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SCIENTIFIC THEORIES OF WELL-BEING

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Abstract. The relevance of well-being study in modern social philosophy results from the need to determine the most significant trends in the analysis of this phenomenon, followed by the use of the results to identify an optimal concept of social well-being in modern society. **The main aim** of the study is to study foreign trends in the study of well-being phenomenon, to analyze the existing theories of well-being and to identify various scientific positions on this issue. The object-subject area of research is modern concepts of well-being presented in the works of John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Robert Nozick, Derek Parfit, Richard Crisp, James Griffin, John Finnis, Philip Kitcher, Thomas Herk, Martha Nussbaum etc. **Methods.** This article uses analytical and comparative methods, which allow to study the main scientific trends in the field of well-being and to compare the results of domestic and foreign authors research. **Results.** The paper presents the classification of the most relevant theories of social well-being, analyses main research trends of this phenomenon and determines further steps in well-being study.

Well-being is most commonly used in philosophy to describe what is non-instrumentally or ultimately good for a person. The question of what well-being consists in is of independent interest, but it is of great importance in moral philosophy, especially in the case of utilitarianism, according to which the only moral requirement is that well-being be maximized. Significant challenges to the very notion have been mounted, in particular by G.E. Moore and T.M. Scanlon. It has become standard to distinguish theories

of well-being as either hedonist theories, desire theories, or objective list theories. According to the view known as welfarism, well-being is the only value. Also important in ethics is the question of how a person's moral character and actions relate to their well-being.

The problems of social well-being as a phenomenon that can significantly improve the quality of life of Russian population are considered in the works of scientists of Tomsk Polytechnic University. The authors of the article "the Phenomenon of well-being: research paradigms of the 50s generation" pay special attention to the social well-being of the elderly and highlight the following aspects affecting it:

1. Social security and health care system;
2. The system of social services of the population and state and municipal housing construction;
3. Counter-cyclical policies and state regulation of economic development;
4. Measures to protect the environment. [1]

Modern philosophical literature on well-being focuses on the value theories of well-being, the purpose of which is to determine what ultimately makes people feel happy and successful, and what, on the contrary, puts them in a difficult position. Modern studies of well-being phenomenon distinguish three main theories of well-being understanding: hedonistic theories, theories of desires fulfillment and objective theories.

According to hedonistic theories, pleasure is what is truly good and pain is what is truly bad. Thus, a person's life develops as he is able to accumulate pleasure and avoid pain. The pursuit of well-being is the pursuit of pleasure over pain. Modern hedonistic theories are rooted in the work of such philosophers as John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, who have argued about the meaning of pleasure in well-being concept.

Quantitative or simple hedonism is the theory according to which "pleasure is defined only by its quantity (including such parameters as duration and intensity), not by quality. Therefore, the cause or source of pleasure is not important." [2]. Jeremy Bentham proposed this theory and it was severely criticized. One of the critics was John Stuart Mill, who stated that "the reason why people experience pleasure is much more important than its duration" [3]. In other words, if a person can satisfy only their primitive needs and experience only physical pleasure, we cannot say that he lives a happy life. He deprives himself of the so-called higher pleasure that he can derive from friendship, knowledge, art, etc. Thus, Mill puts forward the theory of qualitative hedonism, according to which higher pleasure is more valuable than lower.

American philosopher Robert Nozick critically assessed hedonistic theories both in quantitative and qualitative forms [4]. He stated that these theories did not adequately answer the question of what was meant by a prosperous life. Nozick calls life an "experimental machine" that uses neurostimulation to simulate a nonexistent world or hedonism that provides the user with uninterrupted enjoyment. However, in such circumstances, although a user can experience any kind of pleasure he cannot distinguish fictional from real. Nozick argues that most people would not choose to connect to such a machine, because they appreciate the events and experiences that occur in their real lives. Thus, hedonism theories do not reveal the true meaning of well-being.

The theory of desires fulfillment or the theory of needs satisfaction suggest that well-being is realization of human desires. These theories appeared in the XIX century together with the growing interest in the welfare economics. Economists wanted to develop objective criteria to measure the well-being of economic agents. Since pleasure and pain cannot be measured, economists have decided to consider pleasure in terms of satisfying human desires. Thus, it is believed that the advantage of theory of desires fulfillment over hedonistic theories is that they do not take into account the so-called "experimental machine", but consider real human desires.

American scientist R. Crisp formulates three basic theories of desires fulfillment [5]. Simple theory of desires fulfillment suggests that a person feels better when his desires that exist at a given time are satisfied, and if all human desires are satisfied, it is believed that he has lived a better life. The main problem of this theory is that some desires that a person has at some point in his life contradict to his long-term interests. For example, an impulsive teenager who commits a crime satisfies his short-term desires, which in the long term will work against him.

Reflexive or detailed theory of desires fulfillment draws attention to reflexive, carefully thought-out human preferences. According to this theory, if a person decides to live a long and happy life, then this choice will get the best of his short-term desires, which can have a negative impact on his goal. The negative point of this theory is that a person does not always make the best choice for him. As an example, professor Crisp cites the example of an orphan who lives in a church and suddenly wins the lottery. Now he has a choice: to stay in the church and give his prize or choose a new life outside the walls of the church. But since he does not know what life is like outside the church, he still decides to return his prize. In this case, it is obvious that the orphan chooses not the best alternative for him, because he does not know what will happen to him if he makes another choice. It can be assumed that the reflexive theory also does not give a complete picture of well-being.

Information theory of desires fulfillment implies that a person lives better when all his desires are satisfied, taking into account all possible consequences. Thus, the basic idea of this theory is to properly inform a person about what will happen to him if he makes a choice. Due to the correct information, a person chooses "smart" desires that fully satisfy both his short-term and long-term needs.

The main contradiction of all three theories of desires fulfillment is that they represent an abstract, formal theory of well-being that says nothing about its sources. The proponents of these theories maintain the scientific position that satisfaction of our desires is a necessary condition for well-being, but they do not take into account the sources of these desires. In addition, the theories of desires fulfillment do not reveal the reasons why certain desires are useful for a person. In addition, these theories do not address the so-called defective or unproductive desires that people sometimes choose, even when they are thoroughly informed of possible consequences. In this case, the question arises whether it is correct to believe that satisfaction of such desires improves the quality of life more than when a person chooses an alternative option.

Researchers who adhere to objective theories suggest that well-being is the result of essential human circumstances, rather than subjective pleasure or fulfillment of subjective desires. According to these theories, there are things that contribute to human well-being, regardless of whether they are desirable or simply bring pleasure. Well-being can be measured by the quantity of such items in human life. It is objective, because it increases the value of human life regardless of his preferences, character or interests.

In accordance with the scientific position of Derek Parfit, the specified list of such items includes such concepts as kindness, morality, rational activity, education of children, knowledge and understanding of true beauty [6].

James Griffin includes in this list satisfaction of the work done, the components of human existence such as independence, talent and freedom, understanding, joy and deep personal relationships [7].

John Finnis suggested that life, knowledge, aesthetic experience, friendship, practical reasonableness, and religion should also be included in the list. [8]

However, objective theories can differ not only in variety of lists that include the phenomena of human well-being, but also for the reasons that determine the presence of a particular concept in a certain list. So, Philip Kicher proposed to distinguish between simple and explanatory objective theories of well-being. Simple objective theories of well-being are a list of concepts that do not have a single, unifying element. Each of them

contributes to the well-being of an individual, independently of the others. On the contrary, explanatory objective theories of well-being define a fundamental element that unites all the concepts in the list and explains how and why they affect well-being. Most modern objective theories are explanatory [9].

One of the most influential explanatory objective theories is perfectionism. According to these theories, the main thing that unites items of a certain list is their contribution to improvement of human nature. Thus, perfectionism theories encourage people to make efforts to improve their abilities.

One of the most famous theories of perfectionism is the Aristotelian theory of the Supreme good, which he called eudemonism. According to this theory, "human well-being is cultivation of human virtues and rationality, which will inevitably lead to the highest good" [10]. Thomas Herka (1993) presented neo-Aristotle's theory of perfectionism. He argued that human nature is characterized by three kinds of perfection. Physical perfection means the optimal functioning of our biological systems. Theoretical and practical perfection is the optimal development of our aspirations, as well as the best way to implement them. Well-being is realized through physical, theoretical and practical perfection of an individual [11].

Martha Nussbaum, developing Aristotle's ideas about the highest good, presented the theory of possibilities, neo-Aristotle's theory, according to which well-being depends on real possibilities and abilities of a person, such as abilities to read, be healthy, take care of others, etc. She developed 10 basic abilities that she considers most necessary to achieve well-being and that come from human nature: bodily health, bodily integrity, rational perception, play, etc. Nussbaum argues that it is not necessary to have all ten abilities, the main thing is to choose those that are most important for the individual [12].

Reasonable criticism of objective theories is that within these theoretical discourses people are imposed things that, on the one hand, are useful for them, but on the other hand do not coincide with their own desires or values. These theories deny the fact that all people are different and that different situations can affect them in different ways. Furthermore, objective theories often include in their lists absolutely incomparable concepts. Can a life without friendship but with large amount of knowledge be better than a life with enough friendship but no knowledge?

Thus, it can be concluded that none of the stated theories of well-being is perfect. Currently, philosophers around the world are trying to find the ways out of dilemmas that each of the above-mentioned theories have.

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