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WELL-BEING AS MEANING OF SOCIAL-AND-HUMANITARIAN
ACTIVITIES

G.P. Medvedeva (a)*, Ya.V. Shimanovskaya (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) Russian State Social University, Wilhelm Pieck Str., 4, Moscow, 129226, Russia, medvedevagp@inbox.ru,
+79168044696

(b) Russian State Social University, Wilhelm Pieck Str., 4, Moscow, 129226, Russia, ya1873@yandex.ru,
+79854551868

Abstract

This article deals with the study of the meaning of social-and-humanitarian activities. Attention is drawn to the fact that both theoretical study and practice of social-and-humanitarian activities focus on the content and results of activities, their goals and objectives, while their meaning is not considered. The meaning of activities primarily of social-and-humanitarian is deemed to serve as their basis and justification. One of the tools to improve their effectiveness and humanization will be the knowledge of meaning of activities and their account in practice.

The article presents the results of a theoretical study on substantiation of the meaning of social-and-humanitarian activities that would be the achievement of well-being by an individual – the object of activities, and finally by the society. One-sidedness of such categories as “quality of life”, “living standard”, “happiness” requires the use of a category that includes a maximum number of both subjective and objective components. Such category will be the “well-being” category. Its duality not only determines the variability in time and space due to changes in both components, as the idea of well-being can vary significantly in every society and in every historical period. The article reveals the meaning of “well-being” category, which includes subjective and objective components and supposes the harmony of external and internal. The well-being is achievable with the considerable efforts of society and the individual. The conclusion was that the well-being of a human and society is the meaning of social-and-humanitarian activities

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1. Introduction

Countries and societies around the world are paying increasing attention not only to economic but also to social-and-humanitarian components of their life. Their formation and development in modern Russia take place in the context of overcoming the consequences of hasty and sometimes unreasonable economic reform, a system of values transformation, as well as external pressure. All this cannot but affect the content and results of social-and-humanitarian activities, which sometimes acquire a purely utilitarian value.

The “well-being” category is included in the conceptual and categorical apparatus but not of all types of professional activities of social-and-humanitarian profile and content. However, the “well-being” term present in everyday speech is widely used in professional speech as a synonym of categories “happiness”, “living standard”, “quality of life”, “welfare”. The theoretical framework of various types of social-and-humanitarian activities does not develop “well-being category” systematically, and experts do not always identify it. Therefore, the “well-being” category requires a substantiation as the meaning of social-and-humanitarian activities in general (Fahi, 2012).

2. Problem Statement

In domestic practice, the “well-being” category is mainly included in the Russian language dictionaries. They consider the “well-being” as a steady flow of business and life, prosperity, peaceful and happy condition, absence of shocks. However, Aristotle also noted, “with regard to well-being, all agree only in the name of it” (Aristotle, 1983; Aristotle, 1983). Overall, the well-being is a multidimensional construct comprising cultural, economic, social, spiritual and other factors. Subjectively, it is a self-assessment of individual’s actual and future state, including important factors for the individual (health, living standard, degree of self-actualization, etc.) (Demidova, 2016; Belyaeva, 2009; Tvorogova, 2006; Shaminov, 2003; Rybakova, 1998; Tsvetkova, 2007; Medvedeva, 2010; Raphael, 2005; Ross, 1930; Ewing, 1947; Jahoda, 2011).

The problematisation of knowledge in humanities (and social-and-humanitarian sciences) has its own specifics (Ardashkin, 2009). Bakhtin (1979) wrote that the main task of humanities (“liberal sciences”) was to identify the deep meaning of the text. Moreover, no less important task may be to identify the meaning of the activities that are the object of study thereof).

3. Research Questions

A starting point of the analysis is a human’s immanent trait - the pursuit of good, which the ancient philosophers described (Plato, 1993; Aristotle 1983; Cicero, 2003). Indeed, everything that an individual does is aimed at his/her own good (“for good”), no matter what meaning a person puts into this familiar word of the ordinary speech.

The “good” category is used in conceptual and categorical apparatus of philosophy. The Philosophical encyclopedic dictionary, defines the good as everything that has value and carries a positive meaning. The good often is a synonymous with welfare in philosophy and ethics. These meanings of the “good” category make it expedient to use it in social-and-humanitarian activities. The category of “well-

being” and “social welfare”, “welfare”, “prosperity” are used in theory and practice of social-and-humanitarian activities, but not the “good”.

Thus, for example, Aristotle points out that the welfare is understood as a happy life (Aristotle, 1983). I. Kant uses the term ‘bliss’, which “... is the satisfaction of all our likes” (Kant, 1963). The concept of ‘well-being’, always defined through the comfortable existence and successful functioning of the individual and society and previously used in scientific works, including philosophical, is not included in modern philosophical dictionaries, but is represented in almost all Russian language dictionaries.

Unlike the “quality of life” and “living standard” categories, which show the quantity and quality of goods and services that an individual (a family) can receive and acquire in accordance with disposable income, the “well-being” concept includes a subjective assessment of the individual's level and quality of life, personal and social status. Unlike the “happiness” category, it includes the satisfaction of needs level, i.e. objective component.

Thus, the dual, subjective and objective content fills the “well-being” concept. Its duality not only determines the variability in time and space due to changes in both components, as the idea of well-being can vary significantly in every society and in every historical period. The presence of a subjective component involves the fact that the individual, who is not prosperous according to objective criteria of the level and quality of life, can consider himself as such, and vice versa, the individual with a high income, level and quality of life, can consider himself unfortunate, unhappy.

The concept of “well-being” includes multiple aspects and components filled with different contents depending on the level and quality of human and social development, individual and social consciousness. At the same time, it includes objectively high or subjectively sufficient extent of satisfaction of various needs of the person and society corresponding to the level of development of individual and social life.

The “living standard”, “quality of life” categories and others are used in social-and-humanitarian activities, because important is not only what and how people consume, but also the extent of satisfaction with the situation, themselves and life in genera (Diener & Diener 2008). Therefore, it is objectively necessary to use a category that includes both the objective and subjective. In this sense, the “well-being” category optimally meets the needs of theory and practice of social-and-humanitarian activities.

This category correlates to some extent with Plato's “good”, who indicates that “... for all living beings the supreme goal, the initial and necessary object of their aspirations, is happiness. However, happiness is just in possession of the good. Therefore, every soul strives for the good and does everything for the good” (Plato, 1993; Plato, 1994.; Plato, 1993). If we apply this idea to social-and-humanitarian activities, we can see that a practitioner, assisting a person unable to solve their own problems, does it for the sake of his/her well-being, regardless of specific content of the problem. Seeking help from a specialist, a person acts for his/her own well-being, for his/her own good. Thus, the categories of “good” and “well-being” in social-and-humanitarian activities have a similar meaning.

The cohesion and organization of society, social and natural resources have determined and created the well-being of society throughout history (Christie & Dawes 2001; Coser, 1968). Social legislation provides for personal and civil liberties for formation of a healthy environment, human rights and opportunities to make decisions to ensure their physical and moral well-being, realization of intellectual and spiritual potential for the benefit of both the society and themselves. The highest criterion assessing the

society social development can only be determined by the principles that ensure respect for human rights. These principles can result from the activity of public consciousness, if the society has the resources to implement them.

The problems of “social welfare” of man and society have recently been the focus of attention of scientists, as well as public and political figures. They are related to the study of the essence and content of social well-being, the construction of systems of indicators used to assess its level, etc. The “social welfare” category used in social-and-humanitarian activities and related sciences reveals social aspects of individual’s life, as it contains the conformity with the views of society on the lifestyle social norms, consumption, behavior, relationships etc. It corresponds to the “public good” category. The “well-being” and “social welfare” categories together, (as well as the “good” and “public good” categories) reveal the individual and social aspects of the human's existence, the degree and quality of his/her participation in public relations and indirectly demonstrate his/her self-esteem.

Judgments about the content of social well-being have changed throughout human history. Initially, this concept was considered in the context of welfare, i.e. mainly economic, material security. The situation in the labor market and the level of labor force employment determine in many respects the well-being of employees in a market economy environment (Warr, 2007). Therefore, the developmental social model of any society is directly connected to the conditions of productive labor and distribution of funds for life, and one of the value forms of its development is fixed by the “social well-being” concept. This means that social well-being is closely linked with the realization of the right to work and fair distribution. One of the main socio-economic regulators of social welfare is the regulation of the labor market, as well as employment. In Russia, social well-being is both the goal of implementing the social policy of the state, as well as the criterion for assessing its effectiveness, making identical the concept of the level and quality of life and the concept of social well-being.

Social well-being is an integral indicator of the effectiveness of the social sphere, the reflection of social well-being, the level of welfare, the quality of life of the population, an indicator of social security of the public system as a whole. To a certain extent, indicators of economic growth, namely the indicators of social well-being of the population, are a criterion for the effectiveness of state policy. Thus, the subjectivity of the “social well-being” category is a complex functional system of socio-economic relations, which integrates specific values, attitudes, intentions at the individual and society level in general. Social well-being is closely linked to social security, which implies the existence of normative guarantees for the realization of social rights and freedoms, adequate financing of social policy at all levels, the development of social assistance infrastructure, the availability of specialists capable of implementing social support measures.

Aristotle also pointed out that the state is a union for providing assistance, and such state system should be recognized as the best, the organization of which allows every person to prosper and live happily (Aristotle, 1983). The ideas of equality, social justice, freedom from oppression, humanity and responsibility of the state to ensure social well-being provide for sustainability in the maintenance of social well-being. In implementing this concept of development, conscientious work and full involvement of population in the socially useful work will objectively become the basis both for the social well-being of everyone and economic development of society, the rate of poverty and social disadvantage will go down.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to substantiate the “well-being” category as the meaning of social-and-humanitarian activities.

The research problem is:

- to analyze approaches to the definition of “well-being” category;
- to compare the content of “well-being” category with the “good” category, the concepts of “welfare”, “prosperity” and formulate recommendations for its use in scientific and practical activities.

5. Research Methods

The study used philosophical and scientific methods of cognition. The most important methodological basis of the study is the dialectical approach to social problems in conjunction with the Russian philosophy traditions and progressive trends of foreign thought, activity and humanistic consideration of human as a social being. The authors relied on the principles of dialectical logic and the requirements of system-structural and functional analysis in their studies. The ideas of hermeneutical concept of understanding as a methodology of analysis were used, which allowed one to see aspects and connections of objective and subjective, personal and transpersonal in the problem under study.

6. Findings

The well-being is achievable with the considerable efforts of society and the individual. If we accept that it represents the harmony of the external and internal in human, the achievement of actual (not imaginary) well-being is possible, in case when the needs and values of the individual developed harmoniously, he/she had sufficient potential for implementing thereof and living environment contributes thereto. This means that the person socialization process has been successful, the social in the individual is developed and presented optimally for specific historical conditions, and the human environment contributes to realization of the full range of positive needs and values (Mamardashvili, 1992).

Well-being depends on both the individual and environment. Therefore, the society should carry out activities aimed at achieving the well-being of individual, its subsequent maintenance and, if necessary, restoration through social-and-humanitarian activities. The social-and-humanitarian activities do not depend on specific historical situation, since the society is at any time interested in the well-being of its members. At the same time, the peculiarities of social and individual existence and social relations will determine the forms, methods and trends of their implementation. The results obtained in the study are summarized in table 01.

Table 01. Well-Being as a harmony of external and internal

Integral characteristics			
Welfare		Prosperity	
Private characteristics			
Objective characteristics		Subjective characteristics	
Standard of living	Quality of life	Happiness	Bliss

7. Conclusion

We may conclude that the well-being of individual and society is the harmony of the external and internal in individual (society) in accordance with the specific historical level and needs development quality. The pursuit of individual and society to the well-being can be realized using a variety of social mechanisms, including social-and-humanitarian activities, one of the most important tools. It is evident that regardless of forms, types, trends, subjects and objects of social-and-humanitarian activities, their meaning is the well-being of the individual and society

Social well-being is the highest social value with which the vital interests of humanity are linked. Social well-being is the highest social value with which the vital interests of humanity are linked. The desire to achieve social well-being at all times was a stable motivation of social actors ' activity. Modern understanding of the essence and content of social well-being is associated with the most effective use of material and spiritual resources of civilization. The social well-being of the individual is largely based on, but not limited to, the social well-being of the society. A subjective assessment of a person's well-being and satisfaction with life is of great importance for him / her. Life satisfaction is not always directly related to a prosperous life. The development of the need of individuals for social well-being and satisfaction of this need through the fair distribution of means for life is an important task of the modern state.

Social well-being is not determined only by measures of social policy external to a person or a social group of the state. This is largely a subjective assessment by individuals and groups of the extent to which their social, economic and cultural needs are met. Social well-being must be seen as one of the main characteristics of social and economic development, especially since social disadvantage always reflected an inadequate standard of living, that is, a lack of benefits. However, the decline in living standards can sometimes be accompanied by an increase in social well-being. Social comfort may not be associated with high welfare and may be compensated by other factors. Social security is an important basis for social well-being

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