

Adding Spirit to Economics

SULAK SIVARAKSA

In a time when inequality and exploitation dominate our society, there are now movements across the world for peace, social justice and ecology. There are inspiring stories of people applying their ingenuity to protecting nature. In Siam, Buddhist monks preserve forests by ordaining trees into the priesthood. In Thai culture, ordained persons are much respected, so the trees are protected. Such creative resistance is also seen in the struggles of indigenous groups against deforestation and the damming of rivers; in the struggles of local farmers against biotechnology, and countless other examples of people making a stand - however small. These struggles are full of passion, and need to be better integrated. Their common agenda must be firmly placed on a non-violent and spiritual path. This is the only way they can overcome the violence and destructiveness of the dominant world order.

It is abundantly clear that the material benefits of modernization and Westernization are unfairly distributed to the people of the planet. Industrial capitalism has been built upon the violence of conquest, genocide, slavery, debt and bondage. Extermination continues today, especially that of indigenous and ethnic people.

Inequality and exploitation lead to tension and conflict. Although many conflicts are expressed in ethnic terms, the underlying issues are often class based and rooted in the social structures of the global economic system. As social disparities and resistance increase, people have to be managed more and more through violent repression. Thus, we have a situation where the global economy is predominantly a military economy and the world's leading nations are producing the weapons perpetuating the situation.

A Buddhist Response to Global Development

To counteract these global forces, we need to walk a different path from the one offered by capitalism. The teaching we need in order to walk this path already exists. The challenge facing humanity is not the development of more and more technology, markets and bureaucracies but the spiritual development of wisdom and compassion. From the Buddhist viewpoint, all the suffering is directly or indirectly linked with greed, hatred and delusion.

Today, greed is clearly personified in capitalism and consumerism. Human beings are taught to worship money, worldly sciences and technological advance, at the expense of human development and the spiritual dimension of men and women.

Descartes said *cogito ergo sum* - 'I think therefore I am'. I feel that he started the Western dilemma that has now come to the core concept of consumerism, which says 'I buy therefore I am'. Without the power of purchasing, modern people become nobodies.

In Buddhism, we could say 'I breathe therefore I am'. We breathe in for the first time as we enter the world from our mother's womb, and we breathe out the last time when we expire from life. Yet we do not take care of our daily breathing, we breathe in suffering, anxiety, hatred and greed. You do not have to believe in Buddhism. If you are a Christian, you can breathe Christ into you and be happy. Through breathing exercises, we can be mindful and synchronize the head and the heart. We will then have understanding and compassion rather than arrogant intellectual knowledge. We can have a personal transformation, become less selfish and care more for others. We can also develop critical self-awareness and awareness of social ills, in order to find our true potentiality to face suffering both mentally and socially.

The central teaching in Buddhism is the Four Noble Truths and the first Truth is the Truth of Suffering. If one avoids that, one cannot really practice Buddhism. Global development today seems to be a celebration of a way of life that not only leads away from this Truth, but also discourages people from even believing this Truth exists. Global development springs from a civilization that claims to adore life, but actually starves it of any real meaning - a civilization that endlessly speaks of making people 'happy', but in fact blocks their way to the source of real peace and happiness.

From a Buddhist perspective, for human beings to live happily there must be freedom on three levels:

The first freedom is the freedom to live with nature and the environment. We could call this physical freedom. This is freedom from want and deprivation: an adequate supply of the four necessities of life - food, clothing, shelter and medicine. This also includes freedom from natural dangers and the ability to deal with such dangers when they arise.

The second freedom exists in our relationship with fellow humans. We must have social freedom so that we can live safely together without being exploited by others.

But these two kinds of freedom will not be truly effective if they are not connected to inner freedom - this is freedom on the personal level. Having physical and social freedom, people must learn how to live independently, to be happy and contented within themselves.

Connecting Inner Freedom to Social and Physical Freedom

The most important kind of development is human development on the personal level leading to inner freedom. This is a happiness that is independent of externals; with it we are no longer dependent on exploiting nature or our fellow beings. We become more and more capable of finding

contentment within our own minds and through our own wisdom. The ability to be content without exploiting nature or our fellow humans can also be called the ability to be content independent of natural or social conditions. With a more independent kind of happiness, social and physical freedom will be preserved and strengthened. Human beings will then have the best possible relationship with both the natural environment and human society.

From the Buddhist standpoint after the Truth of Suffering, one must go on to the Second Truth: the Cause of Suffering, which is greed, hatred and delusion. If we could overcome these, through the Noble Eightfold Path, or other non-violent means, we can really achieve the other two Noble Truths: the cessation of suffering and the way to achieve the cessation of suffering.

The Buddhist tradition itself contains a wealth of pertinent insight into exactly these issues. It is highly appropriate and indeed crucial that those Buddhists who are concerned with the welfare of humanity, spiritual, political, environmental and social, should join together to try and utilize the wisdom of the Buddha in a socially relevant way; by *initiating alternatives to the mainstream*.

A Buddhist contribution to making our global society more peaceful and fair can draw on, broadly, two main strands of its tradition. First, an analysis of structural violence using Buddhism's rich tradition of exploring the roots of selfishness and violence within human individuals. Progressive Buddhists have been applying these teachings to social issues with increasing creativity, depth, and practical clarity. *Concurrently, the Buddhist ethical tradition has always challenged the status quo of economic, political, and cultural power values and structures.* The Buddha actually never referred to his teaching as being one that is entirely intellectual or entirely moral. He often referred to his teaching (*Buddhadhamma*) holistically as *Ariya-Vinaya*, 'Noble Discipline.' In this sense 'noble' not only means 'high' or 'great' but all-encompassing. The concept of *Ariya-Vinaya* (Noble Moral Discipline) applies both to the monastic lineage and the lay people.

It is this kind of balanced approach that is also demonstrated in the engaged Buddhist movement. This movement is applying spirituality, which has an element of intellectuality, of knowledge and personal salvation or wisdom, to social issues, the practical and tangible. This includes solidarity based on compassion and the appreciation of diversity. This solidarity amongst Buddhists and the actions arising from it will be used as a launching point of an investigation of the idea of *Ariya-Vinaya* from the teachings of the Buddha.

"Socially Engaged" Initiatives Laying the Path for a Better World

One of the main projects I am involved in, initiated through consultation with HH Dalai Lama, was inspired by this idea of "Noble ethical discipline." With help from His Holiness we are presently engaged

in a progressive series of dialogues with Buddhists from various traditions, expanding to Buddhist lay persons and then to other world wisdom traditions. This effort is appropriately called Ariya-vinaya.

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) represents the first effort ever to link together socially engaged Buddhists worldwide. INEB deals with alternative education and spiritual training, gender issues, human rights, ecology, alternative concepts of development, and activism. Despite being primarily a Buddhist network, INEB nevertheless has interfaith elements and seeks to consolidate the communities of those holding the same values and tenets of Buddhism worldwide.

Another important project we are working on is the 'Spirit in Education Movement' (SEM). In this complex world in which spiritual and environmental diversity are being worn away, there is little time and thought for education for the heart and soul mainstream education in the West concentrates on the intellect and is becoming more and more business-like and competitive. As the Eastern countries jump gaily onto the consumer bandwagon, their education systems are beginning to emulate the narrow, unconnected fields of Western education.

The Spirit in Education Movement was founded by several prominent alternative thinkers to counteract the negative trends of Western education. From humble beginnings in Siam, working in rural communities, it is founded on the philosophy that education must be spiritually based, ecologically sound, and must offer a holistic view of life. The philosophy is underpinned by Buddhist wisdom and green principles, but also welcomes and associates with other spiritual and ecological wisdom. We aspire to create an environment to awaken Buddha nature and cultivate wisdom as well as the intellect. We aspire to benefit people by increasing individual and collective confidence in their traditional wisdom, skills and heritage. We hope to move individuals from selfishness to compassion, from a lack of meaning in life to fulfillment, and from negativity to positive thinking. We link together action, meditation, art and intellectual learning, within a friendly, nurturing, happy learning environment in spiritually rich places close to nature.

Despite all the suffering in the world, we know there is a way to transcend and see beyond it. Investigating and envisioning new and creative ways to achieve structural changes in our world that will bring about this transcendence must be a key part of a global strategy for positive change in human development. Bhutan is taking a lead in this regard in its efforts to operationalize *Gross National Happiness*. The tools and knowledge are already here within our spiritual, social, and academic systems, but a concerted effort is needed to bring them to bear on the social ills of our world. In addition, the course of such an effort will naturally bring together the entire global Buddhist community, which comprises an immense diversity of people and traditions. The meetings today in Bhutan are an

important first step towards the eventual goal of establishing and furthering dialogue on new systems of indicators that measure human wellbeing, perhaps the best hope humanity has for creating structural changes that will lead to a permanent, peaceful and fair global society. Buddhism can be the path whereby we might not only engage ourselves in the process of liberation, but also might work towards the liberation of all others.

Operationalizing Gross National Happiness

Now on to the reason we are all here today. When His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck proclaimed, "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product... [because] happiness takes precedent over economic prosperity in our national development process," I knew that Bhutan was truly embarking on a promising new path, and one that the rest of the world might do well to follow. In such a national policy, it is easy to see the influence of Buddhism. I believe it is a groundbreaking, possibly Earth changing, policy that is coming none too late.

The question is how to operationalize it.

In trying to work through many of the conundrums in operationalizing GNH, one stumbles into a number of quagmires. These problems are what have kept the ground between the economics and spirituality camps so long divided. However, it does not have to remain this way. Bhutan is a pioneer in showing the world that it does not have to limit itself to solely economic pursuits. It is my suggestion that the operationalizing of Gross National Happiness (GNH) be thought of in its first few years as a trial, or an experimental stage. In this way, the process of measurement could be tweaked and modified, or outright overhauled. It should even be possible to engage alternate forms of measurement while inaugural forms are running. By following such a logical plan, the project as a whole never remains at risk of abandonment with the inevitable arrival of criticism or cynicism. The GNH project is one that is worthwhile for the history of humanity, and an experimental phase should involve the kind of risk-taking that will allow it to succeed and, in so doing, break new ground for developing the kind of yardsticks by which we judge ourselves.

Confronting the Quagmire

In measuring happiness, the biggest question to me seems to be whether or not you define happiness for the people whose happiness you are measuring. My inclination here is to say "no" and to recognize that happiness can take many forms, can arise due to a variety of reasons, is not static, and does in fact change over time. If you define happiness for people, then some criteria that at least some people consider critical in forming their overall experience of happiness will inevitably be left out.

The problem with not defining what is happiness is, of course, that from a Buddhist perspective, you are left with no guard against

consumerism—that people’s happiness may come to depend more and more on simply consuming more material goods, which leaves out the more subtle spiritual, cultural, and social domains. This will not lead to any happiness that is lasting and will, in fact, only undermine society’s will to be happy without these things we are told we “need” by marketers.

Keeping it Simple Versus Getting More Complex

Buddhism places value on simplicity. For the purposes of operationalizing GNH, I can think of no better place to keep things simple than in a survey. Of course, many people recommend different surveys as a way to measure happiness; it is not a new idea. In fact, several successful and internationally recognized “happiness” surveys have been done around the world, by such institutions as the *New Scientist* magazine and the University of Michigan’s World Values Survey. We might learn from these examples and devise a “happiness” survey that is in accord with social science parameters. Of course, since we are surveying mostly Buddhists we should be careful not to get too complex and confuse or obfuscate the issue; remember Buddhists value simplicity. Much better, it is, to keep things simple and focus directly on the issue.

Opponents of happiness surveys will argue that they are, of course, too simplistic and fail to capture many important components that would be integral to both understanding some sentiment of public happiness, as well as inform government in a good and appropriate manner, so that it can confront the obstacles to public happiness appropriately, where possible.

Of course, the survey method is not perfect, and it could even complicate the government’s objectives to promote the common good, or happiness, of all. For example, the king has said that the ultimate purpose of government is to promote the happiness of the people. What if the values of the people, perhaps due to the introduction of outside influences, begin to clamor for things in the name of happiness that are traditionally unacceptable? What does the government do then? These sorts of questions lead into an interesting and important discussion about the value of looking at happiness in the short-term versus the long-term.

Buddhist societies, because of the classic importance of karma and reincarnation in the religion, tend to view things in the long-term. In Siam, great tragedies can occur and merit hardly the blink of an eye. For example, when misfortune befalls an individual, the attitude is often, “*mai pen rai*,” or “never mind.” The tragedy that occurs in the present is simply not lasting; the pain will soon pass. Such attitudes are not restricted to Siam but can be found widespread in many societies, especially those with a strong belief in karma.

The great strength of this view is something like an eternal patience and accompanying perspective that sees things in the long-term. Western critics will, of course, lament the terrible fatalism that shadows this kind of

perspective. These critiques are not completely without merit. When people care less about what happens to them in this life, because they presumably have many more to lead after this one, the result is a disempowerment and disengagement in working hard to make positive changes in the present life. Socially engaged Buddhism attempts to rectify this situation by focusing on the good that can be done in the present moment.

The important thing to take out of this discussion of the long view of many societies is that happiness can be seen in the short-term and the long-term. Consumerism borne in the West has tried to inculcate an increasingly short-term view in all of its adherents. Pleasure, satisfaction, and any other desires or wants demand immediate gratification. Unfortunately, the same mass media that dominates the West and is increasingly penetrating long distant kingdoms like Bhutan reinforces this “need” to see things always in the short-term.

So another key question facing Bhutan is: what happiness does the government seek to measure and cater to—a short-term one or a long-term one?

The two need not be mutually exclusive. One might, for simplicity’s sake, think of short-term happiness being delivered chiefly by material goods (since we can enjoy them only in this life), and spiritual, cultural, and social experiences promoting a longer-term happiness. The key here is to realize that both elements – short-term and long-term, material and other – are integral components in that great formula which makes us happy.

The question becomes one of balance: how to balance the needs on the material level with those on the spiritual, cultural, and social? Clearly, provision of basic social services goes a long way in satisfying the needs of the material level. But the satisfaction of spiritual, cultural, and social levels are much more personal concerns. Not that government cannot play a role in promoting happiness in these areas, as the Bhutanese government clearly has in such activities as building community theatres where Bhutanese plays are performed, but the government can perhaps only act in these areas to enhance the spiritual, cultural, and social satisfaction of people through provision of material needs here.

Paying Attention to Relative or Purely Subjective Happiness

Another problem to deal with in operationalizing Gross National Happiness is how to deal with the “relative versus purely subjective” dilemma. Recently, an article in the *New Scientist* magazine declared Nigerians the happiest people on the Earth, followed by Mexicans, and then Venezuelans. Russians, Armenians, and Romanians clocked in as the least happy people on Earth. Interesting to note was that the United States, widely considered to be the richest and most materialist, consumption-oriented society on the planet clocked in at number 16. This would seem to indicate that money plays at least a mixed role in encouraging happiness.

But if one takes these results seriously, then one has to note that the happiness leaders are not the richest countries in the world. Indeed, some are the poorest (and, it should also be noted, that some of the poorest are some of the least happy).

Should Bhutan pay great attention to where the happiness of its people sit in great global surveys? Or should the government pay attention *only* to whether its people are happy or not, period, irregardless of where its international happiness ranking lies? Both seem important to some degree. However, it is easy to see how one could get caught up in global happiness rankings in some misguided effort to keep up with the Jones'. A Buddhist approach would seem to place greater emphasis naturally on subjective happiness, without being caught up in the happenings of the external "other."

This leads into a great discussion, I think, about the nature of these surveys that will try to determine Gross National Happiness. Clearly, a quantifiable measure is desirable in the sense that it allows for one to capture numerically what the Gross National Happiness is. However, if it is found that the Gross National Happiness in 2004 is 19,210 units, really what does this mean? Is this not a useless measure?

It seems more important to me that we keep our eyes on the target—that is, measuring people's happiness, which is really whether they are happy or not—and not getting too seduced by the dominant paradigm of economics. This is not to say that some economists' tools or approaches will not help us in measuring happiness, just that we do not immediately need to be thinking of ways to quantify happiness. That will come with time.

Creating a More Complex Formula for Measuring Happiness: An Alternate Approach

Should "happiness" plain and simple be measured? Alternatively, should a number of more specific proxies serve as indicators of happiness?

Having a number of proxies serve as indicators of happiness at first seems counter-intuitive. Why measure something other than happiness, if what you are trying to get at is, in fact, happiness itself? Opponents of measuring happiness by itself would argue that happiness by itself is just too difficult, and one cannot hope to get a good and accurate measurement of such a slippery concept. So, if that is the case, a number of excellent proxies that, when taken collectively together amount to a good measure of happiness, are the next best thing. In a way, opponents would argue, they might in fact be better than measuring "the real thing."

Such proxies might measure the following:

The degree of trust, social capital, cultural continuity, and/or social solidarity in a society

The general level of spiritual development and emotional intelligence in a society

The degree of satisfaction of basic needs – access and ability to partake of basic health care and education

The level of environmental integrity in a nation– including species loss or gain, pollution, rainforest destruction, etc.

Such an approach essentially defines happiness for those who are surveyed, though they may not know it when being surveyed about these various proxy measures.

There are problems with measuring each of the aforementioned example categories. In the area of social capital and interpersonal trust, social scientists are only just beginning to create good measures to be able to ascertain respective levels of these indicators in society. In my view, I am hesitant to prescribe basing a measure of happiness on a proxy measure that is itself still in development. Cultural continuity and social solidarity are very difficult things in themselves to measure, and it does not make sense to use them as a partial base for something else difficult we are trying to measure. Additionally, in the area of cultural continuity/social capital, one has to figure out how he will deal with the issue of diversity. Cultural continuity seems, by definition, to be at odds with diversity as a value. Yet, I would hesitate to give primacy to cultural continuity/social solidarity over diversity here. The two need not and, in my view, should not be thought of as mutually exclusive this way. To do so is, or at least can be, dangerous.

Ken Wilber and Don Beck are two philosopher psychologists who have done work in the area of uncovering paths or maps of spiritual spaces and experiences. These maps can be used to create effectively charts for spiritual development. By applying descriptions of these different levels, one could survey and find out, in general, the level of spiritual development of a society. This approach, however, raises many questions. For example, what happens if someone has a genuine spiritual experience that is off Wilber's charts? How can that be categorized? Also, what kind, if any, long-term damage might be done to the psyche of a society from its spiritual experience constantly being monitored and evaluated? I, for one, might object to my own spiritual experience being monitored and categorized. And if it was categorized, I might not agree with it. Hence, it is easy to see that monitoring and evaluating the important spiritual aspects of society becomes difficult, not to mention the fact that such monitoring and evaluation might actually promote the kind of "spiritual materialism" that Chogyam Trungpa so charismatically railed against!

The degree of satisfaction of needs is a much easier proxy of happiness to measure—and to some degree the government already does so, in finding out the percentage of people with access to basic education, health care, and safe water. The question that arises within this category is whether such questioning should go beyond just the satisfaction of basic needs, since satisfaction of more "frivolous" needs can contribute to happiness also. The contributions of satisfaction in luxury areas seem important enough not to

be left out completely, but also not important enough to be focused on totally. To do so would lead us right back into the consumption trap that GNP, a mere cash flow model, already has us in. Therefore, I suggest, if a complex approach to measuring happiness is taken, that it take into consideration only satisfaction of truly basic needs. However, the government will have to tread very carefully in this area for the reasons mentioned.

Environment has long held an important priority in the public policy arena here in Bhutan. Sixty percent of the land is protected forest. Another 26% is protected land. Given such a great commitment to the environment (a value held by the people), it makes sense that a measure of environmental integrity be inputted as a value into the formula for calculating the overall Gross National Happiness in this more complex approach. Percentages of protected land might be a starting point in such a calculation, but a way should also be found to incorporate measures that account for loss of quality in the environment, such as level of pollution and species loss, which should be of paramount consideration.

Concluding Remarks

A final question involves whether GNH will serve as an ideal, or an actual target. This seems a strange question to ask after a long exposition on how precisely to operationalize the concept of GNH. As now, it serves as a good and important ideal in Bhutan. When asked questions by the international media, officials proudly answer that Bhutan does not follow Gross National Product, but Gross National Happiness. However, operationally, this does not yet mean anything.

So, currently in Bhutan, GNH is an ideal, something to live up to, rather than something that actually exists. We are trying to find ways to make the ideal a target, to operationalize it. But, can happiness be measured? If it can be measured, can humans avoid the pitfalls of becoming disgruntled because this year's happiness is less than last year's Gross National Happiness. I suspect, once GNH is successfully operationalized and other countries come to follow Bhutan's fine leadership, that this will be the biggest problem with such an indicator. It may actually make those who monitor it unhappy from time to time and invoke a race to become always increasingly happy that is not possible. How familiar a trap would that be to the current one with humans running like rats in the "rat race" chasing money all the time! The key, of course, is to create the proper mental and emotional space between us and our indicators, so that they become instruments of liberation and not instruments of control. To do that, we must fall back and rely on the teachings of the Buddha: awareness, compassion, and true seeing.

Thank you for this opportunity. I look forward to seeing where fruitful discussion on these topics takes us.

Happiness in the Midst of Change: A Human Development Approach to Studying GNH in the Context of Economic Development

MICHAEL R. LEVENSON, PATRICIA A. JENNINGS, MICHELLE D'MELLO, THAO LE,
& CAROLYN M. ALDWIN

Contemporary theories of economic development have concentrated on socioeconomic and epidemiological indices of development to the exclusion of issues of psychological and spiritual development. Yet, economic development without attention to individual human development may produce increasing wealth but decreasing happiness. The construct of Gross National Happiness (GNH), as the real measure of success in a developmental endeavor, is intended to serve as a corrective to the exclusive concern with materialistic indices of development. Development has intangible as well as tangible aspects. No theory or measurement of development can be complete without both. Naturally, the assessment of the intangibles is more subtle and difficult. However, that does not render it impossible.

We will first briefly address some of the tangible indices of development that must be considered crucial to GNH. Then, we will survey some of the relationships between economic development and subjective well-being in economically developed societies. We will then critique the contemporary psychological conceptualization of happiness as a rather narrow product of utilitarian philosophy. We will contrast this theory with the Buddhist theory of happiness, showing the close relationship between happiness and wisdom. We will continue with an assessment of the kinds of psychological changes that typically accompany economic development, especially individualism, concluding with a measurement model that could be used to monitor change in individual well-being during a period of rapid economic growth.

Tangible Requirements

Without question, GNH requires low infant and child mortality, universal access to health care, a high level of literacy, and access to gainful employment (Werner, 2003, personal communication). Full membership of women in all aspects of community life is also central. Extreme disparity in wealth is a source of abuses of economic power and of resentment of the "haves" by the "have nots" and must also be avoided. Environmental health based on harmony of humans in nature depends crucially on the maintenance of a sustainable population. On a somewhat more intangible level, GNH requires a sense of community inclusive of diversity. The present era offers more than sufficient evidence of the tragic consequences of ethnic and religious conflict. It seems likely that a balanced life, not solely

concentrated on economic activity, is important for GNH. The U. S. has unprecedented material abundance but some have suggested that it has been purchased at the cost of free time and community participation (Johnson, 1978).

There is no society that completely meets even these, more or less, tangible requirements of GNH. Certainly, the U. S. fails with respect to universal health care, disparity of income, and, to some extent, community in diversity, harmony with nature, as well as balance in life between economic and other pursuits.

Materialistic theories of well-being assume that progress in the production of material wealth and technology will automatically serve to create subjective well-being (SWB). However, effects of material wealth on SWB appear to be mixed at best. In a meta-analysis of studies of the relationship between income and SWB, Cummins (2000) found that income was an important predictor, especially for poor people who presumably were undergoing objective privation. He also found that the effect of income on SWB was generally not present for those who had entered into a state of low income intentionally (eg. college students, former urban residents who have gone back to the land). However, a number of studies have indicated that, in fact, psychological distress, as well as diminishing SWB, can be found in the context of economic growth and wealth.

Happiness In The West

Increasing wealth has conferred great benefits on western industrialized societies, including high levels of health care, education, and employment. Western societies have also made great progress in advancing human rights. However, there is evidence that economic development, especially increasing per capita wealth, has been achieved in Western societies at some cost to individual well-being. The statistical abstract of the United States (1995) reports that between the years 1940 and 1990 income rose steadily in the U. S. and the index variable "very happy" decreased commensurately. In Europe, income increased fourfold (measured in constant 1990 U. S. dollars) between 1930 and 1990, but satisfaction, first assessed in the late 1950's, remained constant (Myers, 1992). Specific indices of psychological suffering have also showed some unfavorable trends. Twenge (2000) found that trait anxiety has increased in the United States over the past half century. Preliminary analyses from the University of California, Davis Longitudinal Study confirmed that succeeding age cohorts have progressively higher levels of trait anxiety.

At the same time, the rate of depression has increased even more dramatically (Buie, 1988). Kessler, McGonagle, Zhao, Nelson, et al. (1994) found that 20% of the American public would be eligible for a diagnosis of major depression. We simply do not know how this compares with depression prevalence in the rest of the world. Weissman, Bland, Joyce,

Newman, et al. (1993) found that successively younger cohorts of Americans have increasing prevalence of depression. In the US satisfaction with marriage, job, and place of residence have all declined between 1973 and 1994 (Lane, 2000). Increase in material wealth and the decrease in some important aspects of well-being have been paralleled by a change in values with a dramatic increase in valuing material wealth at the expense of valuing a meaningful life (Sax, Astin, Korn, & Mahoney, 1998).

We can conclude that a degree of material wealth is important for SWB but excessive attention to the acquisition of material wealth appears to be associated with decreases in SWB. At the very least, there is little indication that, beyond the provision of basic needs, increasing wealth increases SWB.

Utilitarian Approach To Happiness

Even though both Aristotle and His Holiness the Dalai Lama (1998) stated that happiness was the goal of all human endeavors, we still don't know what it is. Veenhoven (2001), in constructing a world database of concepts and measures of happiness, restricted the content of this database to constructs and measures consistent with a utilitarian philosophical perspective. For him, happiness is defined as the "degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his/her life as a whole favorably" including pleasant affect and "contentment (perceived realization of wants)" (Veenhoven, 2001, p. 35). He explicitly excluded measures that have anything to do with a meaningful life. All considerations of meaning and consequences of acts or modes of being associated with happiness are ruled out. What remain are simply reports of happiness over the short or long term. Veenhoven only considers present happiness with life as a whole as an uncontaminated assessment of happiness. The problem is that it actually does not tell us anything about the nature of happiness and, in the best positivist tradition, it divorces happiness from value. From this perspective, the happiness of the Dalai Lama is the same as the happiness of a career criminal. This signals serious limitations to utilitarian/mechanistic approaches to happiness.

From a utilitarian viewpoint, the "pursuit of happiness" has no surplus meaning related to levels of maturity. Even though Veenhoven takes the perception of longer term well-being as a better measure than mere immediate pleasure, the immature good feelings resulting from the gratification of one's own wants are no different from the happiness resulting from providing food for starving people.

The conceptualization of happiness is much influenced by issues of measurement. Because happiness has been studied by psychologists, who have been steeped in the theory of traits, it is typically assessed as a trait. In general, psychological studies have found that SWB is very much influenced by hereditary temperament (Tellegen, Lykken, Bouchard, Wilcox, Segal, & Rich, 1988). Indeed, expressions of positive affect may well

be more strongly associated with temperament than with anything else. If happiness is merely positive affect, then there may be little that can be done to enhance it, aside from simply eliminating poverty. However, as noted above, the fact remains that even trait measures of unhappiness (e. g. anxiety and depression) have shown signs of variability not easily attributable solely to hereditary temperament. That is, it is unlikely that genetic risks for anxiety and depression have changed much in the course of the last half-century. Even happiness as measured by SWB (mainly positive affect) can be influenced by demographic variables such as income, age, and sex although these effects are rather small. Perception influences happiness much more than does demographics, including income (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002).

It appears that, from a utilitarian, individualist perspective, happiness is an endogenous (hereditary temperament) variable and/or an affect added to experiences of satisfaction of wants.

It is noteworthy that, from a Buddhist perspective, wants can never be satisfied. They simply increase with satiation. This “hedonic treadmill” (cf. , Lane, 2000), while fueling economic growth, is regarded by Buddhist psychology as a source of suffering. Increases in measures of subjective ill being in the context of unprecedented satisfaction of wants lends credence to this view.

A Buddhist Approach

Buddhist psychology emphasizes suffering and its causes as well as the cessation of suffering and the path to such cessation. While Buddhism does not offer an explicit theory of happiness per se, it does offer an explicit theory of the causes of suffering. For Buddhist psychology, the “three poisons”, greed, ill-will, and delusion, cause suffering by obscuring fundamental human nature. Greed and ill-will, grasping and rejecting, create the self, not merely as the locus of experience, but as William James, the founder of American Psychology, put it, a person's self is:

Not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife [or her husband] and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, his yacht and bank account (James, 1890/1983, p. 279).

In sum, the self, as it is continuously constructed in the way described by James, is identical with the illusory self, described in Buddhist psychology, produced through grasping and rejecting. It creates a false sense of extreme individuality that gives the impression of separation of persons from each other, from other living beings, and from the environment as a whole (cf. Levenson, Jennings, Le & Aldwin, 2003).

Recently, methods of empirically assessing individualism have been developed in the context of work on cultural syndromes (Triandis, 1990, 1998). Cultural syndromes can be assessed at the individual level and have

recently been shown to be differentially related to destructive emotions. Four syndromes have been identified, including two forms of individualism and collectivism, termed "vertical" and "horizontal," the former emphasizing competition and hierarchy and the latter, equality and cooperation. The form of individualism encouraged by utilitarian views of economic development is, naturally, vertical individualism, the purest form of which can be observed in the U. S. Horizontal (less competitive) individualism is found in such societies as Sweden and Denmark. Buddhist cultures, at least ideally, are more inclined to horizontal collectivism, a cultural syndrome that de-emphasizes individualism and competition. Le (2003) recently found the vertical individualist cultural syndrome to be associated with higher scores on measures of narcissism and neuroticism (trait anxiety) and lower scores on a measure of self-transcendence. To the extent that economic development is associated with increasing individualism, it would seem wiser to encourage the form of individualism that may be less conducive to greed and ill-will.

An emphasis on the individual self is central to utilitarian economic philosophy. Economic development is unavoidably associated with increasing individualism as described by Ahuvia (2002). Indeed, whatever positive relationship does exist between per capita GNP and SWB appears to be mediated by individualism such that when individualism is controlled for, the correlation between GNP and SWB disappears (Ahuvia, 2002; Diener, 1995). Ahuvia goes on to draw attention to the fact that cultures that actually score highest on SWB are those cultures that would be described as "horizontal individualist" cultures in the taxonomy of cultural syndromes (Diener & Oishi, 2000; Schyns, 2000). Ahuvia (2002) hypothesizes that cultures such as those of Denmark, Iceland, and Switzerland, that are individualistic in the sense of freedom from coercion, are characterized by substantially greater SWB than those, such as the United States, that are individualistic in the sense of self-interest and competition. This interpretation is consistent with the finding of decreasing SWB and increasing indices of psychological distress in the United States.

This whole line of inquiry has given support to Buddhist ideas of human development. It is very clear that Buddhism's emphasis on individual effort as well as social responsibility, expressed in terms of wisdom and compassion, makes it an ideal foundation for a non-destructive individualism. It also avoids the wholesale importation of Western utilitarian ideas of happiness into cultures that may have the capacity to pursue other avenues of human development.

For Buddhist psychology, compassion, wisdom, and happiness are considered basic to human nature. They are not states to be added, but are already fully present in the mind, yet obscured by the work of the process of self-construction. For Buddhist psychology, when the obscurations of fundamental human nature are lifted, this nature appears intact. For

Buddhism, the fundamental wisdom mind is nondualistic. In dualism are the seeds of greed, ill-will and delusion.

While this not the place for an examination of specific methods for effecting the realization of fundamental human nature, it is no mean feat. No set of social policies can bring it about. However, the authoritative presence of a spiritual tradition can serve as a protective factor against some of the potentially harmful effects of economic development. In the case of the United States, Hirsch (1976) argued that religious norms were crucial to the maintenance of the American social fabric in its period of unprecedented economic growth. It is important in the maintenance of communitarian values in the face of the utilitarian philosophy of the market. Contemporary Buddhist philosopher David Loy remarks that,

From a religious perspective, the problem with market capitalism and its values is twofold: greed and delusion. On the one hand, the unrestrained market emphasizes and even requires greed in at least two ways. Desire for profit is necessary to fuel the engine of the economic system, and an insatiable desire to consume ever more must be generated to create markets for what can be produced. Within an economic theory and the market it promotes, the moral dimension of greed is inevitably lost; today it seems left to religion to preserve what is problematic about a human trait that is unsavory at best.... The spiritual problem with greed [is that it] is based on delusion: the delusion that happiness is to be found by satisfying one's greed (Loy, 2002, p. 207).

Contemporary social science lends support to this view with the finding, cited above, that the increased wealth and consumption of recent decades have not brought about increasing happiness. In many respects, they appear to have had the opposite effect, as Buddhist psychology would have predicted. Loy's analysis can be supplemented by observing that an unrestrained market philosophy also cultivates ill-will, the third of the "three poisons," through the celebration of competition and the creation of a culture of "winners and losers. "

In Buddhist psychology, the three poisons create suffering. In Western psychology, suffering is referred to as stress. The evidence of declining SWB in industrially developed societies with competitive individualist cultures, as incomplete a measure of well-being as it is, suggests that the psychological conditions that promote rapid economic growth, also promote stress. This is reflected not only in declining measures of global SWB, but also in specific measures of psychological distress.

From the perspective of Buddhist psychology, the "pursuit of happiness," enshrined in the U. S. Declaration of Independence, is best approached indirectly. If the natural state of human beings is happiness, protecting against the sources of unhappiness is the key to allowing happiness to take care of itself. What is approached directly, from the

perspective of Buddhist psychology, is the application of the antidote to greed, ill-will, and delusion which is the cultivation of wisdom and compassion. Buddhist developmental psychology offers both a means of cultivating these attributes and of assessing their effectiveness. The three trainings of Buddhist psychology are antidotes to the three poisons and, as such, are means of promoting human development. These trainings, ethics, meditation, and wisdom, are, from the Buddhist psychological perspective, the foundations of happiness.

In recent years, Western students of human development have realized that wisdom expresses an ultimate goal of human development through the lifespan. However, there has been considerable disagreement about what wisdom is. One prominent theory defines wisdom as "expertise in the fundamental pragmatics of life" (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). We have argued that this conceptualization of wisdom fails to capture the full range of the construct. Drawing upon the Buddhist understanding of wisdom, we define wisdom as transcendence of the self or ego. We have found that we can assess the construct of wisdom as self-transcendence and it is our view that this way of experiencing the world can be cultivated very effectively in a Buddhist culture. We have also found that self-transcendence is negatively related to indices of psychological ill-health, such as narcissism and neuroticism, and positively related to wholesome traits and states of mind such as openness to experience and agreeableness. We have also found self-transcendence to be stronger in persons who have a meditation or other form of spiritual practice (Levenson, Jennings, Aldwin, & Shiraishi, 2003; Le, 2003).

Is it possible to cultivate self-transcendence in a whole society, a society also undergoing a change process that encourages individualism? We hypothesize that, to the extent the trainings of ethics and meditation are sustained, wisdom as self-transcendence will flourish offering a strong protective factor against psychological ill-health and socially destructive attitudes and behavior that derive from competitive individualism. The three trainings constitute a method of lifespan human development.

Buddhist ethics, unlike the dominant system of justice-based ethics in the West, is based fundamentally on compassion. Indeed, compassion is one of the two wheels of the Dharma. From this perspective, the happiness that is a facet of fundamental human nature, follows directly from the ethics of compassion. The Dalai Lama (1999) argues that without compassion there can be no true happiness.

Understanding compassion as ultimately impartial empathy for all sentient beings, the Dalai Lama writes of its role in daily life as follows:

Does the ideal of developing it to the point where it is unconditional mean that we must abandon our own interests entirely? Not at all. In fact, it is the best way of serving them - - indeed, it could even be said to constitute the wisest course for fulfilling self-interest. For if it is correct that those

qualities such as love, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness are what happiness consists in, and if it is also correct that *nying je*, or compassion... is both a source and the fruit of these qualities, then the more we are compassionate, the more we provide for our own happiness. Thus, any idea that concern for others, though a noble quality, is a matter for our private lives only, is simply short-sighted. Compassion belongs to every sphere of activity including, of course, the workplace (H. H. Dalai Lama, 1999, p. 127)

This is especially pertinent to the issue of increasing individualism in the context of economic development discussed above. From the Dalai Lama's viewpoint, there is no need to regard them as contradictory. Actually, individualism brings the need for compassion into the forefront because of the weakening of collectivist sanctions against "standing out." When we have the chance to express our unique individualities, we also have the chance to be consciously compassionate.

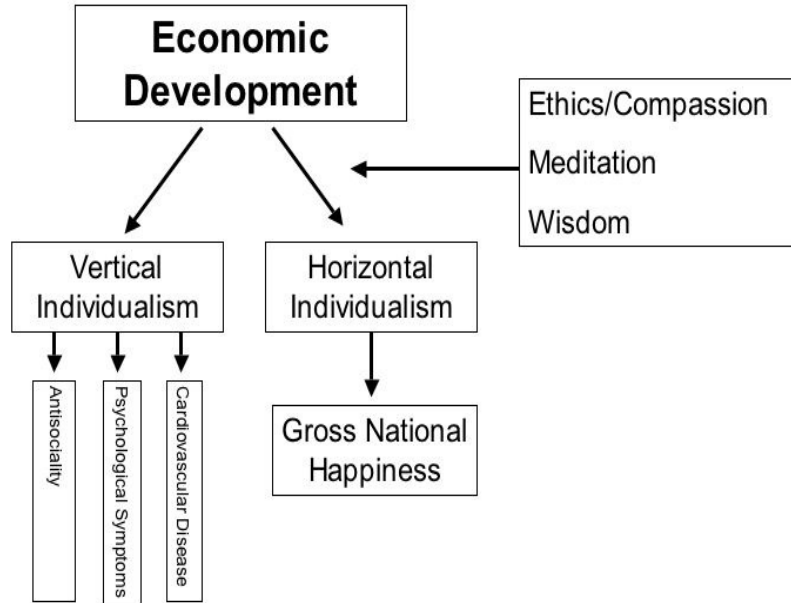
Recent studies have shown that even brief courses of meditation with very short periods of the simplest meditation practices are associated with better psychological and physical health (Andresen, 2000; Alexander, Chandler, Langer, Newman, & Davies, 1989; Kabat-Zinn, Massion, Kristeller, Peterson, Fletcher, et al. ; Patel, Marmot, Terry, Carruthers, Hunt, & Patel, 1985). In Buddhism, it is widely understood that ethics and meditation are mutually enhancing; only through the cultivation of an ethical life can one develop the equanimity of mind even to begin sincere meditation practice (Palmo, 2003).

The adherence to a compassion-based ethics combined with meditation is believed to result in wisdom experienced as non-duality or, in our work, self-transcendence. The three trainings understood in this way as not only a monastic practice, but as the basis of ordinary life, may constitute a viable path to Gross National Happiness.

Monitoring Risk And Protective Factors of GNH

Many well-established measures exist that can be employed to construct a multi-level model of the effects of cultural change on GNH. Economic development, cultural syndromes, socially destructive attitudes, and symptoms of psychological distress can be readily assessed. It is also important to assess the prevalence of the practice of the three trainings. We hypothesize that adherence to ethical precepts and meditation practice are maintained and the extent to which individuals are self-transcendent will mediate the relationship between economic development and psychosocial well-being (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. A psychosocial model of GNH



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