Individuals who have the capacity to effectively use the opportunities around them and shape conditions around them to suit their needs and values are higher in environmental mastery. Ryff agrees with the view that maturity also includes the capacity to engage in important spheres

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<sup>250</sup> Ryff, C. D., (1989), op. cit., p.1072

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Frankl, V. E., (1992), *Man's search for meaning: an introduction to logotherapy*, ( part one translated by Use Lasch), 4th ed., Boston: Beacon Press

<sup>253</sup> Russell, B., , (1930), *The conquest of happiness*, London, England: Allen and Unwin

<sup>254</sup> Ryff, C. D. & Singer, B. H., (2006), op. cit., p.21

of life that surpass the boundaries of self<sup>255</sup>. The combined characteristics mentioned above imply that mastery of the environment is integral to positive functioning<sup>256</sup>.

Ryff puts together concepts from a variety of theories to construct the dimension of *autonomy*. She includes qualities such as self-determination, independence and regulation of behaviours from within. It may be mentioned in this context that Rogers describes the fully functioning person as having an internal system of evaluation which enables him to be independent of approval from outside and to evaluate by own personal standards<sup>257</sup>. Individuation refers to the state of freedom from collective beliefs, laws and fears, so that the person becomes free from the bonds of convention. Cultures where autonomy is encouraged foster successful individuation that would enable a person to develop and express his ideas, beliefs, feelings and preferences. In contrast cultural embeddedness emphasizes on holding on to conventions and beliefs in order to maintain the status quo and imposes restrictions on activities that have the possibility of changing the status quo. Autonomy is also the attribute to take responsibility of one's thoughts, beliefs and action. This comes very close the Sartrean idea of authentic living. An autonomous person can be more open to new experiences because of freedom from conventional beliefs and customs. Hence they can assimilate new experiences from varied cultures more readily. A point to note here is that the definition of autonomy in Ryff's model is broader and different to the one proposed in SDT. In the latter theory, autonomy is not equated with individuation. Rather the process of internalisation of cultural values is held to foster relatedness.

Ryff defines psychological wellbeing in terms of the above six dimensions. She asserts that positive psychological functioning is a complex theoretical and operational framework comprised of the above six constructs. Ryff's model encompasses a broad array of conceptions of self. Psychological wellbeing is assessed mainly through self-reported questionnaires and also biological measures. Other forms of assessment such as informant reports or behavioural observations are sometimes employed.

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ryff, C.D., & Singer B. 1998, 'The contours of positive human health', *Psychological Inquiry*, 9, p.4

<sup>257</sup> Rogers, C., *Client-Centred Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory*, (2003)

According to her theory emotional and also physiological health is facilitated by the promotion of these aspects of psychological wellbeing. Ryff and Singer have shown that eudaimonic living as given by psychological wellbeing may positively affect specific immunological functioning and health<sup>258</sup>. Studies show that adults who have scored high in multiple dimensions of psychological wellbeing suffered less from chronic illness<sup>259</sup>. It has also been found that high levels of engagement in life activities with a purpose have been associated with significantly lower levels of stress hormones as well as lower risks of cardiovascular illness<sup>260</sup>. Studies with positive interpersonal relation in terms of social connectedness have been found to be associated with a lower blood pressure and lower levels of stress hormones<sup>261</sup>.

It has also been found that continuous exposure to experiences that makes a person feel a failure to have control over the events of one's life, adversely affect psychological wellbeing and generates feelings of hopelessness, helplessness to overcome those circumstances<sup>262</sup>. Researches by other scientists have linked a number of psychological qualities with higher wellbeing like optimism and extraversion<sup>263</sup>. Stable self-esteem is highly associated with autonomy, environmental mastery and purpose in life<sup>264</sup>. Married people were consistently found to have a higher purpose of life compared to the divorced, widowed or never married. It was found that all the six

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<sup>258</sup> Ryff CD & Singer B., (1998), 'Human health: new directions for the next millennium', *Psychological Inquiry*, 9, pp.69-85

<sup>259</sup> Keyes CLM., (2005), 'Chronic physical conditions and aging: Is mental health a potential protective factor?', , 30, pp.88–104

<sup>260</sup> Ryff C.D., Singer, B.H., Love G.D., (2004), 'Positive health: connecting well-being with biology', *Philosophical Transactions, Royal Society of London, B, Biological Sciences*, 359, pp.1383– 1394

<sup>261</sup> Uchino, B. N., Cacioppo, J.T., Kiecolt-Glaser, J..K., (1996), 'The relationship between social support and physiological processes: a review with emphasis on underlying mechanisms and implications for health', *Psychological Bulletin*, 119, pp.488–531 & Taylor, S.E., Lerner J.S., Sherman, D.K, Sage, R. M., McDowell, N.K., (2003), 'Are self-enhancing cognitions associated with healthy or unhealthy biological profiles?', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, pp.605–615

<sup>262</sup> Tsihoane maria Tenyane, (2006), 'The psychological wellbeing of learners affected by HIV/AIDS. North-west University (Vaal Triangle Campus)', This article is available at <http://dspace.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/3116>, accessed on 16.05.2014.

<sup>263</sup> Ferguson, S. J., Goodwin, A. D., (2010), 'Optimism and well-being in older adults: The mediating role of social support and perceived control', *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 2010, 71, pp.43–68

<sup>264</sup> Paradise, A. W., Kernis, . M.H., (2002), 'Self-esteem and psychological well-being: Implications of fragile self-esteem', *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 21, pp.345–361

dimensions of psychological wellbeing were negatively related to the status of being divorced or never married<sup>265</sup>.

In studies of psychological wellbeing in women and their work, the dimension of Purpose in life and Personal growth were found to be associated with their career aspirations<sup>266</sup>. Women who perceived themselves as being unable to reach their career goals also scored lower in the above two aspects (Purpose in life and Personal growth) and had more depressive symptoms<sup>267</sup>. It is quite obvious from these various studies that the six dimensions indicate psychological wellbeing.

It can be seen that the Self Determination Theory discussed in the first section has certain similarities with Ryff's model of psychological wellbeing. Both of these models are closely aligned with the Rogerian concept of a fully functioning individual. SDT and psychological wellbeing are in agreement regarding the notion of what being eudaimonic means.

Hedonic approaches to wellbeing focus on feeling good and satisfied with life; Ryff's model has offered a fundamentally different approach to the concept of wellbeing. We have seen earlier that researches on happiness have tended to cluster around the hedonic view of wellbeing. Breaking from that tradition and similar to the concept of wellbeing in SDT, Ryff's model is also a<sup>268</sup> notable exception in that it uses indicators consistent with the eudaimonic perspective. We have seen that the multidimensional model of Psychological Well-Being (psychological wellbeing) proposed by Ryff is very close to the tradition of eudaimonic approach to wellbeing which is concerned with growth, and purpose in life. We have found that Ryff & Singer have developed their theory of human flourishing<sup>269</sup> based on concepts from Aristotle which

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<sup>265</sup> Bierman, A., Fazio, E. M., (2006), 'Milkie MA. A multifaceted approach to the mental health advantage of the married: Assessing how explanations vary by outcome measure and unmarried group', *Journal of Family Issues*, 27, pp.554–582 & Shapiro, A, Keyes, C., (2008), 'Marital status and social well-being: Are the married always better off? ', *Social Indicator Research*, 88, pp.329–346

<sup>266</sup> Strauser, D. R., Lustig, D. C., Çiftçi, A., (2008), 'Psychological well-being: Its relation to work personality, vocational identity, and career thoughts', *The Journal of Psychology Interdisciplinary and Applied*, 142, pp.21–35

<sup>267</sup> Carr, D, (1997), 'The fulfillment of career dreams at midlife: Does it matter for women's mental health?', *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 38, pp.331–344

<sup>268</sup> Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L., (2001)

<sup>269</sup> Ryff, C. D., Singer, B., (2000), 'Interpersonal flourishing: a positive health agenda for the new millennium', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4, pp.30–44

postulates wellbeing is “the striving for perfection that represents the realization of one’s true potential”<sup>270</sup> and not just the attainment of pleasure<sup>271</sup>.

The eudaimonic approach has some similarities with the humanistic concept of a person seeking actualisation of self. It is evident that happiness in the eudaimonic sense is not concerned with the fact of feeling good but gives primary importance to how a person lives one’s life meaningfully. Although the Ryff’s Psychological Wellbeing Theory is an important approach to the study of wellbeing but because of the complexity of the theoretical structure, this approach to wellbeing is difficult to operationalize widely like hedonic wellbeing<sup>272</sup>.

The Self-Determination Theory and The theory of Psychological Wellbeing are the major contenders of eudaimonic theories of happiness or wellbeing. Over the years, both of these theories have undergone refinement. But certain key issues still remain unrequited<sup>273</sup> A critical examination of the eudaimonic measures of wellbeing reveal the fact that since these measures try to capture the experiences of an individual in different aspects of his life, perhaps experiential interviews would be the best method of investigation to assess eudaimonic wellbeing by getting an insight about the unique experiences of the participants<sup>274</sup>. Qualitative interviews however are not psychometrically very reliable. To overcome this obstacle, theories like SDT and Psychological Wellbeing have come up with quantifiable eudaimonic measures. But

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<sup>270</sup> Ryff, C. D., (1995), Psychological Well-Being in Adult Life, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 4, pp.99-104

<sup>271</sup> Ryff, C. D., (1995), op. cit., p.100

<sup>272</sup> Ryff, C.D., Keyes, C.L.M., (1995), op. cit., p.720

<sup>273</sup> Deci, E. L., (1971), ‘Effects of externally mediated rewards on intrinsic motivation’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 18, pp.105–115

Deci, E. L., (1975), *Intrinsic motivation*. New York: Plenum.

Deci, E. L., (1980), *The psychology of self-determination*., Lexington, MA: Heath.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M., (1980), ‘The empirical exploration of intrinsic motivational processes’, in L. Berkowitz (ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, New York: Academic, (Vol. 13), pp. 39–80

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M., (1985), *Intrinsic motivation and selfdetermination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M., (1991), ‘A motivational approach to self: Integration in personality’, in R. Dienstbier (ed.), *Nebraska symposium on motivation: Vol. 38. Perspectives on motivation*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 237–288

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000), op. cit., pp.227–268

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M., (2008), ‘Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life’s domain’, *Canadian Psychology*, 49, pp.14–23, and Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M., (2000), op.cit., pp.227–249

<sup>274</sup> Dale, G. A., (1996), ‘Existential phenomenology: Emphasizing the experience of the athlete in sport psychology research’, *The Sport Psychologist*, 10, pp 307-321

these measures have been accused of being self defeating, because in trying to quantify eudaimonic experiences the human qualities that they endeavour to measure are lost or reduced<sup>275</sup>. Nevertheless we have seen that some eudaimonic measures have been established to capture the concept of eudaimonic wellbeing, despite such arguments. Actually the nature of the measurement is a problem in both SDT and psychological wellbeing Theory. To harbour positive psychological functioning, one will have to live in a way that he or she tries to realize one's potential. So both these theories tell us is that it is the way of living that is being conceptualised by the proponents. It is not possible to represent a way of life through one sentence-questions. The realistic method of understanding it and then assessing it is possible through interview based measurements. But *scientific inquiry* entails quantitative measures and it is hardly possible to translate the human condition of living quantitatively. It seems that the concept that is being discussed is defined in a way as to suit one's objective in understanding the concept. It also appears that measurements of the concept is set up in a way that can give statistics for comparison and other uses- such as policy making etc. but in praxis it hardly seems worthwhile to measure the eudaimonic constructs through yes or no answers or on points on a scale.

Ryff & Singer have criticised models of subjective wellbeing as being a poor indicator of healthy living because subjective wellbeing has a limited scope of measuring positive functioning<sup>276</sup>. In reply Hedonic psychologists like Diener have denounced eudaimonic measures because they feel that the eudaimonic approach is an elite approach in which experts define what wellbeing is instead of the subjective wellbeing approach that allows individuals to decide what is good for them<sup>277</sup>. The debates between these two paradigms indicate that the varied definitions of happiness or wellbeing have resulted in different types of analysis into the cause and consequences of wellbeing.

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<sup>275</sup> Kimiecik, J., (2010), 'Exploring the promise of eudaimonic well-being within the practice of health promotion: The "how" is as important as the "what." ', *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12, pp.769-792

<sup>276</sup> Ryff, C. D., Singer B., (1998), op. cit., pp.1-28

<sup>277</sup> Diener E., Sapyta, J. J., Suh, E., (1998), 'Subjective well-being is essential to well-being', *Psychological Inquiry*, 9, pp.33-37

Measurement of Ryff's psychological wellbeing dimensions has raised several arguments. Initially Ryff had designed 20 items for each of her 6 dimensions, viz., Positive Relations with Others, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Purpose in life, and Self-Acceptance. So the total number of items was 120<sup>278</sup>. But while this was designed keeping in mind the complexity of the dimensions, in practice, it seemed to be a cognitive burden to the participants. After this in subsequent studies the scales were reduced to 14-item scales (84 items total)<sup>279</sup>. But even then it was too lengthy for a large scale survey so from this total of 84-items only 3-items per scale were taken. To accommodate a large scale national survey of wellbeing the reduction of the scale was extreme and it consisted of 3-items per scale, 21 items total<sup>280</sup>. Actually a variety of scales exist with a wide variation of items. A research conducted on women in United Kingdom noted that varying lengths of Ryff scale - "84 items (14 per dimension), 54 items (9 per dimension), 42 items (7 per dimension) and 18 items (3 per dimension) are now widely used<sup>281</sup>" On the basis of this national level survey Ryff concluded that "... data from a nationally representative sample supported the proposed multidimensional structure"<sup>282</sup>. Although Ryff had claimed that her model was supported by large scale study, this scale was heavily criticised for "...the overlap among items in the alternative versions of the Ryff scales is limited; for example, the 18-item version has only six items in common with the 42-item version, one item for each dimension."<sup>283</sup>. Ryff has acknowledged in a very recent article that the :

...extremely pared down version ... (having) psychometric problems with the individual scales ... made clear the reduction had been excessive. That was

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<sup>278</sup> Ryff, C. D., (1989), op. cit., pp.1069-1081

<sup>279</sup> Ryff, C. D., Lee, Y. H., Essex, M. J. Schmutte, P. S., (1994), 'My children and me: Midlife evaluations of grown children and of self', *Psychology and Aging*, 9, pp.195–205  
Schmutte, P. S., Ryff, C.D., (1997), 'Personality and well-being: Reexamining methods and meanings', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, pp.549–559

<sup>280</sup> Ryff, C.D., Keyes, C..L.M., (1995), p.720

<sup>281</sup> Abbott, R, Ploubidis, G, Huppert, F., Kuh, D., Croudace, T., (2006), 'Psychometric evaluation and predictive validity of Ryff's psychological well-being items in a UK birth cohort sample of women.', This article is available from: <http://www.hqlo.com/content/4/1/76>, accessed on 02.06.2015.

<sup>282</sup> Ryff, C.D., Keyes, C..L.M., (1995),op. cit., p.723

<sup>283</sup> Abbott R, Ploubidis G, Huppert F, Kuh D, Croudace T. Psychometric evaluation and predictive validity of Ryff's psychological well-being items in a UK birth cohort sample of women. This article is available from: <http://www.hqlo.com/content/4/1/76>, accessed on 02.06.2015.

because items for the ultra-short version ...compromised internal consistency coefficients<sup>284</sup>.

In Ryff's model also a limitation about survey population is present. A vast number of her studies were undertaken through phone or direct incentives. In Ryff's study on Explorations on the meaning of psychological wellbeing, the participants:

... consisted of 321 men and women divided among young, middle-aged, and older adults..... The educational levels of the three groups were quite high... With regard to financial status, the vast majority of respondents rated their situation as excellent or good... Overall, then, this was a sample of relatively healthy, well-educated, financially comfortable respondents<sup>285</sup>.

These respondents answered a 20-item (a total of 120-item) scale each item with a 6-point scale from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. She reports in her study that

The young adults completed the questionnaire in small group sessions at the university. The middle-aged and the older respondents completed their surveys at work or at home and then returned them by mail to the experimenter. ... Financial contributions were made to the community organizations participating in the study on the basis of the number of their members who returned the questionnaire<sup>286</sup>.

In another survey the participants were mostly of Caucasians, living in the United States having at least one telephone. They were interviewed by telephone and administered a 3-item(18- item total) scale "to accommodate time and cost<sup>287</sup>". Notwithstanding the differences in the scales this survey was compared with her survey of 120 items and interpretations drawn<sup>288</sup>.

Another question that may arise is that in Ryff's model each of the domains serve both as an outcome and as a predictor of eudaimonic living. This may be corroborated by reports from the research findings. It is present in Ryff's presentation and interpretations of her own researches. She says :

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<sup>284</sup> Ryff, C.D., (2014), 'Psychological Well-Being Revisited: Advances in Science and Practice', *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 83(1), p.13

<sup>285</sup> Ryff, C. D. (1989), op. cit., p.1074

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Ryff, C.D., Keyes, C.L.M.,(1995), op. cit., p.720

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.



Longitudinal data showed that volunteer work over time enhanced eudaimonic...and that people with higher well-being at baseline were more likely to volunteer<sup>289</sup>.

A problem in interpreting this data might be that there seems to be circularity. People high in psychological wellbeing are likely to enrol for voluntary services, But she has stated that doing voluntary service is a means to enhance eudaimonia. It may be possible that doing voluntary service may enhance a few domains like positive relationship with others, personal growth and may be, purpose in life also. If this be a fact that voluntary work enhances psychological wellbeing then it does so by enhancing one or two of the domains and not all of them. There is no reason to think that voluntary work may have any influence on other domains like autonomy or self acceptance. This implies that a person may enhance his psychological wellbeing even if he does not advance in all the domains. If this happens then there is possibility that a high score in one domain may conflict with goals of another domain and thereby affect psychological wellbeing negatively.

In designing the six dimensions of psychological wellbeing Ryff seems to have avoided all possibilities of admitting happiness in the subjective wellbeing sense as a dimensions. But in doing so she has failed to notice that for an individual who is rated high in all the six dimensions of wellbeing and also having an additional ability to enjoy smaller things and events of life, psychological wellbeing would perhaps be higher compared to one who does not possess the ability to enjoy the smaller aspects of life. As a matter of fact she never mentions why only the six dimensions should be admitted and not more. In restricting the notion of wellbeing to eudaimonic happiness alone and keeping wellbeing free from all tinge of mundane happiness seems to be an outcome of the influence of the needs of the theoretical framework which Ryff has adopted, rather than an analysis of the concept of psychological wellbeing itself.

It appears that Ryff has “discovered” these six dimensions either by analysing the psychological status of the individuals who, in her understanding is in a state of wellbeing or else Ryff has just hypothesised them *a priori*. If it be the case that she has arrived at this *a priori* then she has to validate it. But in order to validate she

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<sup>289</sup> Ryff, C.D., (2014), p.9

cannot just take into account on the other hand if she reaches the view about six dimension through analysing the cases of individuals possessing positive mental health, then she has to depend either on the diagnostic criteria of mental disorders or on the socio-culturally accepted notion of psychological wellbeing. In either case she is bound to come across cases of those theoretically tailored instances, if she takes into account cross cultural notions of wellbeing of individuals who are psychologically healthy where individuals though enjoying high degree of psychological health had not scored positive in all domains. In Indian context such instances are many. Spiritually advanced individuals like saints and sages would always opt to shun all sorts of autonomy and agency because otherwise they would not have reached their transcendental goals. However they are considered as persons who enjoy high level of positive mental health. Similarly highly creative persons are often found to have no specific purpose or goal of life. They actually subscribe to no fixed set of goals in life rather they are engrossed in their work. They create their own meaning in life and it can hardly be doubted that they possess psychological wellbeing.

Finally a possible objection against both the eudaimonic theories is that a person may satisfy all criteria for mental health like having satisfaction of the three basic needs or scoring high on the six dimensions of psychological wellbeing yet lead a life which is harmful for other people who are not closely related to them. A shrewd politician can be taken as a case in hand. He strives to attain all the goals but the achievements of these goals are beneficial only for himself and usually at the cost of wellbeing of others.

## Section II – Capability Approach

In the previous chapters and in the discussions done earlier in this chapter, we extensively studied the current major psychological theories of happiness and psychological wellbeing to gain a better understanding about happiness and wellbeing. However, it has been found that each of these theories have been able to partially conceptualise the notion of wellbeing or happiness. We have attempted to gain some insight on the subject by taking recourse to notions of happiness as proposed in other fields like economics. Furthermore, we also critically examined these views and pointed out some of the limitations in measurability of happiness in terms of objective and subjective factors, as employed in economics and psychology. Just as it has been argued against the psychologists that happiness is not merely a positive affect or a pleasurable state of mind, similarly we may apply this criticism against the economists and say that happiness is not merely an event or phenomena which leads to positive affect or pleasure. In psychology happiness is equivalent to subjective wellbeing and subjective evaluation of one's life, without including any objective criterion into the concept. The main critique of the economic notions of happiness appears to be that, it is interpreted in objective terms, precisely in utilitarian terms thereby reducing happiness to the concept of utility maximization or satisfaction of desires. It may be noted that according to the economics, notions of happiness, utility and welfare are equivalent concepts. Amartya Sen in particular has strongly opposed this view. Sen does speak about happiness but it is vastly different from the meaning of the term in modern economics or psychology. From the discussions about the different notions of happiness held by various disciplines it is clear that both objective and subjective measures are equally important in exploring happiness.

In contrast to the psychological view of subjective wellbeing<sup>290</sup>, Sen views human wellbeing as primarily objective. The principal criticisms against subjective measures of wellbeing can be summarised as follows. Firstly, Sen argues that a person who

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<sup>290</sup>Kahneman, Daniel and Krueger, B. Alan, (2006), 'Developments in the Measurement of Subjective Well-Being', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20 (1), pp.3-4

lacks knowledge of the range of choices that should be available to him may report a high level of wellbeing, based on his available and yet limited knowledge of choices. This may be acceptable and approved in many psychological<sup>291</sup> and economic researches<sup>292</sup>. Secondly, Sen cites various effects of adaptation and anticipation which emphasises the fact that the subjective assessment of life satisfaction of people often becomes adapted to the circumstances of their lives and also in anticipation to bring apparently positive changes in their lives<sup>293</sup>.

In the Capability Approach (CA) advocated by Sen a purely subjective (and thus one-sided) interpretation of happiness has been rejected. Both these thinkers, as we will see, argue for a more conceptual and comprehensive view of happiness. Their views appear to be closer to the philosophical notion of happiness, specifically the Aristotelian concept as eudaimonia, which is commonly understood as happiness, or sometimes as flourishing. In this section, we shall briefly analyse and examine the views of Sen and Nussbaum and see how far they contribute in obtaining a comprehensive, holistic view of happiness. In the light of their views, we will try to explore whether the varied concepts of happiness and wellbeing can be brought under a single theme. Let us start with the capability approach proposed by Amartya Sen.

Sen makes a paradigm shift in welfare economics when he asserts that the foundation of human development and wellbeing is not constituted by resources, or material goods, but by freedom. According to him freedom lies at the core of evaluation of a person's wellbeing. Being a strong advocate of equality, Sen contends that assessment of equality should be based on the way people live. He further states that, in order to assess equality of an individual, we have to consider whether she/he has the freedom to lead the lives that she/he strongly thinks to be worthy or has reason to value.

For example, suppose there are two individuals, both unmarried and aged 23. One is an American male coming from a rich upper class background and the other an Indian rural female belonging to an extremely conservative family of middle income. Now

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<sup>291</sup>Biswas-Diener, R., and Diener, E., (2006), 'The subjective well-being of the homeless, and lessons for happiness', *Social Indicators Research*, 76:2, pp.200 -202

<sup>292</sup>Sen, A., (2002), 'Health perception versus observation', *British Medical Journal*, 324, (7342), pp.860 - 861

<sup>293</sup>Ball, R. and K. Chernova, (2008), 'Absolute Income, Relative Income, and Happiness', *Social Indicators Research*, vol. 88, pp.518-524

suppose the parents of the rural woman arrange for her to get married to a 30 year old man, whom she has never met. It is likely that the woman may think that it is her duty to obey her parents and so she will willingly give her consent to get married. It is probable that she might think that her in-laws are very significant persons in her life she and that she should live with her in-laws after her marriage. She would very much value the fact if her in-laws consider her as their daughter and treat her that way.

If the same happens to the American male, viz., his parents arrange for him to get married to an 18 year old girl whom he has never met, he may possibly feel outraged. To him this might seem a violation of his individual rights as a person. It is expected that he will never consent to this marriage and neither feel obliged to obey his parents in this occasion. Even if he gets married of his own accord to the girl of his choice later on, it is very unlikely that he would give such importance to his in-laws that he would agree to spend his married life with them. Keeping the nationality of these persons the same, we would expect the above outcome to replicate even if both the individuals were women of the same age coming from the same socio-economic conditions. Given the above background, had the Indian girl wished to continue her education and pursue a career to lead a life of economic independence, it is quite possible that she would have been coerced by social pressure to get married and be a housewife.

Since human beings have different needs and potentials, so it may be the case that in spite of having equal command over same set of resources, two individuals will not agree to value the same kind of life, nor to use their freedom to choose a specific way of life. Hence, ensuring equal resources is not a guarantee to ensure equality of persons in terms of wellbeing. This is concisely put by Alkire and Deneulin:

The key idea of the capability approach is that social arrangements should aim to expand people's capabilities – their freedom to promote or achieve what they value doing and being. An essential test of development is whether people have greater freedoms today than they did in the past. A test of inequality is whether people's capability sets are equal or unequal...<sup>294</sup>.

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<sup>294</sup>Alkire, S., Deneulin, S., (2009), 'The Human Development and Capability Approach', in Deneulin Séverine with Lila Shahani, (ed.), *An Introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach : Freedom and Agency*, International Development Research Centre, New Delhi, p.31

Using equality as the starting point to assess wellbeing clearly indicates the value and importance Sen attributes to each person and the right to equality of a person.

The capability approach developed by Amartya Sen has been gradually developed over several decades. The capability approach was first mentioned for measuring inequality as an answer to the question “Equality of what?”<sup>295</sup> He was the first economist to point out that economic development by itself or *equality* in terms of goods and services does not ensure wellbeing. Sen found that although economic growth and increase in production of commodities and services are necessary, it is far from being sufficient for human wellbeing or welfare. It is often assumed that if the total quantity of goods and services of a country increases, then everyone in the country will be better off. But economic growth does not warrant that the benefits of the increase in a country’s wealth will be equally distributed to all. Multiple factors like social arrangements, political power, the prevailing market dynamics etc., come into play where distribution of wealth is concerned. In an economy where wealth is already concentrated in the hands of a few, the rise in income will also be materialised unequally. So advantages of economic growth do not by itself eradicate poverty. In mainstream economics, if wealth is to be distributed equally then it is assumed that giving each the same quantity of goods and services will ensure equality. Sen’s contribution lies in the proposal that even if goods and services were to be distributed equally, wellbeing would not be ensured for all.

Traditionally in economics, wellbeing is evaluated by utility or income – signifying command over resources. Sen has distinctly analysed the different uses of the term utility in economics, which has caused confusion. Utility has been sometimes defined as happiness or satisfaction by classical utilitarians and sometimes as desire fulfilment by modern utilitarians<sup>296</sup>. We have discussed both these definitions of utility previously. But in modern economics the term utility is used to denote the maximand, i.e., it is taken as the entity that is to be maximized. Utility is maximised through choice (of good and services) as we have seen in the Revealed Preference approach described by Paul Samuelson and discussed in the last chapter. To quote Sen:

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<sup>295</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1980), ‘Equality of what?’, in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, (ed.), McMurrin, Salt Lake City

<sup>296</sup>Sen, Amartya,(1999), *Commodities and Capabilities*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp.1-2

The term utility does, of course, have meanings of its own, defined by utilitarians...as satisfaction or happiness...But in...modern economics 'utility' serves other purposes too, standing for whatever the person maximizes (or can be seen maximizing), or simply for the person's well-being or advantage no matter how that is judged<sup>297</sup>.

In this way the term utility and hence happiness or satisfaction has come to denote a quantifiable entity that can often be easily translated into monetary terms. We have discussed this while explaining about the economic measures of happiness or wellbeing:

The output available to satisfy our wants and needs is one important determinant of welfare. Whatever want, need, or social problem engages our attention, we ordinarily can more easily find resources to deal with it when output is large and growing than when it is not<sup>298</sup>.

The reasoning behind this is that given higher income, people individually or collectively are free to spend their money in whatever way maximizes their satisfactions<sup>299</sup> and thus increase wellbeing. This conflation of happiness or wellbeing with opulence was critiqued by Sen. He points out some fundamental shortcomings in this use of utility<sup>300</sup>.

He puts forward the well-known argument given by Aristotle that "...wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else<sup>301</sup>". According to Sen, comparing the bundle of commodities at one's disposal is grossly inadequate to provide the necessary information for comparing the wellbeing of different people. One vital aspect of the capability approach is that it does not subscribe to any uniform relation between particular goods and services as means to specific functionings and capabilities. There is no fixed set of commodities which can ensure uniform functioning and capabilities in every person. We have to

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid

<sup>298</sup> Denison, Edward F., (1971), 'Welfare Measurement and the GNP', *Survey of Current Business*, 51, pp.13-39

<sup>299</sup> Ibid

<sup>300</sup> Sen, Amartya, (1999), op. cit., pp.2-3

<sup>301</sup> Sen, Amartya K., (1990), *Development as Capability Expansion*, in Keith Griffin and John Knight (eds), *Human Development and the International Development Strategy for the 1990s*, London: Macmillan, pp. 44

now consider the two important concepts in Sen's approach, i.e., functionings and capabilities. The functionings of a person refer to the beings and doings of the person that he or she values and has reason to value. It might be noted that "functionings are constitutive of person's being, and an evaluation of wellbeing has to take the form of an assessment of these constituent elements"<sup>302</sup>. The wellbeing of a person will enhance if the person has the capacity to be what she wants and also to have the opportunity to utilise the capacity.

For example a person may want to be guitarist but does not have a sense of music nor is allowed to possess a guitar. Here capability will mean the availability of resource (in this case a guitar) and also the person's attribute (his sense of music). If he were given a guitar and he develops his musical ability, then he would be what he values and also do what he wants to do. These are the beings and doings that a person values and these will contribute to his wellbeing. Since the beings and doings of a person constitute one's existence, functionings are related to various dimensions of one's lives. Functionings might include a host of things: being nourished, educated, healthy, having close relationships, riding a bicycle, being employed gainfully, participating in one's community etc.

Capabilities are related to the capacity to function. Capabilities refer to the freedom of choice or opportunities to pursue functionings, which are valuable. We will try to understand this in detail with the help of an example. Suppose a school teacher residing in Delhi and a fisherman living at the coast of Orissa are both given a fishing boat fitted with modern equipment each, then it may not be equally or at all valuable to both. The fisherman will be able to use the boat to enhance his means of livelihood. The schoolteacher may feel that the boat is a junk and is useless because he is neither interested in fishing nor has any opportunity to use it in Delhi. So the boat is a resource for both but it is not of the same value to each. To the fisherman it is valuable since he has the opportunity to use it as a means to livelihood. The boat is not a capability for the schoolteacher because it will not yield something fruitful for him. To the fisherman however it is valuable and it is a capability since he can use it purposefully, i.e., it is a "being and doing", a "functioning" for him. It is because of

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<sup>302</sup>Sen, Amartya (2010), *Inequality Reexamined*, Oxford: Oxford University Press(first published 1995), p.39



the fact that the boat provides a potential of functioning for the fisherman, makes the ownership of the boat a capability for him. In this case the resource is a capability for the fisherman but the same resource is not a capability for the schoolteacher. So we see that capabilities are conceptually different from resources.

Resources are instrumental in achieving wellbeing but the ability to achieve a specific functioning through the resources that enhances wellbeing is what matters. The wellbeing of a person depends on the choices that a person makes according to his or her capabilities. If we go back to our example of the fisherman this may be explained further. Suppose the fisherman we are talking about loves fishing but being poor he could not till then own a boat with modern equipments. For him the boat is a dream come true. This new fishing boat will be a source of great enjoyment to him. Thus this capability is allows him to fish (a functioning) but also contributes greatly to his wellbeing or happiness.

A person does not become interested in an object just because it has a special feature, e.g., a rickshaw just because it is made of steel, is red in colour and has a soft seat may not make a person feel that he needs it. Every object has specific characteristics that make it an object of interest to a person. The characteristic of a bus which makes it an object of interest to an individual is that it is a useful mode of transport. This characteristic of the bus (as a commodity) provides a specific functioning to a person – the functioning of mobility.

But several important factors are involved in the conversion of a commodity into beings and doings. Certain specific conversion factors influence the relationship between a commodity and its functioning. The personal attributes of an individual such as age, sex, gender, intelligence, physical ability, etc., influence the capacity of a person to convert features of the good into a functioning. A bus will be of limited functioning for a paraplegic person or a person with Parkinson's disease. This is called the personal conversion factor. Another such factor is the social conversion factor. Gender roles, public policies, social norms influence the conversion of a good into a functioning. If societal norm is such that a woman cannot travel publicly without a male escort or if there are discriminating practice of not allowing coloured people to avail public transport, then the bus will be of limited help in facilitating the

functioning of mobility. Thirdly if there are no paved roads, or the geographical location is such that a bus cannot travel in such a region then also the conversion of the commodity to functioning will be hindered. This is the environmental conversion factor.

All of these factors play a major role in conversion of a good into a functioning. Thus just having a certain commodity does not ensure a given functioning through the commodity. The existence of the above conversion factors lead to several outcomes. There are several outcomes to this point. Firstly, the capability approach takes into account the personal factors and socio-institutional and environmental context of an individual in evaluating her functioning. Secondly, by taking into account the totality of a person's living, capability approach can accommodate the plurality of functionings and capabilities and hence encompass human diversity.

Here Sen puts forward a powerful argument saying that suppose all primary goods<sup>303</sup> in the Rawlsian sense are equally distributed among all the members of a society. Even then everyone would not be equally well-off. People differ in various ways, starting from external features, internal characteristics, and diverse environmental situations. Human beings are born with different endowments of inheritance and liabilities<sup>304</sup>. The amount of nutritious food needed to fully nourish a baby is not the same as that needed by a sportsman or a pregnant woman. The security necessary for one living in a high-crime area is not the same as that needed in a safe locality.

We live in different natural environments—some more hostile than others. The societies and the communities to which we belong offer very different opportunities as to what we can and cannot do. The epidemiological factors in the region in which we live can profoundly affect our health and well-being<sup>305</sup>.

Ingrid Robeyns in his survey of the capability approach writes in a similar vein:

While Sen has often acknowledged his debt to the philosopher John Rawls ... he also criticises Rawls's use of primary goods for interpersonal comparisons, because primary goods are means, and not intrinsic ends, and as a

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<sup>303</sup>Sen, Amartya (2010), *Inequality Reexamined*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (first published 1995), pp. 83-84

<sup>304</sup>Sen, Amartya (2010), op. cit., pp.19 -20

<sup>305</sup>Sen, Amartya (2010), op. cit., p.20

consequence would not be able to account for the full range of the diversity of human beings ... but given human diversity, the comparisons in the space of social primary goods will fail to take note that different people need different amounts and different kinds of goods to reach the same levels of well-being or advantage<sup>306</sup>.

Different societies have different customs and conventions and this difference leads to a difference in their ability to convert resources into significant achievements. Suppose education for girls is made absolutely free in the post graduate level in medicine and engineering, in two different countries. In one country, gender discrimination is very low and the literacy rate is also high. In this country, where girls are brought up in the same way as boys, free education for higher studies will significantly benefit most girl children. Suppose the society in the other country is highly discriminating against women and girls drop out of school before even completing their school leaving examination. In this society, free education at the post graduate level, that too in professional fields, will hardly benefit many girls.

Not only this, different people in the same society differ in their capacity to translate commodities into useful functionings. Suppose the state government decides to give laptops to students of all government schools in metro cities laptops with free internet connection. This may promote their learning significantly. Suppose this facility is extended to government school in interior rural areas where there is no electricity. Students of these schools will hardly benefit from this scheme. Or we may think of the government providing mid-day meals to schools of metro cities and to those of rural areas where the average population is of low income group. This scheme may increase the wellbeing of the rural students significantly compared to the wellbeing accruing to students of government schools in the metro cities.

People differ along so many dimensions –age, sex, intelligence, physical attributes and so on. All of these characteristics are important in evaluating their wellbeing. Having a bicycle might increase the wellbeing of a teenage boy who is studying in a

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<sup>306</sup>Robeyns, I., (2005), 'The Capability Approach – A Theoretical Survey', *Journal of Human Development*, 6:1, p.101

school several miles far from his home. The same bicycle might be absolutely useless for a disabled person, living in the same area and who incidentally might also be a student of the same school. Putting this in a slightly different way, we can say that when two persons achieve same level of wellbeing, it might not entail that they need equal resources or same sets of commodities. A pregnant woman may need more resources to attain the same nutritional level as a non-pregnant woman. Two persons can have much disagreement or inequality in pursuing a particular valuable activity even if they have exactly the same resources. Also the requirements of goods and services for social achievements that are more complex is influenced by factors like social status, social power, customs and conventions and other such cultural factors.

Thus inequality in terms of one variable (e.g., income) may take us in a very different direction from inequality in the space of another variable (e.g., functioning ability or well-being)...The relative advantage and disadvantages that people have, compared with each other, can be judged in terms of many variables...the differences in focus are particularly important because of human diversity. Had all people been exactly similar, equality in one space (e.g., incomes) would tend to be congruent with equalities in another (e.g., health, well-being, happiness)<sup>307</sup>.

So it seems that in evaluating wellbeing of people, it is more appropriate to focus on their ability to function with the given resources they have compared to what or how much of these resources they command. Sen has stressed that it is very important to take into account the diversities present in different individuals/ these diversities

Actually Sen has categorised the following five factors that contribute to the difference in the ability of an individual to convert resources to functionings<sup>308</sup>.

Sen contends that fulfillment of preferences in terms of bundle of goods and services are just one facet of human wellbeing. As human beings we value many other things which we take as intrinsically valuable, for instance, freedom, justice, equality, health, education among others. Mainstream economic approach to welfare fails to take account of these multiple things which are valued by persons. Sen is also deeply sceptical about the subjective psychological approaches to evaluation of wellbeing on

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<sup>307</sup>Sen, Amartya,(1999), *Commodities and Capabilities*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.20

<sup>308</sup>Sen, Amartya, ( 1999), *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.70 - 71

account of “adaptive expectations<sup>309</sup>”. He validates this scepticism based on his post famine health survey of North Indian widows<sup>310</sup> that we have mentioned in the previous chapter.

Sen has repeatedly drawn our attention to the phenomenon of adaptive preference in choosing the capability approach over utility or preference as a measure of wellbeing. To quote Sen<sup>311</sup>:

Our desires and pleasure-taking abilities adjust to circumstances; especially to make life bearable in adverse situations. The utility calculus can be deeply unfair to those who are persistently deprived. ... The deprived people tend to come to terms with their deprivation because of the sheer necessity of survival; and they may, as a result, lack the courage to demand any radical change, and may even adjust their desires and expectations to what they unambitiously see as feasible<sup>312</sup>.

We have seen in the second chapter that Sen himself had conducted a study between widows of Kerala and Bihar to assess their satisfaction with healthcare in the two states of India. Compared to Kerala, Bihar has shorter life expectancy. However satisfaction with health was found to be greater in Bihar than Kerala. The widows in Bihar had lower expectations due to the fact that lower gender disparity coupled with low literacy levels had made them adapt to their condition and so they have lower expectations regarding accessibility to health care. The lack of awareness of their condition has contributed to their being unaware about how much health care should be provided<sup>313</sup>.

It should be kept in mind that although Sen’s analysis clearly emphasizes, that, the crucial normative concern in evaluating wellbeing should be functionings and capabilities, but this in no way signifies that the capability approach neglects or rejects other important components of wellbeing such as economic growth, technical progress and social enlightenment. Sen highlights that the capability approach is an

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<sup>309</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1999), *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.62

<sup>310</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1999), *Commodities and Capabilities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.82-83

<sup>311</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1990), ‘Justice: Means versus Freedoms’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 19:2, p.113

<sup>312</sup>Oosterlaken, I., (2009), ‘Design for Development: A Capability Approach’, *Design Issues*, 25(4), p.92

<sup>313</sup>Sen, A., (2002), op. cit., pp.860 - 861

inclusive model that integrates other developmental aspects. In his evaluation of Indian development experience he asserts:

It should be clear that we have tended to judge development (*in the capability approach*)<sup>314</sup> by the expansion of substantive human freedoms – not just by economic growth (for example, of the gross national product), or technical progress, or social modernization. This is not to deny, in any way, that advances in the latter fields can be very important, depending on circumstances, as ‘instruments’ for the enhancement of human freedom. But they have to be appraised precisely in that light – in terms of their actual effectiveness in enriching the lives and liberties of people – rather than taking them to be valuable in themselves<sup>315</sup>.

From the above discussion capability approach seems to stress that although the availability of resources, social progress, technical advancement are important components of human wellbeing, but they should be considered as instrumental to wellbeing and not as ends in themselves. In the next section we will try to explain the main facets of capability approach.

Capabilities are related to the capacity to function. It refers to the freedom of choice or opportunities of persons to pursue valuable functionings. Capabilities are conceptually different from resources. The latter is instrumental in achieving wellbeing but the ability to achieve a specific functioning through the resources that enhances wellbeing is what matters. The wellbeing of a person depends on the choices that a person makes according to his or her capabilities. The different aspects of the capability approach will be discussed in the following sections.

Let us try to examine the relation between functionings and capabilities. Sen stresses that wellbeing can be explained as “a person’s ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being”<sup>316</sup>. In this respect he says that “Functionings represent parts of the state of a person – in particular the various things that he or she manages to do or be in leading a life,<sup>317</sup>” to which he adds that “Functionings achieved is related to

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<sup>314</sup>The phrase in italics is given by the author

<sup>315</sup>Drèze, J., and A. Sen, (2002), *India: Development and Participation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 3

<sup>316</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1999), *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.30.

<sup>317</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1999), op. cit., p.31

achievement of well-being”<sup>318</sup>. The renowned researcher on capability approach, Sabina Alkire summarises the above as functionings are things or activities that people value and also have reason to value<sup>319</sup>. Here she explains that a person may do many activities or be in a number of states, but these will be regarded as functionings if and only if they are valuable to the person concerned. This is because when a person engages or participates in an activity in order to achieve a state of being, they do so because these activities are valuable to her. Hence the opportunity to pursue the specific course of action will be valuable to him or her and thus be constitutive to her wellbeing. Sen defines these opportunities as capabilities. According to Sen, capability is the “actual ability to achieve various valuable functionings as a part of living<sup>320</sup>”. In other words, the “capability of a person reflects the alternative combinations of functionings the person can achieve and from which he or she can choose one collection<sup>321</sup>”. Robeyns aptly puts this as:

According to the capability approach, the ends of well-being...should be conceptualised in terms of people’s capabilities to function, that is, their effective opportunities to undertake the actions and activities that they want to engage in, and be whom they want to be. These beings and doings, which Sen calls functionings, together constitute what makes a life valuable<sup>322</sup>.

Sen defines capabilities as “... primarily a reflection of the freedom to achieve valuable functionings...so far as functionings are constitutive of well-being, capability represents a person’s freedom to achieve well-being”<sup>323</sup>. Hence the “Capability to function is related to the freedom to achieve well-being”<sup>324</sup>. Simply put we can say that functionings are activities and states that people value and do, while capabilities are the opportunities to do those functionings. This can be understood by an easy example. A person having a lot of money has the opportunity to use that money by spending it in various combinations of commodities and services. She can go to an amusement park, buy some books and join a meditation course. Or she can

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<sup>318</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1992), *Inequality Reexamined*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.50

<sup>319</sup>Alkire, S., Deneulin, S., (2009), *op. cit.*, p.32

<sup>320</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1999), *op. cit.*, p.30

<sup>321</sup>Ibid

<sup>322</sup>Robeyns, I., (2005), *op. cit.*, p.98

<sup>323</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1992), *op. cit.*, p.9

<sup>324</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1992), *op. cit.*, p.50

join a trekking expedition; give some money in charity and save the rest. In reality there can be an innumerable mix of opportunities to use the money as she deems fit. Similarly capabilities are the actual possibilities that are available to a person for different doings and beings. Thus a person having different capabilities has the freedom to choose diverse combinations of functionings to follow a variety of paths in life. Sen emphasized that the freedom he specifies in the capability approach is not a negative freedom in the sense that it is freedom from compulsion or freedom from restraint, but it involves a positive capacity to do or be something valuable<sup>325</sup>.

Here one distinction should be mentioned between potential and achieved functionings. Functionings are valuable dimensions in life such as being nourished, educated, having an intimate relationship, having self-esteem and so on. So achieved functionings are valuable opportunities that have been realised or achieved. Capabilities are the freedom or various options that a person can effectively choose to lead a worthwhile life. Capabilities are the different combination of potential functionings available to a person. Suppose a person loves to ride a bicycle and he possesses a bicycle also. Being the owner of the bicycle is the capability of the person. This is the potential functioning of the person. He has the opportunity to ride the bicycle. That is he has the freedom to choose to ride or not. Now if he actually rides the bicycle, then the riding of the bicycle is his achieved functioning. He has achieved the functioning that was valuable to him. This is his achieved functioning. Functionings are thus either achieved or potential. When functionings are potential they are a part of a capability set. Achieved functionings are those functionings that have already been realised. According to Robeyns:

What is ultimately important is that people have the freedoms or valuable opportunities (capabilities) to lead the kind of lives they want to lead, to do what they want to do and be the person they want to be. Once they effectively have these substantive opportunities, they can choose those options which they value most. For example, every person should have the opportunity to be part of a community and to practice a religion, but if

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<sup>325</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1992), *op. cit.*, p.41



someone prefers to be a hermit or an atheist, they should also have this option.<sup>326</sup>

Two issues regarding the capability approach are important. One of these is the distinction between Sen's use of the word freedom versus choice. He asserts that it is usually assumed that more choice means more freedom and hence higher wellbeing. But he argues that more choices might in reality lead to a lower wellbeing because of the cost of decision making associated with an expansion of choices that are sometimes trivial. Suppose a person has to choose between ten types of cereal and fifteen types of soaps. If he has to take a decision for which cereal and which soap to buy, he will have to give effort to choose them. Now the alternate type of soap or cereal is not usually a very important fact. But the wellbeing from this effort is very small or perhaps not at all. He may be actually irritated by these trivial options. An increase in the number of choices irrespective of their value does not necessarily lead to higher quality of life. So the notion of value is actually inbuilt in the notion of the capability set.

According to Sen, "sometimes more freedom of choice can bemuse and befuddle, and make one's life more wretched."<sup>327</sup> so the expansion of choices does not imply the expanding of any and all choices without regard to the value they hold to a person.

Facing more alternatives need not invariably be seen as an expansion of a person's freedom to do the things she likes to do...The question really turns on the need to judge what options are important and what are not...Some type of choosing might be *valuable* parts of living, giving us the reason to treasure them. But there are other choices that we may have no great reason to value, and the *obligatory* requirement to face and deal with them may impose on us losses of time and energy which we may have good reason to resent<sup>328</sup>.

Moreover many choices have to be made jointly because they concern other people. So increasing the number of individual choices might have little or no effect, and sometimes may even be a burden for the individual concerned. In many cultures some choices are traditionally made collectively, here too expanding individual choices may be bothersome for the person.

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<sup>326</sup>Robeyns, I., (2005), *op. cit.*, p.98

<sup>327</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1992), *op. cit.*, p.59

<sup>328</sup> Sen, Amartya, (1992), *op. cit.*, p.65

The other concern that Sen raises is the complexity of the notion of freedom in capability approach. Sen states that freedom has two irreducible aspects. The opportunity aspect of freedom refers to the ability to achieve the things a person values and has reason to value, while the process aspect of freedom concerns the personal processes involved in achieving valued outcomes. He stresses that the freedom involved in the procedural aspect of attaining one's goal has an intrinsic value in itself. He introduces the notion of agency in describing the process aspect of freedom.

First, more freedom gives us more *opportunity* to achieve those things that we value, and have reason to value. This aspect of freedom is concerned primarily with our *ability to achieve*, rather than with the process through which that achievement comes about. Second, the *process* through which things happen may also be of fundamental importance in assessing freedom<sup>329</sup>.

Sen argues that people “are, of course, interested in outcomes such as being affluent, or creative, or fulfilled, or happy<sup>330</sup>” but they value many other goals besides wellbeing. Not all activities that a person does or aspires are aimed at achieving wellbeing. He explains these in terms of the “wellbeing aspect” and the “agency aspect” of a person<sup>331</sup>. The agency aspect is concerned with having goals and values even if they do not concern one's personal wellbeing. In this regard then, achieving one's valued outcome whether or not those outcomes would contribute to one's wellbeing is agency achievement. He shows that agency achievement might go against the wellbeing achievement of a person. Sen gives the example of a person who might forego her wellbeing in order to achieve the independence of her country. In pursuing the objective of the independence of her country the person might be forced to go to prison, be tortured and face many other obstacles that are directly detrimental to her wellbeing. So clearly people might value and achieve outcomes that negatively affect their own wellbeing. Conversely the “wellbeing aspect” and the “agency aspect” might go in the same direction. A male employee may fight against gender discrimination to obtain equal pay for women employees in his organization

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<sup>329</sup>Sen, Amartya K., (2002), *Rationality and Freedom*. Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, p.585

<sup>330</sup>Sen, Amartya K., (2002), p.623

<sup>331</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1984), Well-Being, Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984, *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (4), p.186

and be successful. As a result of this he might be selected the leader of the labour union. This position might give him more power to bring about other egalitarian changes. As a result he might get the opportunity to meet other important employers and might get a better job. Now this person did not fight against gender discrimination with the objective that his pay packet would increase. So here his agency achievement that includes his getting a new job has direct positive bearing on his wellbeing achievement. Alternatively it might have been the case that he is not successful and so his income would not have increased – there is neither agency achievement nor wellbeing achievement. But this does not imply he will stop fighting for the cause, which is an exercise of his agency freedom. It might also be that his employers concede to his demand but penalise him for fighting for a cause that goes against the profitability of the organization. In this case agency achievement and wellbeing achievement move in opposite directions.

Connecting these concepts to the concepts of functionings and capabilities, we can say that wellbeing achievements refer to functionings, whereas wellbeing freedom is reflected by the capability set of an individual. Sen states:

The primary feature of wellbeing can be seen in terms of how a person can “function”, taking the term in a very broad sense. I shall refer to various doings and beings that come into this assessment as functionings....the primary feature of a person’s wellbeing is the functionings he or she can achieve<sup>332</sup>.

He illustrates this by comparing the activities of a Brahmin who is fasting because of his religious beliefs and as a result is in a state of being undernourished to a poor destitute who is undernourished because she lacks the means to have food. Sen states that the experience of both these persons in terms of deprivation from food or misery might be the same, but in terms of opportunities they differ greatly, i.e., there might not be difference in the actual wellbeing of the two persons, but in terms of freedom to choose i.e. whether they can choose such a functioning they differ. The Brahmin could choose to eat if he desired and the destitute would eat if she could. So the Brahmin has the freedom to choose an alternative lifestyle that the destitute could not have chosen. This difference is significant when we are assessing the actual wellbeing

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<sup>332</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1984), op. cit., p.197

of the two persons. Thus wellbeing freedom is an important aspect when evaluating the wellbeing of a person. The important feature in wellbeing freedom is the agency aspect of a person. This example shows that values other than one's wellbeing may feature prominently in the assessment of choices made by an individual. The concept of wellbeing freedom is an essential part in its own right and cannot be subsumed under wellbeing achievement.

Similar to the concept of wellbeing achievement and agency achievement is the concept of difference in freedom between the wellbeing aspect and the agency aspect of a person. Wellbeing freedom is freedom of a certain kind. It is associated with the capability of an individual to have various alternative functionings and enjoy the corresponding wellbeing achievements. The notion of freedom based on the wellbeing aspect of a person needs to be distinguished from a broader general sense of freedom concerning the agency aspect of a person. The concepts related to the notions of wellbeing aspect and agency aspect in terms of freedom are the freedom to choose the life one wants to lead to achieve wellbeing and the freedom to pursue one's goals irrespective of one's personal wellbeing. The opportunity to choose the goals one values and has reason to value whether or not they will be contribute to one's wellbeing is related to the autonomy or personal liberty of an individual. Sen calls this aspect of freedom "agency freedom". He differentiates the notion of "agency freedom" from "well-being freedom" as the former being free to pursue the goals one values and has reason to value whether or not they are related to one's wellbeing and latter as the freedom to choose goals that directly concern one's personal wellbeing. According to Sen,

A person's agency aspect cannot be understood without taking note of his or her aims, objectives, allegiances, obligations and -- in a broader sense—the person's conception of the good. Whereas well-being freedom is freedom to achieve something in particular, viz., well-being, the idea of agency freedom is more general, since it is not tied to any one type of aim. Agency freedom is freedom to achieve whatever the person as a responsible agent, decides he or she should achieve<sup>333</sup>.

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<sup>333</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1984), op. cit., p.203 –204

Sen reiterates that this “open conditionality”<sup>334</sup> of agency freedom does not imply that any goal that a person chooses or anything that appeals to him should fall under the purview of his agency freedom. He stresses that in exercising his agency freedom, a person needs to assess his aims objectives and allegiances in a careful and exacting manner. It is of utmost importance that his conception of the good be rigorous and precise. Although Sen stresses the significance of discipline in the use of one’s agency, he states clearly that the ultimate decision in using one’s agency rests with the person himself.

Apart from these two notions he explains that the procedural aspect of agency achievement is intrinsically valuable in its own right. This process concerns a persons’ capacity to exert agency in ways that further their valued outcomes. A central aspect of process freedom is that it enables people, whether working individually or collectively, to advance positive changes on behalf of themselves or others.<sup>335</sup> To summarise the notion of agency we might quote Alkire :

1. Agency is inescapably plural in both concept and measurement.
2. Agency is exercised with respect to the goals the person values and has reason to value.
3. Agency includes effective power as well as direct control, that is, it includes not just individual agency, but what one can do as a member of a group, collectivity or political community.
4. Agency may advance well-being or may address other goals – for example, relating to the good of one’s family or community, of other people and of art and the environment<sup>336</sup>.

This distinction of freedom and achievement in terms of wellbeing and agency is important because these are the dimensions that we should take into account when assessing advancements or progress. Thus the central feature of the capability approach is that any notion of human welfare must be based on the information gained from functionings and /or capabilities depending on the aspect that is to be

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Alkire S, (2005), ‘Measuring the Freedom Aspects of Capabilities’, paper presented at the 2005 American Economic Association Conference, Philadelphia, p.3, available at, [https://www.aeaweb.org/annual\\_mtg\\_papers/2005/0107\\_1430\\_0104.pdf](https://www.aeaweb.org/annual_mtg_papers/2005/0107_1430_0104.pdf), accessed 12.12.2014

<sup>336</sup> Alkire, S., Deneulin, S., (2009), p.37

measured. From the above discussion we see that wellbeing achievement is to be evaluated in terms of functionings while the capability set reflects a person's wellbeing freedom. We have also seen that a focus on agency takes agency goal and objectives into account and goes beyond any analysis in terms of functionings and capabilities.

Thus according to Sen, freedom is the foundation of wellbeing and human development can be defined as “the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy<sup>337</sup>”. He has shown that freedom is intrinsically valuable for the wellbeing of a person. The wellbeing of an individual depends directly on his freedom to choose valuable functionings. So freedom is constitutive of the wellbeing of a person<sup>338</sup>. According to Sen, expanding freedom of a person, “not only make the life of the person more unfettered, but more importantly, it allows him or her to experience his or her social life fully<sup>339</sup>”. This means that freedom is intrinsically valuable because it enables a person to actualise his potentials and enrich his life and also that of others as a member of society.

So we see that Sen strongly argues in favour of freedom as the central aspect of human wellbeing. He starts with the claim that the concept of equality should be re-examined to focus primarily on the real freedom people have to choose the kind of life they want to live, instead of focussing on the notion of equality of goods and services. He argues that life can be lived well only if people are free to make real choices and lead a life that one values and finds worthwhile. He also argues that the ability to transform one's life by one's own effort is instrumentally valuable in itself and this also requires freedom to pursue such a goal<sup>340</sup>. Wellbeing should be directed towards expanding the opportunities of an individual to make valuable choices in life. Sen thus establishes that central to the capability approach is the concept of freedom and agency. He states that the assessment of wellbeing should focus on the extent of freedom or capabilities of a person. He argues that the mainstream view of wellbeing has mostly focussed on achievements and the freedom to achieve has been

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<sup>337</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1993), 'Capability and Well-being', in Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum(eds.), *The Quality of Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.3

<sup>338</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1999), *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.14

<sup>339</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1999), op. cit., p.15

<sup>340</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1992), op. cit., p.33

underplayed as being instrumental to achievement<sup>341</sup>. But it should be the other way round because functionings or achievements of a certain level depend on the human freedom or capabilities to achieve those functionings. So freedom should be of utmost priority when evaluating wellbeing because freedom enables a person to choose the life he or she wants to live. This is not to say that achievements are not important. But the first step to achieve a certain state of being is having freedom to pursue that state. An egalitarian social arrangement in terms of wellbeing can be achieved only if real freedom in terms of expansion of human options can be realized. The core themes in the capability approach are then the notion of freedom and the notion of agency. These are the central assertions around which the capability approach is to be understood.

But apart from being self-regarding, an individual is also other-regarding and thus may have goals that he values or has reason to value which are not directed towards his own personal wellbeing. These goals are called Agency goals. The freedom to achieve these goals is termed agency freedom by Sen. The realization of agency goals is according to Sen, agency achievement.

One of the key criticisms against the capability approach relates to its inadequacy in identifying a definitive list of valuable capabilities to make this approach operational. Among others Martha Nussbaum and Bernard Williams have commented against Sen for providing an incomplete framework lacking a coherent list of significant capabilities<sup>342</sup>. Another argument, coming from the other side of the above criticism is that Sen himself highlights that certain capabilities as extremely valuable<sup>343</sup>. This raises the question that given the wide range of disagreement among different disciplines and eminent people about what constitutes a good life, how far it is possible to insist that certain capabilities are necessary or important<sup>344</sup>.

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<sup>341</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1992), op. cit., p.32

<sup>342</sup>Williams, Bernard, (1987), 'The Standard of Living: Interests and Capabilities', in Geoffrey Hawthorn (ed.), *The Standard of Living*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.96 & Nussbaum, M. C. (1988), 'Nature, Function and Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Supplementary Vol., 145:84, p.176

<sup>343</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1999), *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.14

<sup>344</sup>Sugden, R. (1993), 'Welfare, Resources, and Capabilities: A Review of Inequality Reexamined' by Amartya Sen, *Journal of Economic Literature*, 31, p.1953

One weakness of Sen's theory is the extreme detailed informational requirement it demands for the capability approach to be made practically applicable. Assessing the capabilities of a person involves obtaining data on the various functionings of the person. But in many cases these social information might simply not be available. If we want to measure capabilities from any given set of functionings then this requires even more data and is also a complicated exercise because one has also to take into account the counterfactual choices of people that are unobservable along with the actual choice<sup>345</sup>.

Related to the aspect of diversity, there is another issue that one should examine more closely. In reality, even if two people have identical capability sets, their conception of the good life may be entirely different. Hence they are likely to end up with two very different combinations of functionings. Now capability approach acknowledges this difference in the notion of the good life among people. But this difference in the conception of the good life, in most cases stems from the profound influence that our families, tribes, communities, religion and culture have on us. Our ideas of the good life are deeply collective in nature. So the question arises as to whether we could term the capability set as a choice. At most one could say that it is a very constrained choice set. But this is not to say that this influence is all times a negative one. Indeed for some people these may be genuinely facilitative. In real life these constraints are inextricably blended with one's values, preferences, history and personality, so it is difficult to generalise about the nature of these constraints<sup>346</sup>. But the question remains as to how far a person is really free to choose the life they want to lead and whether or not they might be punished or ostracized from their communities for making certain choices that run contrary to their given collectivity. Also there may be certain capabilities for which choice does not play a relevant role, such as the capability to live a long life. In other cases it might be that one's capability will depend on governmental policy and action such as having access to health services. This indicates that focussing on feasible sets of capabilities would be more prudent.

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<sup>345</sup>Alkire, S. (2002), *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.187 -193

<sup>346</sup>Robeyns, I., op. cit., (2005), p.107



Sen has advocated that to evaluate wellbeing, one should look at the capability set rather than functionings. But there are several situations where evaluating achieved rather than potential functionings would be more relevant. Sen himself has noted that young children or mentally disabled people may lack the capacity to make complex, informed and responsible choices. So in such cases it is best to measure the achieved functionings of the person.<sup>347</sup> But there are other situations also where the capacity to make complex choices may not be compromised yet the situation demands that measurement of achieved functionings is much more relevant than capabilities. In countries that are often affected by famine and starvation, it is prudent to evaluate achieved functionings rather than capabilities. In this context we can assume that in all extreme states of bodily and material deprivation in poor communities or societies it is better to focus directly on evaluation of achieved functionings<sup>348</sup>.

Not all the above criticisms do justice to the capability approach. Actually the fact that Sen does not formulate his proposal as a closed theory is one of the key strengths of his proposal. This flexibility allows it to accommodate internal pluralism such that it can be applied in different contexts. This is possible primarily because Sen refuses to endorse a predefined unique list of capabilities. Although he writes about certain intrinsically valuable and basic functionings like escaping morbidity, being nourished, literate, numerate, enjoying freedom of speech etc., are essential...to attain a basic level of wellbeing<sup>349</sup>, he does not subscribe to the view that there is an objectively correct definitive or fixed list of capabilities for reasons that are practical. One reason for this is that choice and evaluation of the significance of a capability set is a matter of personal values and beliefs, and this would partly depend on the purpose or nature of the procedure to do so. The agency aspect of capability approach widens the purview to include those goals and values that are other than personal advantage or wellbeing. As we have seen there are many goals that an individual may value or pursue and have reason to do so not because it would be of personal gain and

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<sup>347</sup> Sen, Amartya, (1984), 'Well-Being, Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984', *Journal of Philosophy*, 82 (4), p.204

<sup>348</sup> Robeyns, I., (2005), op. cit., p.106

<sup>349</sup> Robeyns, I., (2005), op. cit., p.14

wellbeing but because of some other reasons. Goals such as spreading of literacy, fulfilling needs of sanitation or clean drinking water in low socio-economic areas and the like, even at the cost of perhaps one's own standard of living, may be very valuable goals of a person and these goals may clash with personal wellbeing. Another advantage of this flexibility is that the capability approach can be used to evaluate many aspects of individual or social arrangements. A relatively small sub-set of basic capabilities might be sufficient when one is concerned with evaluations of poverty, while measurements of wellbeing might include a wider and diverse range of capabilities<sup>350</sup>.

Sen has actively defended his approach against the criticism of demands of informational requirement. He has emphasised the role of public participation, open dialogues, political freedom and democracy in eliciting necessary data regarding the formation of human values on functionings and capabilities<sup>351</sup>. He stresses that :

The problem is not with listing important capabilities, but with insisting on one predetermined canonical list of capabilities, chosen by theorists without any general social discussion or public reasoning. To have such a fixed list, emanating entirely from pure theory, is to deny the possibility of fruitful public participation on what should be included and why. Public discussion and reasoning can lead to a better understanding of the role, reach and significance of particular capabilities<sup>352</sup>.

He feels that if culture and tradition are at variance with the choice of functionings that lead to wellbeing, then the concerned people must be given the opportunity of deciding through public discussions to resolve and determine what the choices should be. There should not be top down approach from local elites or cultural experts in selecting the preferred way to lead their life<sup>353</sup>. Sen also acknowledges the fact that the capability approach is not a complete theory of justice or human development because

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<sup>350</sup>Sen, Amartya, K., (1993), 'Capability and Well-being', in Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya K. Sen (eds), *The Quality of Life*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.31-32 & pp.40 – 42

<sup>351</sup>Sen, Amartya K. , (1999), *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.153 -154

<sup>352</sup>Sen, A. K., (2004), 'Capabilities, Lists and Public Reason: Continuing the Conversation', *Feminist Economics*, 10(3), p.77

<sup>353</sup>Sen, Amartya K. (1999), *op. cit.*, pp.31-32

to develop it further, other features such as personal liberty, economic growth etc., need to be incorporated<sup>354</sup>.

There is also empirical evidence that invalidates the criticism against Sen's labelling certain capabilities as necessary or important. A methodology developed by David Clark was used in surveying the perceptions of wellbeing among the urban and rural poor in South Africa. The most important finding of this survey was that the conception of the valuable capabilities was strikingly similar to the ones that Sen has put forward<sup>355</sup>.

Another major criticism that can be levied against the capability approach is that Sen's concept of human being is more of a reasoning, choosing being. For Sen choice and freedom are central aspects and this choice has to be a responsible choice or as he emphasises must be genuine choices<sup>356</sup>. Choice is of crucial importance to this approach and human beings are reduced to being rational, logical choosers. He places importance on the quality of the set of capabilities<sup>357</sup>. The goodness of the opportunities are to be evaluated in terms of quality and not just quantity<sup>358</sup>. So responsible choice is of utmost importance when the diversity of options are to be chosen<sup>359</sup>. This view of an individual comes very close to the Aristotelian notion of the rational man. Sen has been criticised on the grounds that his concept of a person does not place enough importance on the other aspects of human life like passions, affection, friendship, and other values and motives that make a person's living rich and meaningful. The personhood given by Sen is thus impoverished. There is hardly any discussion in the capability approach that recognises a person as a being with varied emotions with a need for belongingness, love, care, friendship and other important human qualities. The notion of personhood provided by Sen is insufficient to formulate a complete theory of human wellbeing.

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<sup>354</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1992), *op. cit.*, p.77

<sup>355</sup>Clark, D. A. (2002), *Visions of Development: A Study of Human Values*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp.136-44

<sup>356</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1992), *op. cit.*, p.41

<sup>357</sup>Sen, Amartya K. (1985), *Commodities and Capabilities*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.69

<sup>358</sup>Sen, Amartya K. (1993), 'Capability and Well-being'. in Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya K. Sen (eds), *The Quality of Life*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 34-35

<sup>359</sup>Sen, Amartya, (1992), *op. cit.*, p.148

Liberal critics of Sen often identify the focus of the Capability Approach - 'the ability to achieve the kind of lives we have reason to value' - as problematic because it appears to impose an external valuation of the good life, whatever people may actually value. In replying to this criticism, Sen particularly points to the heterogeneity (variability) in people's abilities to convert the same bundle of resources into valuable functionings. Theories of justice that focus on the distribution of means implicitly assume that they will provide the same effective freedom to live the life one has reason to value to all, but this excludes relevant information about the relationship between particular people and resources.

Both capability theorists and external critics express concern that the content and structure of Sen's Capability Approach is under-theorised and this makes it unsuitable as a theory of justice. Sen does not say which capabilities are important or how they are to be distributed: he argues that those are political decisions for the society itself to decide. Many philosophers have argued that without an objectively justified list of valuable capabilities the nature of the life 'we have reason to want' is unclear and so it is hard to identify the goal that a just society should be aiming towards, to assess how well a society is doing, or to criticize particular shortfalls. Different capability theorists have taken different approaches to the valuation of capabilities, from procedural accounts to ones based on substantive understandings of human nature. There are related concerns about the institutional structure of the Capability Approach, for example, how should capabilities be weighed against each other and non-capability concerns? Should some basic capabilities be prioritized as more urgent? What does the Capability Approach imply for interpersonal equality? How should capability enhancement be paid for? How much responsibility should individuals take for the results of their own choices? What should be done about non-remediable deprivations, such as blindness? Sen's main response to such criticisms has been to admit that the Capability Approach is not a theory of justice but rather an approach to the evaluation of effective freedom.

A related criticism argues that Sen's emphasis on individual freedom is vague and fails to consider how one individual's freedom may affect others. Martha Nussbaum, for example, points out that a just society requires balancing and even limiting certain

freedoms, such as regarding the expression of racist views, and in order to do so must make commitments about which freedoms are good or bad, important or trivial<sup>360</sup>(Nussbaum 2003). Others have noted that ‘freedom’ though broad, is a poor way of conceptualizing certain inter-personal goods such as friendship, respect, and care.

In answering some of the criticisms against the capability approach developed by Sen, it would be relevant to touch upon the capability approach proposed by Martha Craven Nussbaum. There is a basic difference in the capability approach proposed by Sen and Nussbaum. While Sen advocates for equality of capability, Nussbaum proposes a social minimum threshold of capabilities. Actually the context for which Nussbaum and Sen developed the capability approach is very different. Sen never claimed that his approach is a theory, but Nussbaum has endeavoured to develop a theory of justice, at least partially so. For her the capability approach is based on moral-legal-political philosophy, on which a constitution should be based to ensure the basic minimum rights of any human being. She argues for a constitution that is grounded on a universal political principle of human rights by specifying an explicit list of central human capabilities.

She lists ten core capabilities as adequately sufficient level of capabilities necessary to lead a life with the dignity and wellbeing worthy of a human being. Another major difference is that Sen does not claim that the capability approach proposed is a full fledged theory. He puts it forward as an open ended proposal that can be adapted to different context and specially to understand poverty and wellbeing. Nussbaum however offers a partial theory of Justice from a moral-legal-political-philosophical view with the goal of securing a threshold of certain central capabilities as political principles that all governments should guarantee their citizens through their constitutions. In her own words:

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<sup>360</sup> Nussbaum, Martha (2003), "Capabilities as fundamental entitlements: Sen and social justice", *Feminist Economics*, Taylor and Francis, 9(2-3), pp.33–59, [doi:10.1080/1354570022000077926](https://doi.org/10.1080/1354570022000077926) accessed on 23.04.2015

In certain core areas of human functionings, a necessary condition of justice for a public political arrangement is that it delivers to citizens a certain basic level of capability<sup>361</sup>.

Nussbaum believes that human life cannot be lived with dignity unless the following ten capabilities are ensured. The ten capabilities that feature in her list of Central Human Capabilities are<sup>362</sup> :

1. Life (Being able to live for the span normal for the species)
2. Bodily health (Being able to have good health and in order to obtain this, adequate nourishment and shelter)
1. Bodily integrity (Being able to be physically secure, and with rights over one's own body, e.g. not forced to lose capacity for sexual satisfaction or forced to conceive or bear children)
2. Senses, imagination, and thought (Being able to use the senses, imagine, think and reason, and to do this in a truly human way: adequately educated, informed and free from repression)
5. Emotions (Being able to have attachments for other people and things)
6. Practical reason (Being able to 'form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection for the planning of one's life)
7. Affiliation (A. Being able to interact well with other people, and to imagine and empathize with their situation; B. Having the social bases for self-respect and nonhumiliation; not being subject to discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, etc.)
8. Other species (Being able to live with concern for the natural world)
9. Play (Being able to play and laugh)
10. Control over one's environment (A. Being able to participate in political processes;  
B. Being able to have possessions and seek employment)

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<sup>361</sup>Nussbaum, M, (2000), '*Women and Human Development*', Edinburg, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.71

<sup>362</sup>Nussbaum, M, (2000), op. cit., p.78 -80

Nussbaum holds the firm conviction that these are the minimal capabilities that people ought to be provided by any government. She thinks that to live a fully human life these capabilities should be constitutionally guaranteed to all citizens. She says that:

“if people are below the threshold on any one of the capabilities, that is a failure of basic justice, no matter how high up they are on all the others ...the capabilities approach is fully universal: the capabilities in question are held to be important for each and every citizen, in each and every nation, and each person is to be treated as an end ...<sup>363</sup>.

According to Nussbaum, the necessity of this threshold of capabilities is based on the universality of human flourishing and dignity and even if one of them falls below the threshold, then life would be devoid of humanness<sup>364</sup>. So the foundational principle of Nussbaum's theory is the concept of human dignity and human flourishing without which she contends that a person fails to live a human life. Her theory is much more woven with humanities, tradition, literature and narratives. These narratives of the motivation, aspirations, yearnings, hopes, desires and choices are a guide to a better appreciation of the intricacies of the human condition. She calls for a world where basic capabilities that indicate the innate capacities of a person may flourish in a facilitative environment and be transformed to internal capabilities that paves the way for a life with dignity<sup>365</sup>. She asserts that when external surroundings are conducive for human growth, the internal capabilities combine to form combined capabilities<sup>366</sup> where these can be exercised to become, in the language of Sen, functionings and agency achievements. But for this to be realized, a suitable politico-legal-moral environment has to be developed. To create such a surrounding, she has listed the basic minimum rights that has to be guaranteed by any government.

What Nussbaum argues is that given the ten basic capabilities, which she has listed, a person will be able to achieve her potential. She further says that for a woman:

...a life without dignity and choice, a life in which she can be no more than an appendage of someone else, is a type of death, death of her humanity<sup>367</sup>.

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<sup>363</sup>Nussbaum, M, (2000), op. cit., p.176

<sup>364</sup>Nussbaum, M, (2000), op. cit., p.222

<sup>365</sup>Nussbaum, M, (2000), op. cit., pp.84-86

<sup>366</sup>Ibid.

<sup>367</sup>Nussbaum, M, (2000), op. cit., p.83

Dignity according to Nussbaum:

...arises naturally from the recognition that each person has just one life to live, not more than one; that the food on A's plate does not magically nourish the stomach of B; that the pleasure felt in C's body does not make the pain experienced by D less painful<sup>368</sup>.

So this list actually provides a politically implementable framework to ensure wellbeing.

It can be further argued that although the freedom to choose and achievements of the life one desires to live well is important but nonetheless living well and living meaningfully are two different notions and the sense of fulfilment does not come from achieving all that one desires. The sense of fulfilment has to come from within. Even a poor woman may find a sense of fulfilment on becoming a mother. This is not to understate the importance of basic necessities or functionings. But this is to distinguish between achievement, the potential to achieve, and a sense of finding a meaning in life. For example, a person may desire to provide for his offspring to live comfortably and acquire a fortune, but it is another thing to feel deeply satisfied by it.

It is important to have choices and freedom over important aspects of life but it is far more important to have the ability to use those choices wisely and meaningfully so as not to abuse the freedom. This can be possible when one possesses a self-reflexive attitude. The notion of wellbeing given in the capability approach does not elaborate on the selfhood that strives for self-actualisation as a creative, reflective being in quest of becoming. The realization of one's worth as a person depends on the acceptance of one's self from within. This requires a practice of self-reflection and insight into one's self and one's situatedness in life. It is important for a person to explore which functionings and capabilities would contribute to one's wellbeing and why. Engaging in knowing how certain doings and beings make us what we are facilitates self-understanding. This striving for self-realization is absent in the capability approach. It seems that in the capability approach put forward by Sen, the emphasis lies more on human agency and the notion of freedom. Here freedom is just not economic freedom, but is more to do with the informed choices that a person makes. The important

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<sup>368</sup>Nussbaum, M, (2000), op. cit., p.56



cornerstone that is given to freedom of choice and the ability to achieve the status such that the choice can be made, makes the notion of agency freedom very close to the part played by rationality in the Aristotelian concept of choice of a virtuous action. Not much is said by Sen in his theory about the selfhood of a person except his ability and responsibility towards himself and others. He fails to note that “motivation, morale, imagination and self-image also matter to the person, giving her motivation to treasure and value human life<sup>369</sup>.” According to Des Gasper, human beings are much more than rational choosers. There is a multiplicity of values, motives and desires that govern human behaviour and a richer conception of human personality is needed to formulate a meaningful theory of human wellbeing. He reiterates that these factors matter much more than the distinction Sen<sup>370</sup> makes of human behaviour in terms of activities based on ‘sympathy’ (feelings for other people) and ‘commitment’ (goals beyond personal well-being)<sup>371</sup>. Incorporation of a more holistic view of human life in the capability approach may facilitate a fuller understanding of human wellbeing. So we find that the capability approach certainly provides constructive and valuable insights in understanding wellbeing. Although a certain type of personhood is implicitly implied in the works of Sen, but there remains a wide scope to develop it further. A fuller idea of personhood not just in terms of agency or dignity is an area that needs to be developed before we can assess wellbeing in a more holistic manner.

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<sup>369</sup>Gasper, D., (2004), *The Ethics of Development*, Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, pp.180

<sup>370</sup>Sen, Amartya K., (1977), ‘Rational fools: A critique of the behavioral foundations of economic theory’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 6 (4), pp.327

<sup>371</sup>Gasper, D., (2002), ‘Is Sen’s Approach an Adequate Basis for Considering Human Development?’, *Review of Political Economy*, 14 (4), pp.453

### Section III – Aristotelian Approach

We have already noted that the Self Determination Theory and Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Theory claims to follow the *eudaimonic* tradition in defining happiness. Both theories accept that happiness in the sense of *eudaimonia* or flourishing is identical with or closely related to psychological wellbeing. Further Amartya Sen takes recourse to *eudaimonia*, while elucidating his capability approach. It therefore seems to be necessary here to turn our attention to the classical philosophical account of *eudaimonia* as given by Aristotle. Many of the Greek moralists think that, if we are rational, we aim at living well. If living well or to be happy is our ultimate end, then it serves to organize our other ends in life. Aristotle states happiness as a central purpose of human life and a goal in itself. As a result he devotes more space to the topic of happiness than any thinker prior to the modern era. In his view, happiness depends on the cultivation of virtue. He was convinced that a genuinely happy life required the fulfillment of a broad range of conditions, including physical as well as mental well-being. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle first explains the idea of good or what is good for human beings and then he proceeds to the concept of happiness. He starts with a teleological explanation of the Universe. He argues that all human activities are done to fulfil a given purpose. If all activities are done to fulfil some particular goals then these goals are something that people want to achieve, which are considered good by them.

Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.<sup>372</sup>

Now since each activity or pursuit is for a different aim so how can these aims be compared among themselves? Sometimes one activity is done to serve the purpose of fulfilling another activity. There are some activities that apparently seem to be an end in themselves. However, if we examine closely we will find that almost all activities

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<sup>372</sup>Ethics Nicomachea, Translated by W. D. Ross, Oxford University Press, London:1925, Book 1.1 (1094a1-4)

are means to some or other end. But this process cannot go on forever so there has to be something that is an end in itself and hence all other activities are subordinate to it. If this is not the case then the process of carrying out an activity for the sake of another activity would seem to go on forever.

In our everyday lives if we think of wealth or health, it might seem that they are ends in themselves. A person leading a life pervaded with disease or illness will always want to get rid of it. Overcoming ill health and being fit surely makes a person happy. But wealth and health are chosen because through them something else may be achieved. According to Aristotle, a good that is pursued because it is an end in itself can be called the chief or final good. This

...we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else.<sup>373</sup>

Let us now examine whether we can call happiness the final good. We often see that one's choice of wealth or health is directed to happiness. Even if we consider the choice of honour, it can be seen that a person chooses honour in order to be happy. But if we look at happiness, we see that this is a good that is chosen for its own sake. Unlike other things, happiness is always desired for its own sake and not for anything else. Anything that is chosen in life is so preferred because one wants to be happy. So happiness incorporates everything that is worth choosing for. It is a final end to everything else, or the highest good. That is why Aristotle said:

...(T)he self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be; ...Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.<sup>374</sup>

Happiness or is the highest and final good, in the sense it is not subordinate to the choice of any other good. It is chosen for the sake of its own sake. Secondly the highest good possesses the property of being self-sufficient. The person who achieves the highest good will find himself to desire nothing else.

The Greek word that usually gets translated as "happiness" is *eudaimonia*, and this can be misleading. In ordinary usage, happiness is often conceived of as a subjective

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<sup>373</sup>Ibid, Book 1.7 (1097a32-33)

<sup>374</sup>Ibid, Book 1.7 (1097b14--22)

state of mind, as one may say he is happy when one is enjoying a day with one's friends or watching a football match. For Aristotle, happiness is a final end or goal that encompasses the totality of one's life. It is not something that can be gained or lost in a few hours, like pleasurable sensations. It is more like the ultimate value of our life as lived up to the end, measuring how well one lives up to his/her full potential as a human being. For this reason, one cannot really make any pronouncements about whether one has lived a happy life until it is over. Aristotle gives his view on happiness in the following way:

...the function of man is to live a certain kind of life, and this activity implies a rational principle, and the function of a good man is the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed it is performed in accord with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, then happiness turns out to be an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.<sup>375</sup>

In this last quote we can see another important feature of Aristotle's theory: the link between the concepts of happiness and virtue. Aristotle tells us that the most important factor in the effort to achieve happiness is to have a good moral character or "complete virtue." But being virtuous is not a mere passive state: one must act in accordance with virtue. Nor is it enough to have a few virtues; rather one must strive to possess all of them. As Aristotle writes,

He is happy who lives in accordance with complete virtue and is sufficiently equipped with external goods, not for some period but throughout a complete life. In order to achieve the life of complete virtue, we need to make the right choices, and this involves keeping our eye on the future, on the ultimate result we want for our lives as a whole. We will not achieve happiness simply by enjoying the pleasures of the moment.

Aristotle relates his notion of *eudaimonia* with a unique feature of human functioning. Human beings share the function of nutrition and growth with plants and share the function of perception and motion with animals. So these functions are not unique to man. What is unique to human beings is his rationality. Unlike animals and plants, a man is expected to exist in a manner or perform actions and live in accordance with a

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<sup>375</sup>Ibid, Book 1.7 (1098a13)

rational principle. Actually, Aristotle opines that the function of a living entity depends upon the nature of the soul of that entity. And different entities have different kinds of souls as we will see later, when describing the nature of soul in detail. So Aristotle describes the unique human function as a certain kind of life, where living in this manner is an activity or action of the soul which follows or implies a rational principle<sup>376</sup>. Since the function of a human being depends on his soul, so his uniquely human activities must be the activities of the soul, guided and regulated by reason.

Aristotle's concept of function is connected to the idea of the merit of the function, i.e., how good or well the function is. So when we talk of the function of a pen, we try to envisage whether the pen can at all be used for writing and also how good the pen is to write with; in case of a ball, we value it by the fact whether it can be played with and how good it is to play with and so on. So the worth of anything that has a function will depend on whether it is capable of carrying out the function and also how well it can carry out the function. But this aspect i.e., the worth or quality of any function can be determined only when the function has been performed. If something has a function then its good is, to perform the function with excellence. Thus a good mango tree is one that grows well and bears delicious mangoes. A good jasmine flower is one that has bloomed well and has a good fragrance. So the good of any kind will depend on the function of that kind.

...in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the function,<sup>377</sup>

If two entities have the same function then whether one of them is better than the other will depend on two conditions: firstly, whether at all both have the capacity to perform that function and secondly, how skilfully and flawlessly each perform their function. The difference between a cricket player and good cricket player depends on the playing of cricket by both these players. The good cricketer is one who plays the game in a more competent and proficient way. Similarly the goodness of a man as a whole will depend on his actions or activities that are done rationally, i.e. in accordance with a rational principle. According to Aristotle, then living a good life

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<sup>376</sup>Ibid, Book 1.7 (1097b27-29)

<sup>377</sup> Ibid, Book 1.7 (1097b27-29)

means living an active life where the deeds of the person are activities or actions of the soul which follows or implies a rational principle.

Thus a good human being is one who performs activities of the soul that are in accordance with the rational principle and with appropriate excellences. In Greek moral theories, excellence is denoted as *arête*. The English term closest to *arête* is virtue. Here virtue does not signify any moral connotation. Virtue is simply excellence in performance. So if the function of a good man entails good and noble performance of actions of the soul implying a rational principle this would imply performance of those activities in accordance with appropriate excellence<sup>378</sup>. From this it would follow that human goodness is performance of the given activities in accordance with virtue.

...human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue.....for to virtue belongs virtuous activity<sup>379</sup>.

We can say then, the highest good for man must include the excellent functioning of the rational faculties. We have seen that happiness is the highest good for man; hence happiness would entail excellent functioning of the rational faculties which is - the activities of the soul in accordance with virtue. A good life then is a happy life, i.e., a life involved in excellent functioning of the rational faculties that is to say a life engaged in activities of the soul in accordance with virtue. Thus a good life for a human being implies virtuous activities of the soul aiming at the highest good.

The question now is to find out what are the activities in accordance with the soul that will best help one to be a good person or what are the components of a good life, in one word what makes an activity virtuous. This may become clear if we refer to his classification of the constitutive parts of the soul. Aristotle derives his conception of soul from biology. He does not endorse any religious views of soul being the true self or incarnation – reincarnation or other such notions. He makes a fundamental difference between living and non-living beings, on the basis of whether they have a soul or not. So according to Aristotle, all and only living entities have a soul. This is however not to say that the souls of all living organisms possess the same capacity. In differentiating between the different kinds of souls, Aristotle makes a distinctive

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<sup>378</sup>Ibid, , Book 1.1 (1098a15-17)

<sup>379</sup>Ibid,

hierarchy of the capabilities possessed by each kind. The higher capacity is inclusive of the lower ones. He contends that all living entities have the capacity to grow and reproduce. Thus every living organism is endowed with souls that have the capacity for growth and nutrition. The souls of plants have only this capacity, i.e., the ability for growth and nutrition. Plants cannot move or sense anything. They have no sensory apparatus. Animals on the other hand, can move from one place to another, can see, taste, hear, smell and feel touch on their body. Animals have the ability to feel pain or pleasure. Thus the souls of animals, apart from having the capacity to grow and reproduce, possess the capability of sense perception. So the souls of animals have two parts the vegetative part and the perceptive or appetitive part. Human beings can perform all of the above activities and in addition to those, they can think, plan, choose and take decisions. This distinctive feature of human beings as different from other animals and plants is due to rationality that is a possession of man.

The soul of a human being is comprised of a vegetative part, an appetitive part and most significantly of all, a rational part. Man has the capacity to understand concepts, think logically and make rational decisions based on these understanding. As this is the unique faculty of man, the good man must be the one who exercises his rational faculties in an excellent manner. Exercising one's rational faculties to the highest capacity implies that all activities of a person be rational. To ensure that all activities are performed according to the rational principle, one has to ensure that the other parts of the soul be controlled by the rational principle. This means that the vegetative and the appetitive parts of the soul be controlled by the rational part of the soul. However the processes of growth, nutrition etc. are autonomous and biological, and rationality does not play any role in these processes. So what remains is that, to exercise one's rational faculties to the highest capacity, and in all activities, it is necessary that the appetitive parts of the soul be controlled by the rational part of the soul i.e., the appetitive part of the soul be amenable to reason.

In our daily life however, we do not find that all man always act rationally. So there must be some constituent factor in the irrational part that resists the rational principle for if it had not been so, then there would have been no need of advice or remonstrance. No one then would have been praised or reprimanded. So when

someone refrains from doing an activity, then “the irrational element is in some sense persuaded by a rational principle<sup>380</sup>”. Any action of the soul that is in accordance with the rational principle is a human good. So when we censure someone for their activity, it must be for an activity that has not been done in accordance with the rational principle, i.e., an activity that is irrational.

A man is praised when he can control himself and reproved when he indulges himself and acts without any restraint. So we see that it is the activities related to the desiring or the appetitive element that has the potential to be either rational or irrational. It is then clear that we extol the rational element of the appetitive part of the soul and censure the superseding of the rational element of the appetitive part of the soul by the irrational element. Thus when all activities of a man are rational, then it must be because the rational part of the appetitive element in the soul has overridden the irrational element.

We have previously seen that one part of the soul is purely rational, so all the activities in accordance with the purely rational part of the soul are virtuous activities. The character of a man is judged by the behaviours or activities of the person. So the behaviour of a person can be either good or bad. When it happens that a specific activity has the possibility of being good or bad, then that behaviour must be due to an activity of the appetitive part of the soul. This is because all activities of the purely rational part of the soul will be good. Hence the activities that might be bad cannot be the activities of the purely rational part of the soul. We see then that one part of the appetitive or the desiring element of the soul is irrational; otherwise all the activities of all men would be always good and hence virtuous. But in the virtuous and the continent man, the appetitive element in the soul always abides by the rational principle. Similarly the inability of a man to control his desires and passions thereby giving in to uncontrolled impulses and doing activities resistant to the rational principle is called incontinence.

Since the activities of the soul are of two different types, so the excellent functioning of a person with respect to these activities that is the virtue will also be different.

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<sup>380</sup>Ibid, , Book 1.1 (1102b 30)



Accordingly, there are two different types of virtues – Aristotle, terms the proclivity of functioning of the purely rational faculty as intellectual virtues and those of the appetitive part of the soul as moral virtues.

Let us now try to explore what the moral and intellectual virtues are. It is in regard to the moral virtues of a person that we judge his character. When we say the character of a person is good or bad, it is with regard to the virtues of character i.e., the moral virtues. When we talk about the character of a man we say things like “he is courageous or he is good-tempered, or he is modest” and so on, we do not say that he is intelligent or intuitive or good in mathematics etc. This is not to say that the aforementioned traits of intelligence, ability to do calculations are not praiseworthy. They are of course excellent qualities and valuable to anyone, but these do not pertain to the character of a person.

Aristotle states that moral virtues are states of character and have to be cultivated through habit. The moral virtues are termed *ethike* which is a variation of the word *ethos* meaning habit. If something is given naturally, then we need not cultivate it or need to make a habit out of it. Since moral virtues have to be formed by practice, then it cannot be said that it is in the nature of a person to be morally virtuous. If that had been the case, then everyone would be virtuous and one would not have to develop it through training. If virtues can be formed through habit, then it is reasonable to say that vices are also formed by habit. Hence man is neither virtuous nor vicious by nature. One becomes virtuous or vicious through exercising certain good or bad habits respectively. Different situations make a man respond differently. The actions and emotions displayed by a person in a given situation results in a given pattern of behaviour that forms a habit. The character of a person is built up depending on the merit of those habits. So in the same situation, different persons may react differently. Thus one becomes virtuous by acting virtuously and vicious by acting viciously in a given situation.

“...it is from the same causes and by the same means that every virtue is both produced and destroyed, and similarly every art; for it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced<sup>381</sup>.

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<sup>381</sup>Ibid , Book 2.2 (1103b6-10)

It will be interesting to explore what makes certain pattern of behaviour virtuous. Aristotle mentions that three kinds of elements are found in the soul, viz., passions, faculties that denote the capability to feel those passions and states of character. Passion here stands for desires and emotions and by the term states of character Aristotle means the aspect by which a person conducts himself with respect to given desires and emotions, i.e. the characteristic feature of the person.

...we must consider what virtue is. Since things that are found in the soul are of three kinds- passions, faculties, states of character, virtue must be one of these. By passions I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, emulation, pity, and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain; by faculties the things in virtue of which we are said to be capable of feeling these, e.g. of becoming angry or being pained or feeling pity; by states of character the things in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions<sup>382</sup>...

Thus with reference to fear if a person feels terribly afraid or extremely reckless, then he has not conducted himself well. But if he feels fear fairly realistically, then he will be deemed to have stood well in reference to fear. The same is applicable for other emotions also. Aristotle argues that a person will not be praised or blamed only on account of the desires, longings or feeling he is having. We do not reprove or appreciate a person just because he is feeling angry or confident or any other emotion. A person is judged by the way he feels the emotion. Also a person is not evaluated because of his capabilities to feel hunger, fear, anger etc. because the ability to feel hunger, fear and any other desires and feelings is naturally given. But we applaud or rebuke a person on account of virtue or vice, so it is clear that virtue is neither passion nor faculty, but a state of character.

There is another point that should be mentioned. It is not within a person's control not to feel hungry if he has not eaten for a long time, or to refrain from having the desire to sleep when he has not slept for several days. So passions are not given to a man by choice. But the disposition of a person or the behaviour of a person is under his control. It is now relevant to ask how then the disposition of a person should be with respect to a feeling or action in order to become virtuous.

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<sup>382</sup>Ibid, Book 2.5 (1105b19 -30)

Aristotle defines virtuous character in the following way:<sup>383</sup>

Excellence [of character], then, is a state concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, this being determined by reason and in the way in which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect.

By calling excellence of character a state, Aristotle means that it is neither a feeling nor a capacity nor a mere tendency to behave in specific ways. Rather it is the settled condition we are in when we are well off in relation to feelings and actions. We are well off in relation to our feelings and actions when we are in a mean or intermediate state in regard to them. If, on the other hand, we have a vicious character, we are badly off in relation to feelings and actions, and we fail to hit the mean in regard to them.

Aristotle asserts that virtues are developed when a person learns and forms the habit of refraining from excess and deficits. He compares virtues with any perfect work of art. For example, if a painting is aesthetically perfect, then adding further features or removing any feature will impair its elegance and beauty, i.e., the excellence of the work will be impaired. Similarly, the habitual disposition to respond in a given circumstance will be called a virtue when the responses in behaviour and feeling are appropriate for that circumstance. Once again what it means is that whether a given behaviour or feeling is virtuous will depend on that particular situation. This can be easily understood if we take up the analogy of appropriate healthy diet for a person. We know that what is nutritious and suitable for a baby is not so for an adult. Or to remain healthy, the regular food intake of a heavyweight boxing champion or a sportsman will vastly differ from that of an ordinary man. This is the case with moral virtues. A donation of Rs.20,000 to a charity by a person in the middle income category may appropriately be termed generous, compared to the same amount of money given by a very rich industrialist for the same cause. It would be appropriate to get extremely angry at a drunken driver speeding across the street, yet mildly irritated by a two year old child who breaks a vase. So in all cases virtue is a sort of mean lying between the excess and deficit of the same behaviour or feeling depending on the situation. Thus the necessary quality for any behavioural disposition to be termed

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<sup>383</sup>Ibid, Book 2.5 (1106b36–1107a3)

virtue is that it be exactly equidistant from two extremes. For all behaviours and passions, that have excess and deficit, the moral virtue will lie at the intermediate. In his words,

...in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue.<sup>384</sup>

A major feature of moral virtues then is that they are characteristics that have to be balanced between excess and deficit. Aristotle emphasizes that the mean state is not an arithmetic mean, but one relative to the situation. The different particular virtues provide illustrations of what Aristotle means. Each virtue is set over or concerned with specific feelings or actions. The virtue of mildness or good temper, for example, is concerned with anger. Aristotle thinks that a mild person ought to be angry about some things (e.g., about injustice and other forms of mistreatment) and should be willing to stand up for himself and those he cares about. Not to do so would indicate the morally deficient character of the person. It would also be inappropriate to take offense and get angry if there is nothing worth getting angry about. That response would indicate the morally excessive character of the irascible person. The mild person's reactions are appropriate to the situation. Sometimes intense anger is appropriate; at other times calm detachment is.

When we use the terms 'cowardice' and 'rash' in juxtaposition with courage, the first two denote two extremes, both being vices. But this does not tell us what courage is. So we can never formulate a universal fixed rule for determining any moral virtue. Whether an action or emotion is morally virtuous or not will depend in the context in which it is evaluated.

There are however several traits that do not have any excess or deficits but are always bad and under no circumstances can be appropriate. Envy, adultery, theft, spitefulness are some of the actions and feelings that are always a vice. There is no proper situation where one can say that being envious would be a virtue, or committing adultery is appropriate. Nevertheless we can list a great number of virtues with their

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<sup>384</sup>Ibid, Book2.6(1106b25-30)

excess and deficits as vices. Some examples of these are as follows: extravagance and meanness are the vices in comparison to the virtue of generosity, self-indulgence and insensibility are the two extremes or vices in comparison to temperance and so on. So in each context what makes behaviour or feeling morally virtuous has to be determined rationally by judging that context in reference to the given person.

This entails that all behavioural or emotional response in a situation has to be rationally judged as per the demands of the situation. We may say that an action or emotion in any context has to be rationally assessed and be under the control of rationality, for it to be morally virtuous. So a virtuous person will always act and feel according to the rational evaluation of a situation, i.e. according to the rational principle. So basically what is virtuous and what is vicious is determined by rational judgement.

The above view of moral virtues with their defining characteristic of being habits or dispositions brings us to the fact that a morally virtuous person will always be inclined to act in a way such that the excess and deficits are avoided. This means that a morally virtuous person will always want to behave in a manner that is a mean between two extremes. So a virtuous person will refrain from eating excessively or having unlimited sexual interactions, simply because he will not want to so, i.e. he will be pained to do so. Avoiding vices will be the same as avoiding pain for the virtuous person. So to refrain from acting viciously, he need not have to exercise self-control, it will be pleasant for him to abstain from the vices. Thus the morally virtuous person is disposed or habituated to feel pleasant when acting virtuously, and feel disdain or pain about vices.

We have seen then that moral virtues are virtues of character and they are acquired out of actively deliberating about appropriate behaviour and emotions and also being engaged in certain actions so that they form a habit or second nature. So although moral virtues are attained through habits of proper conduct, but the evaluation of the appropriateness of the conduct requires careful thinking in a certain way.

Now apart from moral virtues we have seen that there are intellectual virtues that are the excellence in functioning of the purely rational part of the soul. Intellectual virtues are those that facilitate our thinking about in various ways and about various things. Aristotle has listed five intellectual virtues that fall into two categories. Scientific

thinking (*episteme*), Intuitive reasoning (*nous*) which together form Theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) are concerned with understanding of invariable or unchangeable elements, like mathematics, or elements that invariably happen such as day and night. Theoretical thinking aims at being able to understand why things are the way they are. In contrast, the other category refers to thinking in terms of elements that are changeable such as one's health or friendship or the place where one lives and so on. The virtue which facilitates the understanding of what one can do is *techne* or art or skill. The other intellectual virtue that is related to why one would decide to act in a given way or feel in a given way is called practical wisdom or *phronesis*. Practical wisdom is the mode of thinking that one deliberates and calculates in decision making or judging a certain course of action. Thus when a person decides to act in a certain way it is not only his training that acts in decision making but also the evaluation of the situation in which the person will act in that way. This evaluation is associated with practical wisdom. This faculty acts as a guide to understand our desires, actions and goals that would be correct. Thus this is the feature of deliberative reasoning in choosing the specific action among many courses of actions available to a person which would be appropriate.

But human beings do not always adhere to such a course of action. There are many instances of the fact that men are self-indulgent and their desires and actions do not correspond to the best possible outcome for the person. This is because for some men, the irrational element in the appetitive part of the soul resists the rational principle and hence his actions, desires and emotions tend to be irrational. So there are many instances of men being self-indulgent and their desires and actions leading them to impulsive behaviours. For the virtuous and the continent man the rational principle controls his actions and behaviours but the opposite is true of the incontinent, or vicious or brutish man. Men choose to form vicious habits, even though they have the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. So when ignoble things are pleasant to a person, it must be the unprincipled person who feels pleasure in such base actions. Whatever appears yellow to a jaundiced eye does not so to the healthy eye. Food that is wholesome to a sick person cannot be said to be appropriate for a healthy person. So it is with the actions and passions that are repugnant. Just as some actions are noble and some actions are abhorrent, so will the pleasure in them be of two kinds.

Thus even though pleasure is desirable to all, it is not desirable from all sources. We may be pleased at gaining affluence but not at as a reward of committing murder. Hence pleasure drawn from dignified sources will be different from the pleasures derived from despicable sources. A person in pain may find taking morphine pleasurable but to a healthy person this is harmful and should be avoided. It is similar with pleasures. A good person finds pleasure in virtuous activities and avoids vices.

...since activities differ in respect of goodness and badness, and some are worthy to be chosen, others to be avoided, and others neutral, so, too, are the pleasures; for to each activity there is a proper pleasure. The pleasure proper to a worthy activity is good and that proper to an unworthy activity bad; just as the appetites for noble objects are laudable, those for base objects culpable.<sup>385</sup>

From this we can gather that there may be persons who choose not to follow the rational principle. The continent person recognizes what he should do and does it, but to do so he must struggle against the pull of recalcitrant feelings. The incontinent person also in some way knows what he should do, but fails to do it because of recalcitrant feelings. The incontinent man knows what is right but is overwhelmed by his desire for greater pleasure from inappropriate sources and thus succumbs to temptation. Aristotle terms this the weakness of the will or *akrasia*. In comparison, the intemperate or the vicious man purposefully seeks out ignoble and excess pleasures. The incontinent man has regrets about his behaviour and inability to be rational. So according to Aristotle, the incontinent man can get better and become virtuous. But the vicious man has no regard for virtue and is hence brutish.

That the virtuous person's emotional responses are appropriate to the situation indicates that her emotional responses are in harmony with her correct reasoning about what to do. Aristotle says that the non-rational part of a virtuous person's soul speaks with the same voice as the rational part. That the virtuous person's soul is unified and not torn by conflict distinguishes the state of being virtuous from various non-virtuous conditions such as continence, incontinence, and vice in general.

Aristotle seems to suggest that, any non-virtuous person is plagued by inner doubt or conflict, even if on the surface one appears to be as psychologically unified as

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<sup>385</sup>Ibid , Book 10.5(1175b24 - 30)

virtuous people. Aristotle says of vicious people that they are at odds with themselves and do not love themselves. Virtuous persons, on the other hand, enjoy who they are and take pleasure in acting virtuously. Like the morally vicious person, the continent and incontinent persons are internally conflicted, but they are more aware of their inner turmoil than the morally vicious person.

There is one more aspect that has to be explained in relation to virtue. When we examined the nature of the final good, it was seen that happiness was the final good because all activities are a means to this end. Happiness is sought for its own sake and it is sought by one and all. If now we consider the nature of pleasure, it can be seen that animals act towards pleasure, so pleasure must be a good. Let us then explore the relation of virtue with pleasure and also the nature of pleasure. All our actions and passions are tied with accompanying pleasure or pain. It is on account of pleasure and pain that we want to do certain things and want to avoid certain other things. Since virtue is involved with actions and passions, it has to be associated with pleasure and pain. Now taking pleasure in an activity will ensure that the activity will be intensified and done more precisely. To excel in any activity, it must be done with pleasure. Out of two pleasurable activities the one which is more pleasurable attracts attention more and tends to hinder the less pleasurable one. A good singer of classical music will be distracted from any activity she is doing if she happens to hear a talented rendering of classical music. So if she is an ardent lover of classical music then she might cease to do her present activities to listen to the music. But when she herself is singing, anything else will hardly seem to distract her. The pleasure associated with singing seems to prevail over any other pleasure. So we see that activities are performed well and excelled at when accompanied with the proper pleasure. It is thus important that we learn to take pleasure at the proper activities and to be pained at others. Just as some activities are noble and others base, it will follow that the pleasure in the two activities will also be such. So pleasures also differ in terms of goodness and badness. A just man is a man who finds pleasure in acting justly. So a virtuous man will get pleasure only by acting virtuously.

...virtuous actions must be in themselves pleasant. But they are also good and noble, and have each of these attributes in the highest degree...<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>386</sup>Ibid Book1.8(1099a20-28)



Thus although it cannot be denied that all animals seek pleasure, but there is a difference in kinds of pleasures and all pleasures are not to be sought by humans. Only those pleasures from proper sources are to be desired and others to be avoided. So pleasure is decidedly not the highest good.

To explain what the virtuous person's pleasures are like, Aristotle returns to the idea that virtue is an excellent state of the person. It is the state that makes a human being good and makes him perform his function well. His unique function is rational activity, so when we exercise our fully developed rational powers well, we are good or virtuous human beings and we are happy.

According to Aristotle, human beings can reason in ways that non-human animals cannot. We can deliberate about what to do, about what kind of lives to live, about what sort of persons to be. As humans, we can look for reasons to act or live one way rather than another. In other words, we can engage in practical reasoning. We can also think about the nature of the world and why it seems to behave as it does. We can consider scientific and metaphysical truths about the universe. This is to engage in theoretical reasoning ("contemplation" or *theôria*). It may be assumed, for the purposes of this discussion, that theoretical and practical rational activity are at least related types of rational activity, in that each involves exercising one's abilities to think and to know and to consider truths that one has figured out.

One may ask: how does one realize these powers fully? Aristotle's idea is that an individual develops these abilities to the extent that he enjoys and values the exercise of his realized rational powers in a wide variety of different and even seemingly unconnected activities. When that happens, his exercise of these abilities is a continuing source of self-esteem and enjoyment. In *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.8, Aristotle distinguishes true self-love, which characterizes the virtuous person, from vulgar self-love, which characterizes morally defective types. Morally defective types love themselves in the sense that they love material goods and advantages. They desire to secure these things even at the expense of other people, and so they act in ways that are morally vicious. Genuine self-lovers, on the other hand, love most the exercise of their developed human activity, which is rational activity. When they enjoy and recognize the value of developing their rational powers, they can use this

recognition to guide their decisions and to determine which actions are appropriate in which circumstances. This is the reasoning of those who have practical wisdom or *phronêsis*. Moreover, because they take pleasure in the right things, they will avoid many of the actions, and will be unattracted to many of the pleasures, associated with the common vices. In other words, they will act as a virtuous person would.

Till now we have established that happiness can be attained by leading a virtuous life and subordinating all of one's passions to rationality. In this context there is one more factor that needs to be added. To be happy one needs some external conditions. Without these, it might be impossible or very difficult to implement virtuous action. It will be impossible to do liberal deeds if one has no money. Similarly it is impractical to think of being courageous or brave if one does not possess good health. A list of such externalities, as proposed by Aristotle, is necessary for a person to be happy.

... it is impossible, or not easy, to do noble acts without the proper equipment. In many actions we use friends and riches and political power as instruments; and there are some things the lack of which takes the lustre from happiness, as good birth, goodly children, beauty; for the man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is not very likely to be happy, and perhaps a man would be still less likely if he had thoroughly bad children or friends or had lost good children or friends by death. As we said, then, happiness seems to need this sort of prosperity in addition;<sup>387</sup>

But it should also be borne in mind that there may be success or failures in life. Just as someone may enjoy good fortune by chance and be happy in the same way, misfortune might befall a virtuous man to cause him pain. But if a man is truly virtuous then he will make the best of his circumstances and try to act nobly and with "greatness of soul".

... he will be happy throughout his life; for always, or by preference to everything else, he will be engaged in virtuous action and contemplation, and he will bear the chances of life most nobly...the happy man can never become miserable ...<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>387</sup>Ibid Book1.8(1099b1-9)

<sup>388</sup>Ibid Book1.8(1100b19-20)

So far we have established that happiness is the highest good because it is desired not for the sake of anything else but for its own sake. It has also been shown that happiness cannot be just a capacity or disposition, because then by merely possessing that capacity and not exercising it or a man in coma but in sleep but having such a disposition would have been called happy.

Happiness extends, then, just so far as contemplation does, and those to whom contemplation more fully belongs are more truly happy, not as a mere concomitant but in virtue of the contemplation; for this is in itself precious.<sup>389</sup>

So according to Aristotle we find that “Happiness then is the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing in the world”.<sup>390</sup>

According to Aristotle, the full realization of our rational powers is not something we can achieve or maintain on our own. It is hard, for a solitary person to be continuously active, but it is easier with others. To realize our powers fully we need at least a group of persons who share our interests and with whom we can cooperate to achieve our mutually recognized goals. Examples listed by Aristotle include sailors on a ship, soldiers on an expedition, members of families, business relationships, religious associations, citizens of a political community, and colleagues engaged in contemplative activity. As Aristotle explains in *Rhetoric* II.4, if we and our cooperative partners perform our functions responsibly, each will develop feelings of friendship for the others involved. In this way, successful cooperative activity transforms persons’ desires and motivations. This change, Aristotle indicates, is caused to occur in us. Once bonds of friendship are formed, it is natural for us to exhibit the social virtues, which include generosity, friendliness, and mildness of temper. Aristotle thinks that, in addition to friendships, wider social relations are required for the full development of our rational powers. He says we are by nature political beings, whose capacities are fully realized in a specific kind of political community (a polis or city-state). Aristotle’s ideal political community is led by citizens who recognize the value of living fully active lives and whose aim is to make the best life possible for their fellow citizens. When citizens deliberate and legislate about the community’s educational, office-holding, and economic policies, their goal

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<sup>389</sup>Ibid Book10.8(1178b28-31)

<sup>390</sup>Ibid Book1.8(1099a24-26)

is to determine and promote the conditions under which citizens can fully develop their powers to think and to know.

Aristotle describes a person as good by his performance of virtuous activities and feeling pleasure in doing them. When he describes pleasure we find that true pleasure is the pleasure felt by the good man. So it seems that there is circularity here. But on close examination we can see that the notion of what is pleasant is intimately associated with one's notion of the good life and the latter is associated with the idea of pleasure felt in doing virtuous activities. So the good life and the truly pleasant life have to be explained in terms of one another. But the idea that pleasure is an end in itself independent of any notion of good and bad and with equal appeal to both is rejected. Goodness involves making right choices about what is pleasant. Aristotle does not prescribe asceticism or complete rejection of pleasure, for some higher ideal. What he says is that one must make intelligent choices about what is truly pleasant. To be good is to be virtuous and to be virtuous one must take pleasure in virtuous actions. Thus pleasures arising out of virtuous actions are true pleasures.

What is evident from the above exposition is that, in Aristotle's view, virtue requires a harmony between cognitive and affective elements of the person. He attempts to explain what this harmony consists in by exploring the psychological foundations of moral character. He shows that the virtuous person is characterized by a love of the exercise of fully realized rational activity. This self-love is not an individual achievement, rather its development and preservation require (a) friendships in which individuals desire the good of others for others' sake and (b) political and economic arrangements that promote the conditions under which self-love and friendship flourish.

We may note here that the identification of happiness in the sense of *eudaimonia* and wellbeing, made by the psychological theories seems problematic, if we take *eudaimonia* in the Aristotelian sense. The psychological theories accept certain conditions as sufficient for attaining *eudaimonia* but these conditions e.g. contain nothing which will ensure virtuous activity of an individual. On the other hand, Aristotle would consider virtuous activity as the only way to attain *eudaimonia*.

Hence the well being which is proposed by the *eudaimonic* psychologists is not the same as Aristotelian *eudaimonia*.

In Aristotle's theory non-*eudaimonic* pleasure is also significant because he contends that no one can attain *eudaimonia* without at the same time attaining non- *eudaimonic* pleasure. In his view, even virtuous activity is not performed without such pleasure. But in the *eudaimonic* psychological theories, pleasure does not play any important role in psychological wellbeing. They would rather say that it is possible to attain psychological wellbeing without experiencing pleasure simultaneously. In SDT, pleasure has been identified as correlated phenomena of optimal need satisfaction, but not as a contributory factor in any sense.

Aristotle's theory is founded on the paradigm of rationality as he proposes virtuous activity as a purely rational activity. On the contrary, *eudaimonic* psychological theories mentioned above do not take reason as the guiding principle. For example, SDT takes need satisfaction as the guiding principle, while in Ryff's theory it is said that nothing more than minimum rationality is required for reaching the six dimensions.

In his capability approach, Amartya Sen focuses on freedom in the sense of right to choose and the opportunity to choose, both of which has to come from external sources. In his theory wellbeing or *eudaimonia* depends not so much on the internal factors of the person. But in Aristotelian model, *eudaimonia* is chiefly dependent on internal enrichment. In Sen's view rational means reasonable and this is out and out individualistic. So something can be reasonably valuable to one person and reasonably not valuable to another. In other words there is no fixed, universal rational choice in Sen's sense as we find in Aristotle's theory. Sen distinguishes between agency freedom and wellbeing freedom where wellbeing freedom contributes directly to one's wellbeing. He did not mention any requirement for moral alleviation in order to achieve wellbeing freedom. If there is justice and equality in the socio-economic-cultural domain, then, in Sen's view, one is in a position to achieve wellbeing through capabilities. But in Aristotle's philosophy, individual's moral elevation is necessary for his wellbeing.

So far we have pointed out the differences between *eudaimonic* theories and Aristotle's theory. It may be added here, that all these theories, including Aristotle's theory, focus on individual's wellbeing which can be attained without being concerned with the wellbeing of others.

## Chapter V

### Happiness, Morality and Wellbeing: An Alternative Approach

In this study, we have tried to focus on two primary concepts of human life, namely, happiness and psychological wellbeing. Taking a multi-disciplinary approach, we have analysed and examined some very significant notions of happiness and psychological wellbeing. Since our aim is to understand the link between psychological wellbeing and happiness, if any, we have studied some of the theories of happiness in psychology, economics and philosophy. An understanding of happiness and wellbeing, their connection, and their measuring methods appears to be a very important study because it might work as a foundation for all relevant human enterprise. It is also appropriate for the present time when, in spite of reaching unimaginable technological and scientific heights, human race is undergoing immense threats of mental illness, social alienation, depression and emotional suffering both in individual level and the social plane.

Starting from psychological and economic views of happiness and psychological wellbeing we covered the theoretical reflection of happiness and wellbeing in some ancient and modern philosophical theories. In psychology, we have found two distinct traditions of happiness – *hedonia* and *eudaimonia*. Although both kinds of theories were initially developed from the aspect of psychological wellbeing, hedonic psychology defined happiness as subjective wellbeing to distinguish their research from those undertaken on psychological wellbeing as *eudaimonia*. Although they used the term “subjective” in psychological wellbeing in order to avoid the confusions arising out of the various nuances of “happiness” yet they fail to provide us a clear understanding of the relation of identity between the two notions, as claimed by them. Some major arguments have been raised against the theory of subjective wellbeing as happiness. Scholars including Amartya Sen has criticised the pitfalls of a purely subjective measure. Despite these shortcomings it is undeniable that this is the only theory of happiness that provides the commonsense felt aspects of happiness. The subjective feeling of pleasure in a person is one of the important markers of his

internal mental state in both happiness and psychological wellbeing. We cannot reject the claim that presence of positive affect is conducive to psychological wellbeing.

The *eudaimonic* tradition in psychology has discarded the use of the term “happiness” in ordinary sense and talks about *eudaimonic* happiness or “flourishing”. They have described psychological wellbeing by using the concept of *eudaimonic* happiness. While critically examining the theories of happiness and psychological wellbeing, we have located certain conceptual inadequacies and methodological difficulties. Among others, one important limitation in the Self Determination Theory (SDT) is the lack of adequate conceptual arguments against the claim about why there is a high association of need satisfaction with happiness as subjective wellbeing. A major contribution of SDT is that it provides us with knowledge of minimal conditions necessary for development of psychological wellbeing. The three needs of Relatedness, Autonomy and Competency postulated by SDT give a comprehensive account of the least possible conditions essential for psychological health. This is a step forward in putting the numerous human needs in broad but relevant categories. The theory of Self Determination helps one to understand the broader cause of psychological conflict at a glance.

Carol Ryff is probably right to distinguish between the various dimensions of wellbeing, like personal growth, positive relationships, and others which are important for eudaimonic well-being. The ability to enjoy smaller things of life is not mentioned here; thus it fails to note that wellbeing is not just need satisfaction, functioning, and the capacity to enjoy one’s freedom or openness and flourishing. But the commonsense notion of happiness or hedonic well-being is also important for psychological wellbeing. Ryff’s theory of psychological wellbeing has integrated inputs from several philosophical and psychological theories of wellbeing. But it is not able to conclusively suggest, that a person can be happy in ordinary sense, even if he has a high level of psychological wellbeing. The contribution of this theory lies in giving a clear exposition of some of the dimensions of positive mental health. The satisfaction of needs provides the basic requirement of a healthy psyche.

Ryff’s Theory also helps one to be aware of the processes through which one may actualize one’s potentials. The six dimensions in Ryff’s account of psychological wellbeing provide a framework for working out the paths to understand and develop



knowledge about one's self. It must be noted that the self-knowledge referred here is knowledge of the self in *eudaimonic* sense; it is not self-knowledge required for transcendence or spiritual upliftment. This knowledge is required if one wishes to accept one's self with its positive and negative attributes. Further personal growth cannot occur without one having knowledge about one's self.

A common limitation of all the three psychological theories mentioned above is the lack of objectivity in evaluating one's happiness and psychological wellbeing. All major claims made by these theories are founded upon subjective reports of individual persons. In the absence of any objective criterion, we are unable to verify the authenticity of those subjectively valid claims. Our assumption is that one's internal psychological state must have some external manifestation or some publicly accessible status, or else there should be some external factors which validate the subjective reports regarding one's psychological wellbeing.

This turned our attention to economics. From the very beginning, economists have assumed that psychological wellbeing and happiness are identical. Later, as happiness researches in economics became gradually inclined to quantitative methods similar to mathematical theories, normative economics was abandoned in favour of positive economics. But from the turn of the twenty-first century, the trend in economics seemed to take a reverse turn and go back towards giving importance to psychological wellbeing and happiness. Andrew Oswald, who has been studying happiness as an economic phenomenon for quite some time, says:

The relevance of economic performance is that it may be a means to an end. That end is not the consumption of beef burgers... the vanquishing of some high level of interest rates, but...the enrichment of mankind's feeling of wellbeing. Economic things matter only in so far as they make people happier<sup>391</sup>.

This reversal of focus is to a large extent influenced by the Easterlin paradox that we had discussed in Chapter II,<sup>392</sup> which has challenged some of the fundamental concepts in economic theory. Apart from this, one of the foremost motives for the huge upsurge of research in happiness as a part of economic theory has probably

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<sup>391</sup>Oswald, A. J. (1997). 'Happiness and Economic Performance', *Economic Journal*, vol. 107(445), pp. 1815-1831. <http://www.andrewoswald.com/docs/happecperf.pdf> accessed on 05.12.2014

<sup>392</sup>Easterlin, R. (1974), 'Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence', in P. David and M. Reder, eds. *Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honour of Moses Abramovitz*, New York and London: Academic Press

“been the fact that certain assumptions of neo-classical economic theory are not confirmed by research findings<sup>393</sup>”. In economic literatures the terms ‘wellbeing’, ‘happiness’, ‘psychological wellbeing’, ‘psychological health’ and ‘mental wellbeing’ appear as synonyms.

Economics has taken a very parsimonious view of human happiness and has been more concerned with the quantitative measure and analysis of happiness in monetary terms. The necessity of accurate calculations is perceptible in the definition that economic theory provides, with regard to happiness. We have seen that in economics almost all concepts are understood through mathematical models. This has brought precision to and facilitates aggregation of wellbeing at the broader level. Wellbeing nowadays is computed at the national level in terms of economic growth. So if one knows the aggregate indicators of economic growth such as gross domestic output (GDP), one can calculate accurately the gain in happiness for each individual. The implicit assumption here is that aggregate wellbeing percolates to the individual level, and that, it is distributed equally. In the process it also assumes that individuals are exactly alike in terms of desires, preferences and capabilities. Here variation and diversity of the human needs, preferences and capacities become secondary in comparison to the importance of mathematical precision.

It should be noted however that the quantitative analysis of welfare has made it easier to understand the abstract nature of the concepts of “happiness” and “psychological wellbeing”. Psychological health is an important aspect of human life but for one to develop physically and psychologically, a basic minimum material comfort may be essential. Economic account of wellbeing gives us objective markers of human wellbeing. Discussions of psychological wellbeing miss out some of the fundamental requisites of wellbeing. Economic indicators of happiness give one the opportunity to compare the difference in resources at the societal and individual level. Specific social aspects of living in terms of infrastructure and public services such as health, education contribute significantly in producing happiness. We may obtain the status of such markers through the economic views on happiness so that we can get a

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<sup>393</sup>Bollerman, S., *Happiness and the Welfare State*, [http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap\\_bib/freetexts/bollerman\\_s\\_2009.pdf](http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_bib/freetexts/bollerman_s_2009.pdf) accessed on 23.11.2013

holistic account of the condition of an individual. This is required so that the bias included in the effects of adaptation is removed.

The economic and psychological theories discussed above have not considered the normative aspect of attaining happiness or psychological wellbeing. It is noteworthy that none of these theories have deliberated on the consequences of achieving happiness or psychological wellbeing through unscrupulous methods. Apparently they are all concerned in reaching certain levels of psychological wellbeing. Since none of these accounts take moral evaluation or moral sense as an important component of psychological wellbeing, it appears that psychological wellbeing attained even by non-moral means will be approved in these theories. This is all the more relevant because it is conceptually possible to think of a person who is highly immoral yet have a high level of happiness. Under this hypothesis, it will be possible to consider that if stealing from other people makes one happy, then it is prescribable that he should steal if he wishes to develop his psychological wellbeing; if one's purpose in life is fulfilled by unethical means then doing immoral acts will augment one's psychological wellbeing. The inadequacy of these theories of psychological wellbeing lies in their non-inclusion of any moral dimension. Thus in psychological theories and economic theories there is a possibility of accepting immoral happiness.

This deficiency may be overcome if we find a theory of happiness where the above argument may be answered. It is notable that wellbeing or happiness in economics has its roots in one such theory of happiness, that is, theory of Utilitarianism. Probably the notion of aggregation of happiness or wellbeing in conceptualising and measuring welfare i.e., utilities also stems from this theory. In Jeremy Bentham's view mankind has two masters, and they are pleasure and pain. All actions are to be governed by these two principles. In utilitarianism, it is proposed that the value of an action be judged by the outcome or consequences of that action. Among a number of alternatives, that alternative from which the maximum amount of happiness is generated for maximum number of persons should be chosen. He states, any action should be chosen according to "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". Bentham did not differentiate between different types of pleasure. He firmly advocated that pleasures differ only in quantity but qualitatively they are of the same

kind. Since pleasures are quantitatively measurable, so all actions can be hierarchically ranked in terms of the amount or intensity of happiness, etc. produced by them. Such a partial account of human happiness attracted much criticism and to overcome them, John Stuart Mill proposed a modified version of utilitarianism. Let us explore how Mill defines happiness and He introduces the qualitative distinction among various kinds of pleasures and proposed a doctrine of higher pleasures. However, he too pledges his commitment to the first principle of Utilitarianism. As stated by Mill:

Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure.<sup>394</sup>

In this passage Mill seems to endorse both Utilitarianism and Hedonism. But since he tries to rid Utilitarianism of the charges of hedonism, Mill introduced two concepts into utilitarianism. He argued that pleasures not only differ in quantity but in quality also. All pleasures are not equally valuable. Pleasures can be divided into the categories of higher pleasure and lower pleasure. Mill claims that it is absurd to assume that pleasure should be measured in terms of quantity only. He argues that human beings strive for a higher grade of existence. So goals like liberty, pride or dignity are much sought after goals even if they entail a certain amount of discontent or unhappiness. The enjoyment of these is far superior to any physical or sensual pleasures. That is why Mill states -

...one of the two (*pleasures*) is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of... he can never really wish to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence.

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A being having higher faculty will always try to satisfy pleasures relating to that faculty. Since mental or intellectual pleasures are those involving the higher faculties

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<sup>394</sup>Ibid Chapter II,p-5

<sup>395</sup>The Project Gutenberg eBook of *Utilitarianism*, by John Stuart Mill, Chapter I, pp 6-7, (*pleasures*), accessed on 23.02.2013, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11224/11224-h/11224-h.htm>

of a person, so these activities are intrinsically much more valuable than activities of sensual indulgence. Actually the best judge of the superiority of pleasures relating to the mental and intellectual faculties is one who is conversed with both type of pleasures – the bodily and the mental. So a person who has experienced both types of pleasures, one gained from say, drinking alcohol and fine food and the other from aesthetic appreciation of a sense of beauty, or a spiritual experience will easily differentiate and prioritise between these two types of pleasures. Given a chance to choose between the two, a human being would always and naturally choose the latter, which is higher. Bodily pleasures are enjoyed by animals and human beings alike but pleasures arising out of our intellect are enjoyed only by human beings. To quote Mill on this argument, “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.”<sup>396</sup>

Mill explains this choice of higher level of existence as an outcome of human intelligence, independence or dignity. As he contends,

A being of higher faculties ... can never really wish to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence. We may give what explanation we please of this unwillingness; we may attribute it to pride...we may refer it to the love of liberty and personal independence... but its most appropriate appellation is a sense of dignity, which all human beings possess in one form or other....<sup>397</sup>

So when appraising the happiness accrued from an action one has to take into account the kind of pleasure generated by that action. And this again will depend on a greater number of persons choosing higher pleasures. If a case arises where a person capable of both kinds of pleasures chooses to discard the higher for the lower, then it must be attributed to his weakness of character. Only a person of feeble character and weak mind will choose to such lowly pleasures. To quote Mill –

Men often, from infirmity of character, make their election for the nearer good, though they know it to be the less valuable; and this no less when the choice is between two bodily pleasures, than when it is between bodily and mental...<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>396</sup>Ibid Chapter II,p-7.

<sup>397</sup>Ibid Chapter II,p-7

<sup>398</sup>Ibid Chapter II,p-7

Faculty for dignified feelings has to be developed carefully, otherwise it will degenerate. In other words –“capacity for the nobler feelings is in most natures a very tender plant, easily killed, not only by hostile influences, but by mere want of sustenance...” . To cultivate such feelings and capacities for enjoying intellectual and refined pleasures, one has to have the time and opportunity to do so. Once cultivated, no one in his right mind will choose to indulge inferior sensual pleasures. Most importantly if one were to sustain the faculty of exercising the higher faculties of mind, one will have to cultivate a strong character. To put in Mill’s own words –

Utilitarianism, therefore, could only attain its end by the general cultivation of nobleness of character, even if each individual were only benefited by the nobleness of others, and his own, so far as happiness is concerned...<sup>399</sup>

He claims that the choice made by a person to exercise their higher faculties is neither random nor subjective; rather the potential to act in accordance with such higher feelings is possessed by all humans. Since human beings are rational so they will always act in ways that produce maximum happiness in the society. Maximising happiness means maximisation of the general good that serves the interest of the whole society. So it is good of the whole or the ultimate good. We can say that the happiness, in Mill’s theory, is universal happiness or wellbeing. Thus maximisation of happiness according to Mill is maximisation of wellbeing. For him the wellbeing of an individual consists in attaining general good. According to Mill, voluntary or spontaneous individual sacrifice of happiness can be allowed if it tends to promote general wellbeing or actually does increase general wellbeing.

Given this, the individual pursuit of happiness can never be contrary to general or universal happiness. It is true that wellbeing at the societal level may promote individual happiness but we have to take into count individual level of happiness separately. It is important to ensure that wellbeing takes place not only as the greatest good of the greatest number, but the minority and the individual are also important. We cannot ignore the individual levels of wellbeing. However it is to be noted that whatever be the goals, aspirations, activities that an individual engages in should not go against the societal wellbeing. Happiness of an individual cannot be admitted to go

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<sup>399</sup>Ibid Chapter II,p-7

against or violate morality. Actually this will not be possible in Mill's ideal society. Any immoral act will harm others. But harm will cause pain and the total happiness of the society will decrease. So if something goes against the greatest happiness or wellbeing then this will not be prescribed. Morality is necessary in the sense that one cannot make use of immoral or unethical means to ensure one's psychological wellbeing.

Ethical considerations or ethical insight is binding for an individual to be happy or have psychological wellbeing but this is not to say that it is mandatory that all the actions he does have to be morally judged. A person may engage in a lot of activities that does not fall under the purview of morality. Suppose a person likes to read a book or write a novel or perhaps paint a picture. None of these activities can be judged as either ethical or unethical. All actions of an individual are not evaluated in terms of morality. Many actions are non-moral. We cannot say that each and every actions of an individual that promotes his happiness should be ethically evaluated. Whether an action is to be judged against morality will depend upon the context. Rather evaluating each and every action in terms of moral standard may be a sign of a weak or apprehensive mind. A man who constantly worries about the moral valuation of all his actions that may contribute to his psychological wellbeing or happiness may be psychologically weak or anxious.

But there are certain conceptual issues in Mill's theory, as it prescribes to perform all actions for the sake of some greater good. Here he says that a rational agent will always act for the greater good. Such an agent will act only by the rule of utility, irrespective of any emotional tie or concern to the matter in hand. If this is the case then, actually the emotions of a person are being ignored or denied. The possibility of engagement in intrinsically enjoyable activities is overridden by having to act only from a rational and impersonal viewpoint. But we know that positive emotions are very important for a person's happiness. The fact that emotions also play a significant role in psychological wellbeing is overlooked in Mill's theory. There is a possibility that engaging in intrinsically joyful activities may be considered irrational. If one is always guided by rationality and acts only in the interest of societal wellbeing or happiness then this does not ensure individual wellbeing or happiness.

Similar to the above condition, if each action for psychological wellbeing of a person has to be carried out for general happiness, then that will also pose a burden on a person. If an individual always feels compelled by the command of reason, to be guided by his ethical concerns about greater good, then this may impede his own psychological wellbeing. For a person to flourish it is desirable to act towards personal growth. For example suppose a person loves to paint and is also very good at painting. A follower of Mill's Utilitarianism who is very conscientious may tell this painter that painting a picture should not be preferred, since it is done only for the sake of personal enjoyment and thus does not produce human worthy happiness. This may prevent the painter from realizing his creativity and thereby lowering his wellbeing.

Since emotional satisfaction is significant in determination of psychological health in the individual level, simple pleasures may at times be important for the promotion of wellbeing. It might be that these simple pleasures are not of the higher quality that Mill talks about. But nor are they lower kinds of pleasure which is avoidable for a human standard. Suppose a person chooses to enjoy a good dinner instead of reading Plato's philosophy, not due to feeble mindedness or weakness of character, but simply because he feels like doing so at that moment. Then according to Mill the person chooses to be happy by indulging in a lower pleasure so is not getting human worthy happiness. But there are many such pleasures that might not be of harm to others and yet bring joy to a person. Together such pleasures often contribute to the psychological wellbeing of a person, provided it does not bring harm to others or cause pain to others. Also since Mill is concerned with general happiness, flourishing of an individual is neglected.

Having said this we would also take note that the view of happiness advocated by Mill, that is happiness as general good, has been accepted as a moral theory in the context of psychological wellbeing. Mill has proposed that general happiness is the sole consideration for morality and utility is the only moral criteria. There is something attractive in the utilitarian idea that morality is fundamentally universal and impartial, i.e., the idea that, at the most fundamental level of morality, everyone is equally important — women and men, strong and weak, rich and poor. The non-utilitarian members of the consequentialist family are theories that assess acts and/or



character traits, practices, and institutions solely in terms of resulting good, *where good is not restricted to welfare*. There are consequentialists who are non-utilitarians, who propose that their fundamental evaluations of wellbeing will be in terms of not only welfare but also some other goods, like justice, fairness, and equality.

In this context we have explored the capability approach proposed by Amartya Sen. The Capability Approach is defined by its choice of focus upon the significance of individuals' capability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value. This distinguishes it from more established approaches to ethical evaluation, such as utilitarianism, which focuses exclusively on general welfare. A person's capability to live a good life is defined in terms of the set of valuable 'beings and doings' like being in good health or having loving relationships with others to which they have real access. He considers that this notion of wellbeing takes into account human diversities and at the same time ensures equality.

In the book *Idea of Justice*, Sen makes an attempt to use basic tenets of the theory of social choice to suggest possibilities that could be adopted in identification and minimization of social injustice. He emphasises more on the manifest instances of injustice and attempted to find ways to minimize them rather than to speculate on the ideal form of a just society that has no room for injustice. The greatest contribution Sen makes to the area of social justice is by underscoring the importance of the objective reasoning. He discusses the demands of impartiality in dealing with the questions of social justice and praises the contribution made by John Rawls for his analysis of moral and political objectivity and for firmly establishing the concept of 'Justice as fairness'. However, he severely attacks Rawls's theory of justice by bringing out its inadequacies to deliver the actual justice. At the same time, he also proposes the usefulness of Social Choice Theory for propagation and enhancement of social justice. What is important in the idea of justice is emergence of various social alternatives which can be ranked based on priorities and from among those alternatives, based on the public reasoning, some of which could be selected. Sen thus gives importance to the plurality of approaches, role of public reasoning and availability of democratic institutions. He further argues that we need to re-examine

our accepted approaches for their effectiveness and actual delivery of justice. As regards, focus and measure of actual delivery of justice, Sen argues in favour of using capability approach as it is a general approach focusing on information of individual advantage judged in terms of opportunities rather than specific design on how society should function. It points to the central relevance of inequalities of capabilities in assessing social disparities but on its own does not propose any formula for policy decisions. The notable outcome of capability approach is development of Human Development Index as a measure of human welfare, in place of earlier static indicators such as per capita income, GDP etc. Although Sen's theory give some extremely valuable insights on fundamental human attributes necessary for flourishing, the non-moral character of Sen's theory renders it possible to consider only on the individual's development to the exclusion of other members of society.

It would not be incorrect to say that contemporary literature on well-being largely ignores the contributions of philosophers as it does not pay much attention to the complexity of philosophical conceptions of happiness, even though philosophy has dealt with this subject long before psychology or economics even existed. In order to understand and achieve happiness or psychological wellbeing, one must know what he or she is living for, or what the meaning of life is. The current theories of well-being seem to give a one-sided, rather bare picture of well-being. In fact, what they do seem to cover quite well is the notion of hedonism - striving for maximization of pleasure (positive affect) and minimization of pain (negative affect). A non-hedonic approach to a good life has risen out of the historical and philosophical idea of *eudaimonic well-being*. Originally Aristotle introduced the concept of *eudaimonia* (from *daimon* - true nature) as a goal for human living. He thought that true happiness is found by leading a virtuous life and doing what is worth doing. He argued that realizing human potential is the ultimate human goal. *Daimon* refers to potentialities of each person, realization of which leads to the greatest fulfillment. Efforts to live in accordance with one's *daimon*, the congruence between this and people's life activities, lead to the experience of *eudaimonia*. Some authors define *eudaimonia* as actualization of human potential, while others associate it with frequent experiences of positive psychological states; still others identify it with flourishing. Aristotle has

provided us with a moral framework for individual happiness but his account of happiness as *eudaimonia* includes the happiness arising solely from rationality. He has conceived human potential in purely rational terms. His notion of happiness applies to a few privileged individuals and not to common people. The commonsense ordinary notion of happiness is absolutely absent.

The two philosophical concepts that we have discussed both seem to have certain features in common regarding the path to happiness. Mill specifies “nobleness of character” and Aristotle argues for virtue. But it is important to note that both the philosophical theories are theories of morality, whereas the other two disciplines have shied away from ethics.

Though several important aspects of psychological wellbeing and happiness have been discussed and elaborated in the above theories, none of the theories have given a comprehensive and holistic view of psychological wellbeing or happiness. It will be interesting to explore whether we may arrive at such an understanding of happiness and its relation to psychological wellbeing by combining the theories with one another that have been deliberated upon above. Starting with the theory of happiness as subjective wellbeing, we may investigate whether by adding this to SDT it is possible to arrive at a broader conception of happiness. SDT takes care of the bare minimum necessary for psychological wellbeing. By adding an additional need say happiness, might add some more explanatory power to the theory. But in SDT and in the theory of subjective wellbeing as happiness, this addition would not remove the difficulties raised by lack of normativity in psychological wellbeing or happiness. Moreover even after these two theories are combined, the bias of having singularly subjective account would still be present. Also the arguments raised by Nozick in this context will remain valid.

Combining Ryff’s theory with the theory of happiness as subjective wellbeing, may go a long way in overcoming the problems caused by ignoring the commonsense notion of happiness. But this combination will not eliminate the problems of unscrupulous attainment of psychological wellbeing or happiness. The problems of absence of normativity will continue. Further even after this addition the limitations of subjective reporting will continue along with its accompanying problems.

We might consider combining the views on psychological wellbeing in economics with the psychological theories to address the drawback of subjective reporting. But supplementing the objective view with the subjective views on happiness or psychological wellbeing will not eliminate shortcomings caused by lack of normativity because this is a common deficiency of all these theories. Moreover the addition of subjective wellbeing as happiness to economic views on happiness would not remove the fact that felt happiness and satisfaction are not the only valuable goals of life. There may be other valuable goals in life apart from the commonsense notion of happiness.

One might consider combining the Capability Approach with the eudaimonic psychological theories to get a more holistic view of psychological wellbeing. This addition would result in a theory which will be free from the charges raised against Sen's view of human wellbeing on the ground that Sen has not considered any internal requirements of psychological wellbeing such as those indicated in the eudaimonic views of happiness. The capabilities he talks about seem to refer to external states of a person. This does not however take away the inadequacies in these theories caused from the non-inclusion of moral dimension in the theory of human happiness or psychological wellbeing.

Aristotle's theory of eudaimonia as happiness provides a moral aspect of happiness. However Aristotle's account of eudaimonia as happiness ascribes happiness purely in terms of rationality. It is far removed from the common sense view of happiness. For Aristotle, happiness seems to be attainable only for a privileged few who are providentially endowed with good fortune, good looks, friendship and other external attributes along with a high sense of rationality. If Aristotelian happiness be held to be a mark of psychological wellbeing then the latter will be a very rare phenomenon. This in effect would provide with a reductio argument against any proposal of formulating a secular theory of wellbeing on the basis of Aristotle's theory. If this happiness on the other hand is regarded as highest mark of psychological wellbeing then lower levels of psychological wellbeing would leave room for doing immoral acts for realizing one's potential or flourishing and thus the whole theory will get vitiated by the same charge that has been brought against all other theories.

Thus we find that no one theory that have been discussed provide us with a view of happiness or psychological wellbeing which includes a commonsense notion of happiness coupled with internal attributes required for attaining psychological wellbeing. Nor does any theory give us a moral dimension to the views on wellbeing. A holistic view of wellbeing is not gained even after combining the various theories mentioned. Here we will explore whether there may be an approach of wellbeing that addresses the inadequacies given in the fore mentioned theories but retaining the valuable insights, if any, contained in those theories. We will endeavor to develop the outlines of such an approach. We will also try to explore the relationship between happiness and wellbeing in this context.

In this context it would be relevant to explore about the Indian thoughts and philosophy on happiness. One major difference in Indian thought from the theories we have discussed is that in Indian theories, happiness has never been regarded as the one and only goal of life per se. This is not to say that Indian texts have not regarded happiness as an important aspect of life. On the contrary the pursuit of happiness has been considered to be as a primary goal of human life in the Indian context. Traditionally, the goal of life has been termed *puruṣārthas*. Daya Krishna states:

...the notion of *purusartha* is perhaps more fundamental as it defines those ultimate goals of human life which give meaning and significance to it...*purusarthas*, it is claimed, encompasses within it all the actual or possible goals that mankind may pursue for itself<sup>400</sup>.

It is given that there are four *puruṣārthas*, –*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. Since our discussion on happiness is limited to worldly psychological states and not transcendental states, we will consider only the first three; the fourth *puruṣārthas*, i.e., *mokṣa* is concerned with liberation, a transcendental state. So our discussion on *puruṣārthas* will be limited to those goals of life that are important for leading a good mundane life. We will desist from including this in the discussion any religious or transcendental perspectives.

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<sup>400</sup>Daya Krishna, ( 1991), *Indian Philosophy : A Counter Perspective*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p.189.It may be noted that Daya Krishna , himself does not claim this he refers this to be the usual notion of *puruṣārthas* in Indian Philosophy.

According to *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* of V.S. Apte<sup>401</sup>,] the meaning of *kāma* is given as the following: wish, desire, longing, love, affection, pleasure, enjoyment, love, sexual love. In a very wide sense *kāma*, can be taken to imply desire or also the object of desire and also the drive to satisfy those desires<sup>402</sup>. Usually *kāma* refers to sensuous pleasures. Matilal quotes a definition of *kāma*. He says:

*Kāma* is that pleasure which in our mind...This mental state is experiential. It has no embodied existence<sup>403</sup>.

In the same text he quotes from the *Mahābhārata* -

*Kāma* is that pleasure which is experienced by our mind and our heart<sup>404</sup>.

It is to be noted that *kāma* includes sexual love, which is thought to be frowned upon by Indian philosophy as an aim of human being. Without going to hair splitting debates of Indian philosophy, in this thesis from now on we will take *kāma* to extend so as to include a mental state of desire or an entity that is an object of desire. This will imply that all human aspirations will be included in *kāma*.

In a general sense *artha* is translated to mean wealth (see Wikipedia). Daya Krishna argues that if *kāma* is extended to imply all human seeking then the meaning of *artha* can be “instrumentalities for the satisfaction of what is desired, or even generalized instrumentalities such as power or wealth which could be used for the satisfaction of any and every desire.”<sup>405</sup>

Among these *puruṣārthas* the most difficult to explain and translate is the concept of *dharma*. It is necessary to be clear about the boundaries of the concept *dharma* that will be used in this discussion. Although the word ‘*dharma*’ is vague yet it is used successfully in literature, and in both academic and practical sphere. *Dharma* is used to refer to many notions like religion, righteousness, virtue, attributes, property, quality, scriptural laws, custom, justice, religious principles, norm, religious merit, duty, morality, justice, faith, and many more<sup>406</sup>. To quote P.V Kane, “*Dharma* is one

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<sup>401</sup> Apte, V.S., *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition 1965, Delhi: Matilal Banarasidas Publishers, 12<sup>th</sup> Reprint 2014

<sup>402</sup> Matilal, B. K. (2002), *Ethics and epics: The collected essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal*, ed by Jonardon Ganeri (Vol. 2), New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.145

<sup>403</sup> Ibid, p.146

<sup>404</sup> Ibid

<sup>405</sup> Daya Krishna, *Indian Philosophy : A Counter Perspective*, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1991, p -192

<sup>406</sup> Halbfass, W. (1988), *India and Europe: An Essay in Philosophical Understanding* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), p. 314

of those Sanskrit words that defy all attempts at an exact rendering in English or any other tongue<sup>407</sup>. The difficulty in translating the word *dharma* has been compounded by the fact that its meanings, implications and contextual connotations have varied from the era of *R̥g Veda* till today.

The etymological origin of *dharma* in the *R̥g Veda* is root √dhr̥ meaning "to support," "to uphold,"

Initially *dharma* referred to the norms of individual conduct that sustains the structure of the community, to the Vedic ritual and socio-religious activities, ordinances or rites and the established order or custom<sup>408</sup>. Later on *dharma* was equated with truth<sup>409</sup>. This composite connotation of *dharma* can be described as:

*Dharma* is the basis for the norms of individual conduct; it sustains the structure of the community...The person who follows the *dharma* realizes the ideal of his own character. As long as...his doing and his omissions are in agreement with the normal, traditional, and personally approved actions, goals, and livelihood of his position, his gender, his family, his age-group, so long does he adhere to the *dharma*<sup>410</sup>.

Thus *dharma* came to acquire a contextual character. With change of context, *dharma* also changed to stand for different milieus with terms such as *deśadharmā*, *kāladharma*, *sadharandharma*, *rajadharmā* etc. Although *dharma* came to signify a host of terms, but what gives the enigmatic coherence to these terms is its etymological meaning "to uphold", or "to support"<sup>411</sup>.

In our exposition the word *dharma* will be used devoid of any connotation to religion or scriptures. In this respect *dharma* will closely resemble the term ethical.

So we see that *dharma* in the sense we have discussed covers man's private and public lives. As a human goal or *purusārtha*, *dharma* stands for or is constituted by living an ethical life, a life which conforms to the requirements appropriate to human existence as an individual and as a social being, a participant in interpersonal transactions. We have seen that *dharma* is the sustainer of the human world and

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<sup>407</sup>P.V.Kane, (1930), *History of Dharmashastra*, Vol 1 Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona,

<sup>408</sup>Halbfass, W. (1988), *op. cit.*, p.314

<sup>409</sup>Olivelle, P., (2009), 'The semantic history of dharma :The middle and late vedic periods' in *Dharma Studies in its Semantic, Cultural and Religious History*, (ed.) Patrick Olivelle, Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi, p.77

<sup>410</sup>Halbfass, W. (1988), *op. cit.*, p.312

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid*, p.317

society, which protects, preserves and prevents the social world from disintegrating. But this is not to say that *dharma* is the protector of the status quo and will not allow for social change. If *dharma* is taken to be in a fixed codified form then it will prevent social reform. Actually it is this very flexibility inherent in *dharma* that renders it unique and exceptional as opposed to the word “morality”. Let us elaborate on the notion of dharmas to bring out the import of the moral dimension of wellbeing.

Here it will be noteworthy to review the *Vanaparva* section of the *Mahābhārata*, where there is a series of exchange of question and answers of the *Yaksa* (specific category of demon) and *Yudhisthira* (the eldest brother of the *Pandavas* and the rightful heir to the throne of the kingdom called *Hastinapur*) in the forest take place during the exile of the *Pandavas*. The questions of the *Yaksa* to *Yudhisthira* include both spiritual and mundane issues, but they are presented in the form of riddles or puzzles. Also many of the questions and answers seem to have layers of inner meaning.

This dialogue is chosen because it is given in the *Mahābhārata* that the *Yaksa* is *Dharma* personified and *Yudhisthira* is regarded as one of the persons who follows *dharma* in all walks of his life. People in the *Mahābhārata* regard any word spoken by *Yudhisthira* to be absolute truth. The epic cites that *Yudhisthira* had lied only once in his whole life. We have seen that Indian philosophy is more concerned with the ways of living life in a fulfilled manner, worthy of human existence. *Dharma* as given here is a way of life that does not cross the limits of morality. But this way of life gives equal importance to satisfaction of all mundane desires from which one achieves happiness and wellbeing. These are attained in ways that do not harm any being, including the person following *dharma*. We think that this dialogue will give a clear exposition of happiness and wellbeing in the Indian context.

मृतो दरिद्रः पुरुषो मृतं राष्ट्रमराजकम् ।

“Without wealth a man is deceased, without governance, a state is lifeless “

So we comprehend that a man who has failed to acquire enough affluence to realize the goals of *artha* and hence is unable to fulfill both *kāma* and *dharma* is according to the *Mahābhārata* as good as being dead. This verse also refers to a nation or state that is dead. An anarchic state that lacks justice is a dead state. In the present context we



may understand the above verse as firstly the effort required by an individual to build one's capacity for leading a happy life. Secondly, a state where justice does not prevail is a state where one cannot live because it is no state at all. We have seen earlier that Nussbaum and Sen both have emphasised the role of the state in contributing to wellbeing. If we take *dharma* to be a condition for wellbeing, then wellbeing may be possible only when the efforts of both the individual and the society are combined in a productive manner. One more aspect of psychological wellbeing that may be included in this verse is the notion of competency. A person who is not able to flourish may have a sense of failure and may feel incompetent. So being poor may bring negative psychological consequences on a person. This is very true as we know that poverty is one risk factor for having mental illness. A question that may be raised here is that how much money does a man require? In answer to this we may quote another verse:

..... कश्च व्यादिरनन्तकः । 412

कीदृशश्च स्मृतः साधुरसाधुः कीदृशः स्मृतः ॥

(... And what is an unending disease? Who is honest? Who is dishonest?)

लोभो व्यादिरनन्तकः

सर्वभूतहितः साधुरसादुर्निर्दयः स्मृतः ॥

The answer given in the *Mahābhārata* is: “greed is an unending disease. An honest person is called as one who bodes well toward all beings, a dishonest person is cruel” It is interesting to consider how far this is true. We have seen that social comparison and unrealistic expectations both are likely to produce negative affect and ill-being. So it is not irrelevant to say that greed is an illness that one should seek to cure for psychological wellbeing and happiness. Likewise the pursuit of wealth and power may lead a person to acquire them through unfair means. In the *Mahābhārata* a life of wellbeing balances the self and the other equally in terms of avoiding harm and/or

<sup>412</sup> *The Electronic Text of the Mahābhārata* edited by Professor John Smith of Cambridge University & Scholars at Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute BORI, made from Critical Edition written by V. S. Sukhtankar, the general editor of Mahabharata at BORI. Available at the website of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute BORI : <http://sanskritdocuments.org/mirrors/mahabharata/mahabharata-bori.html>

causing benefit. Living in such a way entails activities that do not take advantage of another person nor deceive or harm another individual for unjustified benefits to self. Any other way attaining of wealth would go against *dharma* which is one of the *puruṣārthas* that a person seeks. Again this would be possible only when an individual is not greedy and is ethical enough to care for fellow human beings. We have earlier seen in the theory of subjective wellbeing, that being greedy and satisfying uncontrolled desires may make a person happy but also have negative consequences for the individual himself. The happy yet addicted person is someone who cannot control his desire and this is a difficulty that the above theory cannot explain. Here this difficulty does not arise because *artha* is obtained by following *dharma* and this ensures wellbeing of the society. Thus we see that if *dharma* guides a person in controlling and pursuing desires that are positive for a person he may flourish and prosper in a manner such that it does not lower the individual wellbeing or societal wellbeing. The charge against the theory of subjective wellbeing about an unscrupulous yet happy person producing ill-being in others and hence ill-being in the society is overcome by this aspect of the present approach.

*Dharma* shows the path to constructive pursuit of *artha* and *kāma*. Honesty is one of the qualities that is needed to be cultivated for total wellbeing so as not to produce ill-being to one's fellow beings. Care for the other may be taken as one marker of being ethical. This is explicitly stated in the *Mahābhārata*. Honesty consists in wishing well for all and dishonesty lies in being violent or cruel. This is illustrated in another manner, the *Yaksa* asks

किं नु हित्वा न शोचति ।  
किं नु हित्वा सुखी भवेत् ॥ <sup>413</sup>

(One does not grieve through renouncing what? One may become happy through renouncing what?).

क्रोधं हित्वा न शोचति ।  
लोभं हित्वा सुखी भवेत् ॥ <sup>414</sup>

To this *Yudhisthira* answers: “By renouncing anger one does not grieve. By renouncing greed one becomes happy”. Another dimension that is added here is that

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<sup>413</sup> ibid

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

not only is greed an eternal disease but giving up greed makes one happy. The answer to the other question tells us how we may avoid regret. Regulation of one's emotion is an important aspect of psychological wellbeing. Just as uncontrolled desire leads to ill-being so does uncontrolled negative emotions such as anger may lead to ill-being. An angry person may say and do things that he may regret later. The resultant harm might affect him and other negatively. So control of one's anger is a preventive to remorse, guilt or any disappointments. This is applicable not just for anger but all emotions specially those that are negative. Regulation of emotion is an important aspect of psychological wellbeing. This is stated in the *Mahābhārata* by the question - - controlling what would a person be able to avoid regret?

किं नियम्य न शोचन्ति 415

*Yudhishthira*'s answer to this question asked by the *Yaksa* is: the mind, if controlled, does not lead to regret.

मनो यम्य न शोचन्ति 416

The same sentiment is given in another verse in the same passage given by the *Yaksa* asking *Yudhishthira* what true restraint is.

को दमश्च प्रकीर्तितः । 417

To this question, *Yudhishthira* replies that the restraint of the mind is the true or greatest restraint. So temperance is one of the ways to be free from regret.

मनसो दमनं दमः 418

Being free from regret is a marker of psychological wellbeing because regret is the forbearer of many negative emotions. In fact guilt is one of the key emotions that overwhelm a person in depression. In Ryff's model we have seen that environmental mastery and self-acceptance are important dimensions of psychological wellbeing. Above three questions and answers give certain insights as to how one can acquire these qualities. Self acceptance requires control of emotions, particularly negative ones. Self control is possible when we have emotional maturity. One of the essential markers of emotional intelligence is good regulation of one's mind. Another aspect of

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

Ryff's model is seen in a verse where a person with psychological wellbeing is described as one having positive relation with others. It is expected that such a person will have many friends. To the question asked by *Yaksa* as to who is a happy person, *Yudhisthira* replies:

बहुमित्रकरः सुखं वसते 419

“happy is the one who has many friends”

So a person who has many friends is according to the great epic is the happy person. Actually in the *Mahābhārata*, the question “who is a happy person” is asked several times. Each question is answered with a different characteristic of a happy person. So we see that through the different questions and answers in this exposition, the different dimensions and attributes required for a happy person as discussed in the earlier chapters are included. But we have also seen that the attributes that are said to be possessed to be happy are also the attributes necessary for psychological wellbeing. So here we find in the above discussion that a person with psychological wellbeing is also a happy person in the common sense notion of the term.

Considering a person's psychological wellbeing in line with the three *purushārthas*, we find that his purpose in life may be given if he follows the three *purushārthas*: cultivating control of mind may be possible through personal growth; self-acceptance and environmental mastery are given above [reframe the sentence; --meaning is not clear]. The dimension of positive relationship with others may make it possible for the person to have many friends. This person is a happy person and also one who can control his negative emotions such as anger, and has control over his desires. So the happy person may be said to have psychological wellbeing.

The dimension of environmental mastery requires competence in different aspects starting from emotional regulation to skills such as those that are required to face challenges of life. We call such individuals as dexterous. According to the *Mahābhārata* the highest wealth one may possess is that of proficiency or dexterity (*dāksha*). The etymology of the two terms is similar and quite noticeable. The dictionary meaning of dexterity is many and it is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of meanings. Some of the important meanings of dexterity are given - quickness

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

of the mind, expertise, talent, mastery, skilled, capability to accomplish tasks efficiently, acumen, understanding, sagacity, insight and other similar qualities that help one to overcome challenges of life successfully and gracefully.

धन्यानामुत्तमं दाक्ष्यं 420

This *Vanaparva* of *Mahābhārata* gives some major attributes of *dharma*. When the *Yaksa* asks: 'What is the highest happiness?

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*Yudhishthira* replies that happiness consists in having a good disposition.

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Here it must be noted that disposition may refer to one's nature or decent and good conduct or character.

From these questions and answers we have glimpse of the elements that are to be included in the moral dimension of wellbeing. Actually in the whole exposition we have several attributes of *dharma* in different verses which stand for various positive mental qualities that can be included in moral dimension of wellbeing. Putting them together we have: truth, self-control, forgiveness, honesty, modesty, steadiness, equanimity, lack of envy and non-violence to name a few. All these positive qualities help in flourishing of the individual.

Maharshi Kanad, in the second sutra or canon of *Vaisesikasutra* claims that *dharma* leads to man's total wellbeing or flourishing in his worldly life<sup>423</sup>. In this sense it is an overall wellbeing or flourishing. The wellbeing discussed here is not only for the person who leads a *dhārmic* life, rather it includes the wellbeing of all other persons with whom his leading this life is concerned, directly or indirectly. Since it leads to happiness in this life, in this world, it protects and promotes social harmony or harmony of one man with the rest of his universe. Living a life in accordance with *dharma* makes life of the man happy in all respects and it does that by establishing a

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<sup>420</sup> Ibid

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Prasad, R., (2008), *A Conceptual-analytic Study of Classical Indian Philosophy of Morals*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, (ed.) D.P.Chattopadhyaya, Volume XII, Part I. pp.271-300

harmony between his and others' interests. *Dhārmic* life is therefore not a selfish life. The total wellbeing which it yields is not the total wellbeing of any one man at the cost of the wellbeing of any other person. And it is wellbeing attained by man in this world, in this life. To live with *dharma* is thus to ensure that one leads a happy life. This explication of the role of *dharma* is that it is a precondition for leading a life which is desirable in all respects – hedonistic as well as non-hedonistic.

I have dwelt on *dharma* in an elaborate manner to explicate the nature and significance of moral temperament as a dimension of psychological wellbeing. The discussion on *dharma* also indicates some ways in which moral temperament may be cultivated. In the introduction to the translation of the *Dharmasūtras*, Olivelle, while describing how one should follow *dharma*, he quotes from the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtras* (A 2.29.13–14):

...he should model his conduct after that which is unanimously approved in all regions by...(those)who have been properly trained, who are elderly and self-possessed, and who are neither greedy nor deceitful...the practice of cultured people (*śiṣṭas*)<sup>424</sup>.

It may be noted here that though Indian philosophy is almost always associated with the spiritual, the mystical or the religious as against sensuality or materialism. While expounding on the *puruṣārthas* we find that *kāma* (desire or objects of desire including sexual pleasure) and *artha* (pursuit of wealth, power etc. which is in all aspects a materialistic item) are given substantial emphasis as valuable goals of life.

It will be helpful if we were to study the interrelationship between the different *puruṣārthas*. B K Matilal in this context says: “morality is not an Indian term” and the nearest “Sanskrit equivalent is...(the) term *dharma*”<sup>425</sup>. Regarding the inter-relationship among the *puruṣārthas* Daya Krishna says that the role of *dharma* is:

...to bring a prescriptive element into *kāma* and *artha*- to bring them under *dharma* would be to say that each human being has to pursue them for the

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<sup>424</sup>*Dharmasūtras -The Law Codes of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Vasistha:Translated from the Original Sanskrit and Edited by Patrick Olivelle (1999) - Oxford University Press Inc., New York pp.xl-xli*

<sup>425</sup>Matilal, B.K.,( 1989), ‘Moral Dilemmas:Insights from Indian Epics’ in *Moral Dilemmas in the Mahābhārata*, (ed.) by Matilal, B. K.,Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, p.6

utmost flowering and fulfillment of his being, and if he does not do so for any reason, it is a deficiency that ought to be rectified as soon as possible<sup>426</sup>.

If we analyse the two *puruṣārthas*, *kāma* and *artha*, then the above postulation becomes apparent. Any desire that gives pleasure is enjoyed and hence is sought after. Pursuing and satisfying one's desires and wishes makes a person happy. But not all our desires are beneficial. We have discussed some examples like that of the addict in our previous sections. Moreover desires can be unlimited, in which case, indulgence might lead to the pursuit of endless wants which if restricted is beneficial but when uncontrolled becomes detrimental. Let us take the example of honey. Honey was called the nectar of the world and was considered to be a panacea. But consumption of unlimited quantities of honey will upset the digestive system. Consumption of burgers, chicken roll etc. by an otherwise healthy person may appease his hunger and might even be beneficial for him at that time. But too much intake of such food will make him unhealthy. In fact too much of any food will lead to ill health. Even if a person consumes excess of rice he may become obese. It is here that the role of *dharma* becomes significant. Endless desire is greed and this may be one of the root causes of distress in society and self.

The discussion regarding the other two *puruṣārthas* viz., *kāma* and *artha* in relation to *dharma* may guide us to identify some other important dimensions of psychological wellbeing and also to appreciate the interrelationship between various dimensions. *Kāma* as indicated in the doctrine of *puruṣārthas* represents a universal inclination of human beings towards happiness. Accordingly an ability to strive for happiness can reasonably be included as a dimension of psychological health. An individual who cannot even try to be happy or fails to feel happiness at all can be held to be in a state of psychological wellbeing. This dimension can be shown to have implication on other factors of wellbeing. Any worldly pleasure needs certain skills to be acquired. Success in our ventures gives a rewarding feel. We feel competent. Competency is one such need that may be satisfied here. The dimension of the ability to strive for happiness explains why happiness is always associated with psychological wellbeing.

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<sup>426</sup>Daya Krishna, *Indian Philosophy : A Counter Perspective*, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1991, pp -194. Here Daya Krishna says this but he disagrees with this.

If the ability to attain happiness be a necessary condition for wellbeing then evidently happiness will emerge as a goal of psychological wellbeing.

It is apparent from the above discussion that the goal of human life between eastern and western thoughts differs considerably. Indian philosophy has been criticised for the importance given to ascetism and transcendence while condemning material comfort and pleasure. But this is not really true as we can see from the above. On the contrary, we find that Indian thought has given substantial significance to the pursuit of pleasure and wealth compared to morality and moksha or transcendence. As mentioned earlier, we have deliberately avoided any discussion about moksha because it is not a pertinent aspect of this analysis. It is interesting that pleasures of all kinds; material comforts and happiness have been discussed elaborately in Indian thought but in a different manner.

If the moral dimension be considered as guide and regulator of the pursuit of happiness (as a goal of psychological wellbeing), it will solve many problems of hedonism by distinguishing between desirable and undesirable pleasures. The essence of an individual's ethical being lies in his cultivating or possessing an interest in the welfare of others and at the same time flourishing in the sense of realising one's capability. Thus it enables us to admit the relation between happiness and psychological wellbeing without admitting their identity.

We have found that the various dimensions of psychological wellbeing given in the fourth chapter can be extended by taking clue from the idea of *puruṣārthas* that have been mentioned. Parts of the first two *puruṣārthas*, viz., *kāma* and *artha* are common to the hedonic pleasures and their attainment. Since *kāma* signifies all human desires and aspirations, it refers both to sensuous pleasures and pleasures gained from other sources. In this sense *kāma* indicates the higher and lower pleasures that Mill had specified and also the pleasures mentioned in subjective wellbeing as happiness. If *artha* is taken to be instrumental to *kāma*, then effort, skills, and capabilities may be represented in it. These will include some of the dimensions of psychological wellbeing also. So *artha* is the means to achieve *kāma*. The capability approach discusses capabilities and opportunities to realize those capabilities. The first verse that we mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, gives the importance of using one's



capabilities and the importance of a state where justice prevails. In subsequent verses, different qualities of a happy person are given which are necessary for satisfaction of the basic needs. The significance of *dāksha*, as the greatest wealth that one may have includes within it, the actual realization of autonomy and competency.

The dimensions of psychological wellbeing mentioned above would lead to psychological wellbeing in the sense of being as in the state of flourishing and not in the state of happiness alone. It would be important at this juncture to bring out what flourishing actually means and why at all it should be considered identical with the notion of wellbeing. To begin with let us first try to know how we have come about the concepts of ill and well by going back to the ordinary sense of wellbeing.

As human beings we are continually engaged in the appraisal of the experience that we face. These experiences are judged as positive or negative for an individual. The evaluation of wellness as something positive and of illness as something negative come from one's ordinary sense of good, or value judgments of one's lived experiences. The accumulated experiences of human living have given us a vast body of knowledge regarding life conditions. If one has a bodily condition like high blood pressure, or diabetes, which as we now know has a strong likelihood of negative consequences; we normally judge that as a condition leading to ill being or illness. We know this from the collected history of observations of this condition and its consequences. The concept of illness has arisen from the negative life experience faced by an individual by a given condition.

All biological entities have species specific functions which are performed by all the members of the same species. All human beings are expected to perform specific functions that are consistent with their group. From birth till death, we perform specific tasks according to the life stage that we belong to. A person is born, learns to eat, walk, run, sleep, laugh, cry procreate, grow old and die. These are the appropriate functioning that all humans are expected to perform. They are the normal functioning of human beings<sup>427</sup>. The fact that this is what normally happens has been noted by

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<sup>427</sup>Wakefield, J.C. (1992). 'The concept of mental disorder: on the boundary between biological facts and social values'. *American Psychologist*. 47: 373-88

objective observations of the majority of every society stretching thousands of years of human subsistence. It is from these observations that we develop the expectations of normal functioning in terms of performing particular kinds of activities. But if something happens to preclude an individual from carrying out the typical pattern of activities, we call that a dysfunction<sup>428</sup>. For example consider two people who cannot walk. One of them has met with an accident and has broken a leg. So his inability to walk has been caused by an external condition. The other has a specific nervous system dysfunction which prevents him from walking. The second experience of inability to walk has arisen from a condition internal to the individual. It is the second condition that we term disease or illness.

...Conceptions of disease, illness and pathology are thus primarily normative concepts arising out of the subjective experiences of living beings in the totality of their lives<sup>429</sup>...

This appraisal of a condition of health is not a moral or ethical evaluation. It is a social assessment made in accordance with a given norm. Biological laws are a part of natural laws like laws of physics and chemistry. However biological norms are derived socially from experiences of living<sup>430</sup>.

Let us see what this means. According to the data from World Bank, in 1960, an average Indian male was supposed to live up to 42 years, a British male 68 years and an American male had a life expectancy of 67 years. By 2014, the life span of average males in all three countries had risen significantly. For India, the life span of an average male was 67 years, for UK it was 79 years and for the USA it was 77 years<sup>431</sup>. This data shows two important aspects. First, that human beings die is given in all the countries. This is a biological law that follows the same rules everywhere. But at a given time period, the number of years a male person is expected to live vary among different societies. We have seen that in 1960, the life span of an average male is quite

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<sup>428</sup>Kendell, R.E. (1975). 'The concept of disease and its implication for psychiatry'. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 127: 305-315

<sup>429</sup>Chatterjee, D., MEANING OF MADNESS: clinical and philosophical domains, Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Arts), Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University, 2012. p-112

<sup>430</sup>Canguilhem, G. (1978). *The Normal and the Pathological*. (trns. Carolyn R. Fawcett and Robert S. Cohen) New York: Zone Books, p -228

<sup>431</sup><http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN>

lower in India compared to UK and the USA. This is a biological norm and it is different in different societies at a given time. Also from the above data we gather that in India the average life span a male person has risen significantly from 42 years in 1960 to 67 years in 2014. This illustrates that the biological norm of any given society may vary at different points of time.

So we see that the concept of health in general has its root not in any physical domain but a domain of social evaluation. It is a social evaluation of functioning that is viewed to be normal. From the perspective of human condition health and ill health are both appraised in terms of desirability and undesirability. This is a social normative evaluation not an ethical one and it is an appraisal at the individual and the societal level. The idea of illness is based on the negative assessment of lived experience of the community. It is a human condition of living evaluated by an amassed body of wisdom accumulated through centuries. Now illness is a concept that is associated with a dysfunction and ill being. If this is so then mental illness will mean that the functioning of the mind are impaired and hence are dysfunctional. Since any dysfunction is associated with ill being so mental dysfunction is also associated with ill being.

If then dysfunction is a negative life experience, then any dysfunction whether it is illness or something else will be evaluated negatively. The example we saw earlier may be referred to once more. The condition of being unable to use one's leg for mobility is hindered in both situations. In the first situation the leg was broken in an accident, and in the second, a nervous system disorder prevented the person from walking. But both are equally debilitating for the individual and are judged as negative life experiences. So putting all of these together we realize that dysfunction is a negative evaluation of subjective experiences of living and thus a condition of ill being.

Likewise conditions of good functioning are also judged as wellness and social evaluation of living viewed positively. Adequate functioning are a necessary condition for health but not a sufficient one. If we think of health and ill health as a spectrum of human conditions, then at one end of the spectrum we would get ill-being and the other end as wellbeing. The midpoint is a condition which we may call absence of illness. If this is so, then the minimum requirement for wellbeing would be

absence of illness. In chapter I we have seen that Indian notions of illness are fundamentally concepts of illness or distress of the mind. So it would be pertinent to consider the ill-being part of the spectrum denotes mental ill-being. If this is so, then the more an individual is situated at the right side of the spectrum, i.e., further away from the midpoint, higher will be his functioning. Positive functioning will then indicate reaching higher levels of wellbeing. The branch of psychology engaged in the study of positive aspects of functioning is termed Positive Psychology.

One of the major proponents of Positive Psychology, Csikszentmihalyi has described this branch of psychology as “the study of positive aspects of human experience<sup>432</sup>”. In this field, one is concerned with the prevention of mental illness and also the promotion of psychological wellbeing. This branch of psychology emphasizes on different human qualities that help one to lead better lives. Researchers in this area claim that by focussing on positive human qualities such as forgiveness, optimism, courage, kindness, self-regulation, social intelligence, fairness and prudence among many others, one may improve one’s psychological health. According to them by cultivating these qualities one can enjoy better physical health and satisfaction. These characteristics help individuals to actualise their potentials and thereby thrive. This notion of self-actualization is very close to Carl Rogers’ concept of the fully functioning person who is creative, free and receptive to new experiences and is continually developing himself.<sup>433</sup>

An objection may be raised against the view presented in our approach on the ground that it emphasizes too much on the role of moral evaluation in determining the state of psychological wellbeing. It may be held that this will go against the scientific nature of the concept of psychological wellbeing, since psychology is supposed to be value neutral in defining its concepts. It may be urged that by invoking moral dimension of wellbeing this approach has identified certain behaviours and internal states as contrary to the state of wellbeing from moral point of view. Reference to moral point

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<sup>432</sup> Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M., (2000), ‘Positive Psychology: An introduction’, *American Psychologist*, 55(1), p.5

<sup>433</sup> Rogers, C., *Client-Centred Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory*, Constable: London, 2003

of view or moral values is not consistent with the spirit of scientific enquiry. We will try to answer these arguments and show that although the qualities have come from the dimensions of morality, they can be shown to be valuable in a non-moral sense also.

First we have discussed about the burgeoning field of positive psychology that is concerned with well-living and wellbeing. The most prominent leader in this field Martin Seligman defines flourishing as:

“...well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing...”<sup>434</sup>

He says that to experience wellbeing one needs to both feel good and also have meaning in life. According to him the contents of human flourishing is constituted by happiness, love, gratitude, accomplishment, better relationships and other such strengths.<sup>435</sup> He identifies several qualities that contribute to wellbeing. According to him wisdom, courage, love, humanity, justice, and temperance are among the primary qualities that one needs to cultivate to flourish<sup>436</sup>. We have analysed how health is a social and non-moral evaluation. Just as health is a social evaluation, similarly the qualities of kindness, gratitude etc. are evaluated socially as good and beneficial for one's health. Inculcation of these qualities renders one to be psychologically healthy. Now psychological health is desirable to us. Not only is health desirable but if we can improve upon our health it is even more desirable. And even if do not refer to any external authority such as religion, we find the qualities that are socially desirable, not in a moral or ethical normative sense, to be and remain healthy are the same qualities that are prescribed by theories of morality (say virtue ethics) so that one may lead an ethical life. That is the “virtues” given in our approach converge with the non-normative valued human characteristics put forward by a scientific enterprise for positive living. It seems that non-moral appraisal of indicators of good living and wellbeing concurs with indicators elicited in the moral dimension in the alternative approach that we propose.

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<sup>434</sup> Seligman, M. E. P. (2012), *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*, Free Press: New Delhi

<sup>435</sup> Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P., (2004), *Character strengths and virtues: a handbook and classification*, New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid

Another argument that may validate the inclusion of a moral dimension in psychological wellbeing can be elicited from the inherent tendency in human nature to justify one's actions as right. Actually since human beings are social, all people have some idea or notion of social norms. This social norm is integrated within our concept of self. One cannot think of one's self as someone unjust or someone doing injustice. When a person commits an unjust act (according to his own norm) then two things can happen. The person can either accept that his action is unjust and become repentant and feel regret. In this case he feels ashamed of his action and admits to himself of the unethical character of the act. Regret, shame, guilt – all of these produce negative feelings in a person. Feelings of shame beget humiliation and disgrace to an individual. The self-esteem of the person is thereby affected. We always try to increase our self esteem because it gives a sense of worth to us. Thus negative feelings such as shame or guilt cannot be congenial for psychological wellbeing. This is why we refrain from actions that lower our self esteem and respect. If commission of an immoral act does not produce remorse, then the person is almost always likely to give excuses for his actions. He will justify the action to himself and others. Even in cases where gross violations are committed, it has been seen that the person when asked always justifies their actions. It appears that one cannot live with the fact that one is unethical. Self-acceptance of an individual will be affected adversely when one feels that he is unjust. Self acceptance is an important dimension of psychological wellbeing, so if it is negatively affected then the consequences are expected to produce ill being. If being ethical increases happiness or wellbeing (in the psychological sense), then being ethical will be preferred to being unethical.

The moral dimension helps us to retain the reasonable intuition that increase in individual wellbeing leads to the increase in social wellbeing. If this does not happen we cannot say that social wellbeing increases by increasing individual wellbeing. The notion that individual immoral actions that are harmful to the society may increase social wellbeing runs contrary to common sense wisdom. Our approach of including a moral dimension in the concept of psychological wellbeing seems to explain this phenomenon.

Our beliefs, attitudes and perspectives are formed by the socio-cultural values, norms, customs, conventions and principles. These involve a certain ethical and moral perspectives. Different societies have different values and one's assessment of what is good, valuable or satisfying is influenced, to a large extent, by one's environment. Perhaps incorporation of these differences will help us to understand the relation between psychological wellbeing and happiness.

“Being a person is always contextually specific and requires the engagement of particular ideas and practices; it is not possible to “be” in a general way. Being well is also a collective and context-specific project, and to be well depends on the incorporation of particular understandings and practices of wellness and being...A person's local worlds are saturated with meanings and implicit messages about what is real, what is good, what is proper, and what is the right way to be a person. These local meanings define what feels good, what feels right, and what it means to experience well-being. Each person lives within a variety of socio-cultural contexts (gender, age, ethnicity, race, religion, social class, region, and country...). These contexts are each associated with some distinctive explicit and implicit ideas, images, messages, and social representations about how to be and how to be well...A sense of wellbeing requires some synthesis of these various meanings and practices...It is not difficult, therefore, to imagine that people in diverse regional contexts and backgrounds have understandings and representations of what is good, right, and moral that diverge from one another and that these differences are manifest in the nature of well-being...<sup>437</sup>,”

From the above exposition we gather that happiness is neither identical with neither wellbeing nor a component of wellbeing in any sense – hedonic or eudaimonic –they are conceptually different. Happiness is a psychological state to be attained as a goal of psychological wellbeing. Thus one who is in a state of wellbeing cannot but be in a state of happiness, but not the other way round. From the fact that one is in a higher state of wellbeing it can thus be assumed that the individual is enjoying an enhanced

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<sup>437</sup>Plaut, V., Markus, H., &Lachman, M. (2002). "Place matters: Consensual features and regional variation in American well-being and self." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, pp.161

state of happiness compared to one who is in a lower state of wellbeing. . So to ensure psychological wellbeing it is necessary to satisfy both the internal and external requirements.

This approach gives emphasis to the individual level of psychological wellbeing because having wellbeing at the societal level does not ensure individual wellbeing. We have shown how this is rather the other way round. But the opposite is true— in the third chapter we have already discussed that wellbeing or happiness in the societal level does not indicate either wellbeing or happiness at the individual level.



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