

The Concept of Subjective Quality of Life and Psychological Well-Being: Essay On Contemporary Ideas

A. A. Poduzov* and V. S. Yazykova

Institute of Economic Forecasting, Russian Academy of Sciences Moscow, 117418 Russia

*e-mail: ecfor1809@mail.ru

Received October 17, 2016

Abstract—This paper considers the subjective quality of life and psychological wellbeing as different, albeit related concepts. We analyze the approach to measurements and international comparisons of psychological wellbeing developed by famous American researcher C. Ryff. It has been suggested that, after some improvements this approach can be used in the construction of the subjective indicator of quality of life.

DOI: 10.1134/S107570071703011X

The concept of subjective quality of life and approaches to its study. The term *subjective quality of life*, which was introduced to science half a century ago, has become widely used in the analysis of political, social, and economic processes. Nevertheless, its scientific content is still to be finalized. The purpose of this article is to specify (as possible) its content and make observations about the feasibility of measuring the SQL and its practical application.

Attempts to solve this problem have repeatedly been made by specialists in the field of social and economic measurements, as well as representatives of anthropology, philosophy, and especially psychology. The problem is that all of these attempts are separated because of the barriers historically established between various branches of knowledge, which sometimes are very difficult to overcome. The latter are associated with traditions rooted in each of the sectors in the use of particular scientific terminology and some others. For example, instead of the term *subjective quality of life*, one of the most important contemporary trends in psychology (existential analysis) employs a term that is only understood by experts in the field, namely the *existential fulfillment*. On the other hand, known attempts of this kind are based on the belief that objects of the world perceived by existing human senses, including our own bodies, are reflected realistically in our minds, accurately without distortion. However, entities of the objective world and their images that are born in our minds are in fact two different things [1]. Humans live in an illusory world (experts call it a living world, or phenomenological world), and only thanks to the achievements of natural sciences our ideas about the quality and meaning of our lives may become more adequate.

The starting point in the analysis of the current situation can be the information contained in the phrase *subjective quality of life*. This implies that respondents themselves define the relation to their own lives, and SQL is one of the results of their mental efforts. However, because human life is unthinkable without the surrounding physical, biological, and social environment, the perceived segments of this objective reality also require (with the desired level of detail) qualitative and quantitative estimates. Of course, they cannot be perceived directly. Only their subjective images are available, and they can only actually become an object of individual estimation. Thus, we appeal specifically to these estimates, i.e., the world of human sensations, feelings, and emotions.

The well-known specialist in the field of interpersonal communication, Paul Ekman argues bluntly: “*Emotions define quality of our life* (emphasis ours). We express our emotions at work, when communicating with friends, in our contacts with relatives, and in our relationships with each other and people close to us hidden from prying eyes, that is, in all that we hold dear and genuinely care about” [2, p. 10]. Here, we emphasize again that, although each person has many reasons for the external manifestation of emotions, on their own emotions are human response only to images and events that occur in his or her mind. The phenomenological trend in psychology rightly considers that real to the individual (that is, to his thoughts, ideas, and feelings) is all that exists within the inner coordinate system of the person or its subjective world, that is, all the person is aware of at any given time. This rejects the idea that the world can be perceived as something that really exists in itself, as the same reality for all. In other words, each is responsive to the event in accordance with how they subjectively perceive it.

It is not difficult to imagine (staying within psychological science) an alternative approach to the study of SQL, which involves appealing not to the feelings of

the person but to their intellect and cognitive world: to the activities aimed at cognition and understanding, that is, to thoughts, logic, reasoning, and achievements. In this case, when polling, it is important to find out whether respondents consider their life to be successful and decent, whether they think that they achieved much, whether they believe that their creative possibilities have not been exhausted and there are encouraging prospects. In recent years, this approach has been widely used in the examination of the system of value orientations of the population in many countries.

In 1992, the author of one of the most famous of these orientations, Israeli psychologist Shalom Schwartz, constructed an evaluative questionnaire that offered each respondent a way to evaluate how each of the values included in the questionnaire is important as a guiding principle of their lives. Of course, this approach and the study of quality of life of people are different objectives, and the values selected by Schwartz may not be relevant to the task facing us. In addition, we must specify the following fact: people are often faced with a situation where the perception of an object, statement, or value is accompanied by the appearance in the consciousness of the reasoning—feeling dilemma, which contradict each other. In these cases, the psychologist recommends relying on the senses, as they are closer to the truth than thoughts.

One can finally point to the approach proposed recently by Swiss professor and neuroscientist Luciano Ciompi [3]. He argues that human feelings and thinking in all mental processes, even *including* research in the field of mathematics, are inseparably intertwined. Combinations of emotions generated by any given situation, as well as reasoning, and human behavior, form functional unities in the memory, i.e., integrated sense-intellectual-behavioral programs (SIBs), which in similar situations are realized over and over again, perhaps being slightly modified. Ciompi considers that these programs are perhaps the true building blocks of our mental apparatus, including indicators of SQL. However, in any case, the solution will take some time, during which SIBs will be subject to further study so that they can be reliably identified and classified.

It is clear from the above that further specification of the content of SQL is limited by the emotional world of the person, that is, the selection of the first approach. After all, it is because of the feelings and emotions that arise in the mind as a reaction to visual and other images that the latter are perceived by the person not as a scattering of independent, unrelated to each other elements, but as a complete picture of all that was in his field of vision at that particular moment. Feelings and emotions, which summarize the incoming impressions, link them to the priorities in life, and thus provide the possibility of aggregation of those impressions that are vital for human beings. From this, we have the idea of SQL as a holistic subjective experience of individual being and its subjective integral assessment of his or her personality [4]. In other words, SQL is how comfortable the person *feels* in their life world.

Quality of life and the world of human emotions. The first questions that arise here are as follows: How is the

human emotional world examined and does the degree of scrutiny achieved progress when addressing our task? But that is not all. Since the philosophical concept of *quality* in relation to human life means its external and internal certainty, a system of *basic* characteristics and features of the psychophysical organism, “losing which it ceases to be what it is,” [5, p. 160], it is necessary to clarify the *significance* of the human emotional sphere. In other words, it is also necessary to answer another question: What are the role and place of the senses and emotions for a person and whether they are important for his or her mental life or are they peripheral?

Here is what famous Austrian scientist Alfred Langley says about the role of the emotional sphere in human life [6]. Our life revolves around feelings. When there are feelings, everything becomes animated; it is as though things condense. We build our lives around feelings because we want to experience something and, consequently, to feel alive. Of course, to feel is a lot, but along with the sensual dimension, we also see other fundamental motivations for life, which reveals our relationship with other important spheres of life and show that we are talking about actual human relationships with the surrounding reality. However, feelings are the *leading* element.

L. Ciompi’s opinion with regard to the question of whether the emotional world is sufficiently studied is as follows: “On one hand, to some extent, we are all experts in the field of emotions because, as Hermann Hesse once aptly noticed, *our whole life consists mainly of emotions* (emphasis ours). On the other hand, we know almost nothing about them or, more precisely, science has highly uncertain knowledge about what emotions are, what they mean, and how they function” [3]. We find it difficult to agree with the last statement, even more so since, according to L. Ciompi himself over the past 20–30 years, the science of psychology has been characterized by a clear shift in interest towards the deeper study of emotions, feelings, and affects. In our opinion, the currently existing level of understanding in the human emotional world is sufficient (or close to that) to conduct surveys of the population and obtain very approximate necessary SQL estimates for social and political experts involved in regulating the quality of life of the population in their home countries and international comparisons.

As known, the human emotional sphere is very broad and diverse. However, the development of a key tool for the population survey (questionnaire) requires one first to make it clear from what kind of elements of that sphere the person forms their own ideas about quality of their lives, whether they all are to be included or only some of them (preferably minimum), and if a part, what is the criterion of its formation? Perhaps the answer to these difficult questions would be simpler if we had reliable information about the

world of human emotions, e.g., its structure and whether its elements are prone to ordering and ranking. Can we consider this world to be a space of a certain dimension with a known coordinate system (it could be called an *SQL space*) and the actual quality of a person's life as a point in a multidimensional space? In our opinion, this way, although attractive from a theoretical point of view, it is complicated due to practical reasons. However, one step in this direction is possible. We will use the experience accumulated by psychologists in the field of so-called axiology (the section of psychology that studies human values).

If emotions are the result of sensory perception of the influence (of something or someone) on the life of the subject, volatile, often fleeting influence, then values is an even narrower range of perceptions that are qualified by subjects as being *important* to their lives. It seems that significance is a criterion that allows one to approach the specification of the content of SQL. The definition of *quality of life* given above can therefore be refined and formulated as the integral result of perception of only emotions significant for the life of the subject. Another possibility is to define the *SQL of the individual* as the totality of its values, i.e., objects (images, phenomena), which generate a set of all emotions significant for them in their mind [7]. In this second variant of the definition, although it formally shifts the focus from the important emotions to their generating sources, the definition of *SQL* is still based on the emotional part.

Values are divided into positive and negative. The former, i.e., values in the full sense of the word, are those that the person perceives as having the special quality of good. These values contribute to life and are experienced as positive emotions, such as joy, affection, pleasure, enjoyment, bliss, and delight. The second, which are faultily referred to as negative values, or nonvalues,¹ are phenomena to which the subject has a negative attitude, e.g., rejection, disappointment, dislike, displeasure, sorrow, and despair.

Feelings, especially those that accompany values, are not an adverse reaction of the body or annoying interference that prevent a rational, intelligent life. Feelings "are the channel that connects us to life; with their help, people perceive what is happening around them and perceive the impact it has on their lives, whether they get stronger from what is happening, whether it feeds them or they begin to wither away from it, whether it brings them harm, or whether it injures and suppresses them" [7]. For a mentally healthy person, all that denies life is nonvaluable, harmful, and fearsome. The negative attitude towards life overturns the experience of values. Valuable

objects are now those that match his or her negative position in life, maintain and support his or her denial of life. In other words, the same values (satisfaction of vital needs, work, family relationships, health, etc.) are qualified by an individual as positive when their position in relation to their own life is life-affirming and as negative in the opposite case.

As we have seen, the internal position of the person with respect to their own life is the key to their division into positive and negative. It determines not only the sign of the value of their life, but also the sign of SQL. Some psychologists call this position the experience of the *fundamental* value [8]. The social importance of in-depth study of this experience has become particularly high in the past decades, when a certain part of the population in different countries, which experiences a sense of inner emptiness and a feeling of absolute meaninglessness of their lives, began growing rapidly, and quality of life, respectively, falling. What is the reason? The world-famous Austrian psychologist Viktor Frankl² answers this question as follows: "animal instincts do not suggest people what they need, and traditions of their ancestors no longer teach us what we should do. Thus, not knowing what he wants and how he should live, the person often cannot understand what he or she actually wants. So, he either wants to do only what others are doing (that is, he becomes a conformist) or he does only what others want—want *from him* (that is, becomes a victim of totalitarianism)" [9, p. 7]. Both options are undesirable because they are not compatible with the individual's spiritual development or with the implementation of the individual creativity pledged in each of us.

The person values only what he or she intends to implement, maintain, and approve. According to British scientist Johan Siebers, values create some guiding milestones in our orientation in life, our practical actions, and overall relations with the world. Values give life a special quality of both its content and essence. *The way of being of the value is in the effort that the individual makes to achieve it.* This effort discovers what is really important for us. Values are closely linked with some prospects, opportunities, and potential; it gives origin to an easily recognizable difference between facts and values. While facts are something that are available, values are something that can only be obtained in the process of achieving, something that creates a common focus, a special dimension of our ideas and actions [10].

People, objects, natural phenomena, and events can induce a wave of emotions and feelings in us. It is believed that this is an innate human trait; i.e., phenomena that attract our attention that can profoundly affect a person's feelings and cause changes. This particularly applies to its social environment, close relatives, friends, and colleagues. Thanks to these value-

¹ This designation was a consequence of the impossibility to literally translate from one language to another. In German semantics, as stated in [8], values and nonvalues are equally important; only the sign is changing. Together they form a sphere of nonindifference.

² In the World War II, Frankl was a prisoner of several Nazi concentration camps.

related experiences, human beings change, which is reflected in their psychological development. People develop the ability to expand their axiological horizons and thus their living space. When living conditions are stable, the tendency to develop the described process can be identified with the tendency of SQL to increase in its purest form.

The most important individual values should include, first of all, those that result when the person implements their congenital instincts of the subsequent development of abilities, needs, and talents. To some extent, this process accompanies or creates the movement of human life in its entirety. Understanding this relationship, which was initiated by Plato, spurred psychologists to introduce the special term *self-actualization*, which refers to the situation when a person applies all of their talents, abilities, and potential, in scientific use. The main driving force of a healthy person is the need to develop and implement their inherent capabilities (for example, painting, sports, and so on).

A person's desire of a person to match his or her own nature is the need for self-actualization. As a rule, a person begins to feel it only after satisfying all of the needs of their lower, base layer. In the middle of the last century, American psychologist Abraham H. Maslow [11] proposed the now well-known hierarchical theory of human needs, a theory designed to explain the motivation of individual behavior. Characterizing each type of basic needs by the height of the role it plays in the development of the personality, A. Maslow put them in ascending order as follows: physiological needs; need for security and stability; need for love and belonging; need for recognition, self-esteem, and the respect of others; cognitive needs; aesthetic needs (need for beauty, order, symmetry, completion, system, structure, etc.); expressive needs, i.e., the need for emotional and motor expression directly linked to aesthetic needs; and the need for self-actualization. The interest this hierarchy of needs represents for the present work is revealed when the study of the SQL of people is not regarded as a single act but as a long-term process.

The gradual promotion of a person as the needs increase occurs as the previous needs are satisfied. However, their place is inevitably taken by new higher needs. Psychologists classify this phenomenon as sensuous human enrichment, change in the system of his or her *values*. Thus, the process of elevating needs and changes in the value system should be in a close correlation relationship, go hand in hand. Therefore, the systematic monitoring over the composition of the needs of the same individuals, which makes it possible to establish facts of the intensive replacement of old needs for the new ones, simultaneously signals the change that occurs in their value system. Therefore, it seems that a prolonged statistical survey of the needs of a fixed sample of individuals could help to improve the organization of the research of quality of life.

When psychologists talk about values, they usually refer not to moral and other values and norms widely recognized in any given society, but mostly to *personal* values. For example, if we have in mind another person, then the more he or she is loved, the more personal value to the loved ones he or she poses. The more the subject experiences pleasure from the perception of their own house, car, good food, holidays, interesting conversations, etc., the higher their value is in the eyes of that subject. However, in our view, the SQL content should not be limited to only personal values. People appreciate when society has law-enforcement agencies, government agencies, agencies of health care, culture, and educational and other public institutions. Another question is what significance people give to those public institutes in their lives, and one of the tasks of designing SQL is to assess this question.

Above, we repeatedly noted that the *life world*, i.e., the world of images, which is perceived by the person directly and in which the person lives, is not the same as the so-called *objective world*, i.e., the real world of objects independent of who perceives them and how, which can only barely be imagined. While the objective world is something original and fundamental, the life worlds of different people that reflect it are manifold, illusory, and ephemeral. Those are the worlds of completely different natures. They exist not outside of people, but inside the human mind. The impression that every such world has on its owner is so vivid and compelling that that person does not hesitate to identify that world with the real, objective world. Of course, there is a mistake here. Another source of differences between the objective and life worlds is a system of human values and significances attributed to them. The mind cannot relate images that arise in the mind dispassionately, distantly. Guided by feelings, tastes, and preferences, the mind brings its characteristic representations about their relative importance to the available panorama of images of the outside world; it evaluates them and, thus, forms a personal aspect of perception that is different from the real-life aspects of cognizable human reality.

Does the said have anything to do with the problem of studying and measuring the SQL? Our answer to this question is positive: both the kinds of differences require qualitative and quantitative assessments, and science, including philosophy, sooner or later will deal with that. The first kind of differences brings inevitable *uncertainty* to human life, which is accompanied by *surprises*, sometimes pleasant, sometimes unpleasant and even tragic.

We do not equate uncertainty to happenstance. It is clear that each of unexpected phenomena has a cause, but it can almost never be foreseen. Is uncertainty of death threats and outcomes a consequence of the fact that accidents observed in the life world are a consequence of the processes, the causes of which are

rooted in the objective world intractable to direct observation? Although we all know that sooner or later people's lives end, the unexpected character of this completion reinforces already present in the depths of the soul of every human concern, anxiety and fear, and sometimes terror of dying and death itself, especially in old age. In our opinion, the fear of parting with life is a significant negative feeling that should be reflected in the human SQL.

Psychological wellbeing. If we limit ourselves to only the life world familiar to everyone and only the effect generated by the values combined with subjective significance of each of them, then this effect becomes the source of one of the most important characteristics of human mental life called SQL. As far as we know, no quantitative indicator of SQL adequate to this characterization has yet been designed. It appears that development of science in that direction can be assessed as very intense, but with one important reservation. Fundamental and applied research and empirical development for decades were primarily separated, in isolation from each other. As a result, scientists working in the field of empirical studies measure not quality of life, but a kind of *related* indicators of the so-called psychological wellbeing (PWB).³ In the United States, for example, they started to be developed since the late 1940s. These are indicators of feeling life satisfaction (i.e., its effectiveness, productivity, and success), human happiness, indicators of mental maturity, personal integrity indicators, mental health indicators, and others.

Special attention of psychologists was drawn to the first two groups of indicators. They were quickly improved and are now widely published around the world. At the beginning the measurement of satisfac-

³ Socioeconomic scientific literature often contains terms *material wellbeing* and *social wellbeing*. In our opinion, both of them are faulty. For example, personal material wellbeing is understood as availability of material goods and services, that is, aggregation of objects and processes existing (occurring) outside of the person, in the objective world, and owned by the person. All of them are beyond personal immediate reach. The only thing available to the person is their mental images present in his or her mind. Only they (and not material goods) can generate feelings of wellbeing or dissatisfaction in the person. Similar arguments can be given in relation to the term *social wellbeing*. Therefore, the only justifiable term is *psychological wellbeing*, which, inter alia, incorporates intangible images of the surrounding material objects and services, as well as images generated by the surrounding social environment.

Another remark is linguistic in nature and refers to the term "благополучие." Russian psychologists use it as an equivalent of the Anglophone term *wellbeing*, the literal Russian translation of which is an inconvenient for use but correct collocation *хорошее бытие*. In our opinion, a well-chosen term should be self-explanatory, that is, disclose its meaning on its own, without further comment. From this standpoint, the term *благополучие* is not the best. If the life of a certain person is described by the word *благополучие*, one immediately thinks that it is not about quantity and quality of goods (images) that fill person's life, but rather about life filled with goods from some external source. To prevent this kind of confusion, we propose reviving an outdated and obsolete term *благоденствие*.

tion, If a questionnaire was administered that included a single question in which each respondent was asked to assess the degree of satisfaction with their own life at points that use the conventional scale, then in papers published in the early 1960s, when empirical studies of life satisfaction approached peak popularity, the range of phenomena included in the concept of satisfaction was already covering components, such as the position occupied by the individual in the range from vigor to apathy, determination and perseverance, the ratio between the desired and achieved purpose, self-image, mood at the time of the survey, etc. Recently, life satisfaction has become the object of broad international comparisons [12]. In 2008, one of the American versions of the questionnaire for measuring the life satisfaction was adapted to Russian conditions [13].

Another indicator of PWB, an indicator of personal happiness appeared in the United States around the same time as the previous one. The history of its formation contains an episode worth mentioning. In 1969, work [14] was published, which is dedicated to the PWB structure and is considered by American psychologists to be a classic work. The happiness indicator occupied a key position in this work as a result of an extensive search for the PWB indicator, the dynamics of which would most fully reflect the social changes taking place in the country.⁴ The final choice was affected by the appeal of the author to the work of the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle [15], which states that the highest good, which can be achieved through human effort, is *eudaimonia*, a term that was translated from Greek into English as happiness. However, after a decade and a half, it turned out that this translation is inaccurate. An article published in 1984 shows that, according to a more accurate interpretation, we should talk about something completely different; feelings that a person experiences during the implementation of congenital potential abilities [16, p. 16]. But this finding did not affect the interpretation of PWB in the hedonistic manner, that is, as individual happiness. In subsequent years, application of the happiness indicator rapidly spread in the world and reached the United Nations level. In March 2016, the organization presented another rating for 156 nations ranked by the share of people who consider themselves to be happy in the total population of each country. Denmark constantly takes the first place in this ranking, while Russia is 56th [17].

For a long time, a wide range of empirical studies responsible for some progress in measuring PWB was combined (and in many respects continues to be combined) with serious methodological shortcomings [18]. First and foremost, these include the fact that this progress has never had a profound theoretical

⁴ Upon discovering that positive and negative facts in human life form two independent set of events, Bredborn defined the indicator *happiness* as a balance of the feelings they generate.

basis. Even the content and structure of the concepts central to this area of knowledge, namely, as a rule, life satisfaction and happiness were considered to be intuitively clear with no demand for strict definitions. However, is it possible in these circumstances to compare the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches? Another important drawback is that in many applied studies of PWB there is a substitution of concepts: not wellbeing as such is measured but the absence of illnesses, which are equated, as well as the absence of anxiety, fear, depression, various phobias, hysteria, obsessions, etc. This is a poor interpretation because it completely ignores the individual creativity and achievement of personal objectives. And one more important thing. Empirical studies of PWB have a tendency not to take into account or seriously underestimate the possibilities of continuous human mental development throughout the life cycle. In particular, this was reflected in the fact that PWBs were associated more often with the maintenance and preservation of preceding manners and attitudes, rather than successfully overcoming new problems and challenges. Thus, the threat of excluding such an important component of its growth as an individual's ability for self-realization and development from the dynamics of wellbeing was created and escalated.

Thus, after half a century of efforts to understand and measure the quality of life, science was facing an unacceptable, contradictory situation. On one hand, basic research has constantly replenished and to some extent created a thorough potential of knowledge about SQL, including the concept, the principle of formation, and measurement indicators. On the other hand, isolating itself from this knowledge, applied science, which is supposed to present specific possibilities of the practical use of new knowledge for the benefit of people and society, claimed unjustified independence.

Approach to measuring psychological wellbeing. A solution to that issue was proposed by prominent American psychologist C. Ryff [18]. She appealed to some already known scientific literature, which was largely ignored in the study of PWB. In an effort to fill the gaps in its theoretical validity, she focused on current trends of the psychological thought that might be closely related to the problem. First of all, this is the theory of psychosocial development stages proposed by Erik Erikson [19] and works of his followers on the theory of human development throughout the life cycle. Hereinafter, this includes the so-called clinical theories of personal development, i.e., self-actualization theory [11], the theory of a fully functioning personality [20] and the theory of the individuation process [21], as well as the theory of personality formation [22]. In addition, Ryff believed that works of M. Yahoda [23] and her followers in the field of mental health should be highly praised in terms of improving the performance of PWB indicators.

That preliminary phase of the work resulted in the emergence of a large volume of new positive information (that is, about ways to *improve* wellbeing). The generalization and systematization of that information, which are necessary for further empirical research, were due to contact points in PWB structures discussed by various authors. It turned out that some features of human mental life are considered from different sides by almost all of the authors mentioned above. According to Ryff, these features taken together should make up the concept of *psychological wellbeing*. The six aspects of mental life are self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environment management, purpose in life, and personal growth. Ryff argues that they are introduced into scientific circulation for the first time; even if some scientists used them before her, it was in a very different sense. Independently determining the position for each of the six sides of their mental life,⁵ the respondent thus formulates an idea of his or her own PWB as a whole. However, it is not sufficient to move to measuring the latter. One requires so-called *operationalization*, i.e., tools that connect empirical research needs with the theory. In Ryff, one of these tools is the maximum allowable range within which respondents' attitude towards the corresponding sides of their lives and their actual positions can vary. The boundaries of the ranges are defined by their meaningful qualitative description. Ryff thinks of every dimension of wellbeing as a scale and the respondent's position as a point on that scale characterized by a number of conventional points. Thus, scientific circulation is introduced with a new concept, i.e., *space of psychological wellbeing*, the coordinate system of which is represented by six scales, and the actual wellbeing of each respondent is represented by a point in this space. *The meaningful interpretation of the six mental life scales developed by C. Ryff is as follows.*

Self-Acceptance. The highest score characterizes the respondent as a person who has a positive attitude towards him or herself; acknowledges and accepts all aspects of their personality, including good and bad qualities; and appreciates their past. Respondents with the lowest score is not satisfied with themselves, disappointed in the events of their past, concerned about some of their personal qualities, and wants to be different from what he or she is.

Positive relationships with others. The highest score indicates warm, gratifying, trusting relationships with others; the ability to care for the wellbeing of others, to deeply empathize, bond, and to establish close rela-

⁵ To identify these elements of wellbeing, Ryff uses different terms, including *sides* or *facets of mental life*, *components*, *dimensions*, and others; in our opinion, some prefer the term *dimensions*. We believe that *facets of mental life* is the most appropriate term. For example, a term like *components* could even be misleading, and we suggest calculating the value of the respondent's wellbeing by adding quantitative (score) estimates for all components.

tionships; and understanding that human relations are based on mutual concessions.

Respondents with the lowest scores are limited in the trust relationships with others; it is hard for them to be open and to show warmth and care for others; in interpersonal relationships, they are usually isolated and feel frustration, as they are not willing to compromise in order to maintain important connections with others.

Autonomy. A high score on this scale characterizes that the respondent is autonomous, independent, and able to resist the outer desire to act in a certain way. Respondents self-regulate their own behavior and evaluate themselves according to personal criteria. Respondents with the lowest scores depend on the opinions and evaluations of others; in making important decisions, they rely on the opinions of others; they are prone to society's attempts to make them act in a certain way.

Environment management. High scores indicate that the respondent is confident in their skills and competence to cope with daily activities, controls a complex set of external activities, leverages emerging opportunities, and is able to capture or create conditions and circumstances that are suitable to meet personal needs and goals. Low scores characterize the respondent as someone who has difficulty organizing daily activities, feels unable to change or improve circumstances, recklessly deals with opening opportunities, and lacks a sense of control over what is happening around them.

Purpose in life. Respondents with high scores on this scale have a purpose in life and a sense of direction; they believe that the past and present life has meaning; we adhere to beliefs that are the source of purpose in life; and they have intentions and goals for their entire lives. Respondents with low scores have no meaning in life; they have little purpose or intent; they have no sense of direction and see no purpose in their past life; they have no prospects or beliefs that define the meaning of life.

Personal growth. Respondents with the highest scores have a sense of ongoing development, they perceive themselves as growing and self-fulfilling, open to new experiences, feeling a sense of realization of their potential; they observe over time that they and their actions improve; and they change in accordance with their own knowledge and achievements. Respondents with the lowest score are aware of their lack of development. They do not feel a sense of self-improvement or self-fulfillment; they experience boredom and have no interest in life, and they feel the inability to establish new relationships or change their behavior.

Questionnaire for the PWB scale of C. Ryff is another tool designed to identify and measure the severity of the main components of PWB in the respondent's position. It includes a series of statements (points), and by evaluating (in conventional

points) each, the respondent chooses one of the following six proposed answers (and the corresponding number of points): completely disagree (1 point), mainly disagree (2 points), partially disagree (3 points), partially agree (4 points), generally agree (5 points), and completely agree (6 points). There are several variants of the questionnaire: including 120, 84, 54, and 18 points. The most common version is of 84 points, in which each of the 6 scales accounts for 14 propositions. As an illustration, we present the shortest questionnaire, which consists of 18 statements (three statements per scale). It was designed for large-scale national surveys that typically use the telephone.

C. Ryff's Questionnaire for Population-Based Survey in 1995

1. I am inclined to be influenced by people with strong convictions.
2. I tend to feel responsible for the situation in which I find myself.
3. I think it is important to deal with new circumstances that cast doubt on what I think about myself and the world.
4. Maintaining close relations is difficult for me and causes irritation.
5. I live day by day and do not think about the future.
6. When I think of my life, I am happy with the way everything turned out.
7. I trust my opinion, even if it is contrary to the general opinion.
8. Requirements of everyday life often plunge me into despair.
9. I see life as a continuous process of learning, change, and growth.
10. People tend to consider me to be a person who is willing to share their time with others.
11. Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.
12. I like most aspects of my personality.
13. I assess myself based on what I think is important but not what others consider to be important.
14. I am quite capable of coping with multiple responsibilities in my daily life.
15. I have long refused to implement major improvements or changes in my life.
16. I have rarely had warm and trusting relationships with others.
17. I sometimes feel as if I have done everything needed to do in life.
18. I often feel frustrated regarding my life achievements.

This questionnaire contains two types of statements. First, there are statements implying that the more (less) they comply with the respondent's convic-

tions, the higher (lower) their assigned score. These are statements nos. 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. Second, there are remaining statements (nos. 1, 4, 5, 8, 15, 16, 17, and 18), which are constructed based on the opposite principle. The lower a certain statement corresponds to the conviction of the respondent, the higher the assigned score. In addition, the relative position of the statements in the questionnaire is specifically devoid of any order, their sequence is random. In psychological questionnaires, both of the methods are in widespread use and aim to increase the reliability of information extracted from the survey and reduce all sorts of fraud, in particular preventing the sometimes encountered attempts by some respondents to embellish their inner world.

A noteworthy distinctive feature of C. Ryff's approach consists of avoiding defining the PWB composition in an a priori expert way and transitioning to the formation of the content of this concept based on (1) accumulated achievements in fundamental science and (2) systematic evidence of the justification of the steps taken using statistical methods. We already mentioned the first characteristic feature of that approach, which brings the meaningful interpretation of the six scales she designed. The second feature (correlation analysis of the results of the application of the questionnaire) covers the study of statistical relationships between newly introduced scales and conventional indicators of wellbeing, such as the balance of positive and negative emotions, life satisfaction, and the happiness indicator, and the analysis of relationships within the system of new scales. Calculations by C. Ryff showed that, in both cases, the correlation coefficients have the expected sign and, in most cases, the expected value, which generally confirms the validity and scientific justification of her proposals. The only caveat concerns high values of the correlation coefficients. The level of some of them equal 0.7 and above (as in the case of the scales, self-acceptance and purpose in life or self-acceptance and environment management), may call into question the correctness of the dimensions of the psychological wellbeing space, since it raises suspicion that some of the scales is redundant. However, C. Ryff convincingly shows that, in this particular case, the doubts are groundless.

It is convenient from the point of view of various kinds of empirical research, as well as measurements of human PWB that, in our opinion, the remarkable fact that the number of coordinates that in the model of Ryff define how well a particular respondent lives is relatively small (six). This enabled her to successfully analyze and visualize changes in the structure of PWB of the US population according to age, gender, and cultural background. Comparing the three age groups, namely, junior (respondents aged 25–29), medium (30–64), and older (65 and older), she showed that, usually, with increasing age, the scales that reflect *purpose in life* and *personal growth* steadily decline, while the scales that correspond to *positive relations with oth-*

ers and *environment management* gradually increase. The remaining two scales, *self-acceptance* and *autonomy*, are nearly independent of a person's age. Then, contrary to existing theories, women of all ages see themselves higher than men in matters related to *positive relations with others* and *personal growth* [24]. Finally, comparing a sample for the middle-aged US group with a sociodemographically similar sample for South Korea, she confirmed the hypothesis that representatives of Western culture, especially women, assign the highest scores to *personal growth*, while representatives of Eastern culture above all value *positive relations with others* [24].

The low dimension of the PWB space constructed by C. Ryff is attractive because it creates an important precedent, i.e., the fairly complete (in her opinion) characterization of how well (or poorly) people live, can be represented by instantiating just six sides of actual life of each of them. In the first part of this article, we pointed out this possibility, referring to the construction of the SQL space formed by some of the most fundamental value coordinates. Studies by C. Ryff suggest that these coordinates can be and will most likely be proposed and put into scientific use in the foreseeable future.

Currently, C. Ryff's approach has been adopted by many researchers and the methodology she developed for PWB measurement is widely used in research practice in many countries. The most common version of the questionnaire (consisting of 84 statements) provided the basis for two Russian versions; the questionnaire was adapted to Russian conditions in 2005 [25] and 2007 [26].

On possibilities of improving the approach to SQL measurement. For multidimensional SQL (or PWB) values to be the object of targeted policies on the part of the social state, their structure must first be defined; then, it is necessary to find out precisely which aspects of life require government intervention. In our opinion, the closest to the scientifically grounded and simultaneously practical solution to this problem was offered by Professor C. Ryff. She argues that speaking confidently about how well people live is only possible when the six aspects of life of each respondent are preliminary evaluated.

While it is clear that this circumstance plays a key role in her concept, specialists have not yet formed a final opinion about the number of these dimensions, their content, and even terminology. Clarification of the terminology is facilitated by comments of Spanish psychologists M. Merino and J. Privado [27, p. 46]. They state that C. Ryff grouped six newly introduced scales and *defined* the resulting group as *psychological wellbeing*. Of course, *to group* is not a strict term, but in Russian it usually implies the presence of a certain unifying principle (a group of students, an organized criminal group, etc.). Does the model of C. Ryff imply

this kind of principle? In our opinion, the answer is no. The publication of the same Spanish psychologists suggests that even the nature of the aspects of human life included in the specified group is different, i.e., five of them are psychological and one is sociological. A situation in which PWB is defined by a set of elements of the same nature would be preferable.

A group that involves elements of a different nature is probably meaningless as a whole.⁶ Therefore, the selection of elements to be included in the wellbeing model must be preceded by specification of the nature of wellbeing. If the included elements have a uniform nature, it is obvious that wellbeing has the same nature. If the nature of elements is heterogenous, it is pointless talking about the nature of wellbeing. However, apparently due to the previously described circumstances, Ryff acted differently; she collected suitable elements from different sources, probably without paying attention to differences in their nature, and then *called* the resulting group *psychological* (?) wellbeing. That raises the following natural questions: What is the theoretical idea of psychological wellbeing in C. Ryff's representation? Does it exist at all? And, if so, how much is it distorted in the process of practical implementation? It seems that answers to these questions would make it possible to give her methodology more definite meaning.

Demanding that the aspects of human life that determine the degree of wellbeing of the respondent had the same nature, we believe that not only psychological and non-psychological nature should be distinguished, making a choice in favor of the former, but also taking into account the fact that the very psychological nature is very heterogeneous. What is the nature of wellbeing if a portion of its constituent aspects of life has an emotional and sensitive nature and the other cognitive? In our opinion, the essence of these two types of mental activity is so different that the answer to this question is meaningless.

Is the value-based approach that we support compatible with the C. Ryff's approach? It is partially compatible. The value-based approach implies solving the problem of searching within the emotional world of the respondent for a minimum set of significant feelings (or values) required for a fairly complete description of how good (or bad) their life is. In our opinion, the central result of C. Ryff is the identification and meaningful interpretation of the set of aspects

⁶ Widespread use of this group as the minimum food basket for measuring and studying poverty in the country is primarily due to the fact that the set of food products has great unifying meaning, which transforms it into one of the most important tools of social policy. If we add to the basket, for example, Christmas decorations, it will have no sense and the usefulness of the basket will be reduced to zero.

of human life that she has defined and which makes it possible to assess the extent of a person's general wellbeing; whether it is minimal or not is unknown. However, because there are only six aspects, it is unlikely that we are seriously mistaken when assuming that it is practically minimal. In this case, one would assume that the considered sets are close to a certain degree, as well as try to use C. Ryff's set as a pragmatic tool for measuring SQL.

The main obstacle on this path has a technical nature and is associated with the just-discussed structural problems. The quality of life in general, as well as each of the aspects of psychological life having a significant weight in its formation, should have, as has been repeatedly pointed out, the same (emotional) nature. However, if we turn to the concept of wellbeing introduced by C. Ryff, this condition is not met: the emotional nature is inherent in about one-third of all the components that form it: (*self-acceptance*, emotional aspects of the dimension *relations with others*, a sense of certain freedom from conventions that dictate how to behave in everyday life in the dimension *autonomy*, as well as the sense of direction and the meaning of life in the dimension *purpose in life*). In the given questionnaire, the listed positions are statement nos. 4, 10, 12, 13, 16, and 18. It is the listed aspects of life and their fragments that can be used for direct inclusion into the content of the concept of SQL. As for the rest of aspects and fragments (nonemotional nature), their inclusion requires further study.

To illustrate, let us take the statement no. 14 from the questionnaire given above: "I cope quite well with multiple responsibilities in everyday life." If this statement correctly describes the corresponding fragment of the actual life experience of the respondent (here, we also include their career), he or she will assess the proposed situation as 6 points (strongly agree). The question is whether this high score says anything about their quality of life, whether it contributes to the formation of their opinion of how satisfactory their life is. It is doubtful. Maybe since childhood, the respondent was dreaming of favorite activities, e.g., about being an artist. However, the circumstances were such that the dream remained unrealized. Becoming an accountant, he or she is perfectly comfortable with the unloved profession, but never experienced the joy of it. Therefore, if the respondent is now offered with an emotional statement derived from the considered one: "I like to do many duties in my everyday life," then most likely it will cause no positive emotions and it will get assessment of 2 points at maximum. This is the assessment with which we offer to include the unemotional statement no. 14 into the emotional space of SQL of the respondent. Thus, the path of the SQL space formation that we propose based on the PWB

space of C. Ryff includes a reformulation of a large part of statements of the questionnaire (that is, all unemotional statements), in which they would acquire emotional character without losing the content orientation.

Among the issues that arise from the work of C. Ryff, we need to pay attention to the following. Let us recall what considerations underlay the selection of the six key aspects of human life that form the foundation of her approach. In the course of studying the extensive literature devoted to clarifying the concept of a *good life*, C. Ryff found that most of the leading representatives of the world psychological thought concentrated their attention on a very limited number of the same aspects of psychological life. Based on this fact, C. Ryff decided that, taken together, these sides form a set sufficient for assessing individual PWBs. Is this decision justified? Every leading psychologist Ryff took into consideration was a scientist who proposed their own concept of prosperity built based on the unified position of the author and a creative idea embodied therein. Yes, each of the original concepts had a quite prominent place for the six widely discussed dimensions of human life. However, they only form *part of this concept, albeit an organic part*, and are served each time so that, along with the other dimensions, it gave birth to an entity. In our opinion, it is questionable to consider them in isolation from the concept from which they were born and for them to be taken together a status of a new independent concept.

Thus, in our opinion, C. Ryff's studies in the field of the theory and measurement of psychological well-being have not yet been completed. Taking her set of six fundamental aspects of human life, we believe that it is most likely insufficient and should be improved. One of the facts confirm the recent emergence of proposals by certain psychologists to expand the C. Ryff's set, which includes features like vitality, curiosity, and others [27]. However, another thing is more important. Over the last decade and especially since the publication in 2010 of a report prepared by Nobel laureates Amartya Sen and John Stiglitz at the request of the former French President Nicolas Sarkozy called "Report of the Commission on Main Indicators of Economic Activity and Social Progress" [28], the interest in constructing statistical indicators to confidently judge how well people live in different countries began to rise rapidly [29]. It visibly manifests in the concentration of efforts of specialists who aim to create more sophisticated indicators of quality of life and wellbeing, which have a central place in the report.

REFERENCES

1. A. A. Poduzov and V. S. Yazykova, "On the theory and measurement of quality of life," *Stud. Russ. Econ. Dev.* **25** (4), 379–388 (2014).
2. P. Ekman, *Psychology of Emotions. I Know What You Feel* (Piter, St. Petersburg, 2015) [in Russian].
3. L. Chompi, "Feelings, affects, and affectology. Their place in our understanding of the world and humans," *Ekzistents. Anal., Byull.*, No. 4, 217–238 (2013).
4. R. A. Emmons, *The Psychology of Ultimate Concerns: Motivation and Spirituality in Personality* (Guilford Press, 1999).
5. *Brief Philosophical Dictionary* (RG-Press, Moscow, 2014) [in Russian].
6. A. Lengle, "Feelings are an awakened life. Justification and practice of the existential-analytical theory of emotions," *Ekzistents. Anal., Byull.*, No. 2, 167–181 (2010).
7. A. Lengle, E. M. Ukolova, and V. B. Shumskii, *Modern Existential Analysis. History, Theory, Practice, and Research* (Logos, Moscow, 2014) [in Russian].
8. S. V. Krivtsova, "Comments on the article by A. Langle [6]," *Ekzistents. Anal., Byull.*, No. 2, 172 (2010).
9. V. Frankl, *Suffering from the Meaninglessness of Life. Topical Psychotherapy* (Sib. Univ. izd., Novosibirsk, 2014) [in Russian].
10. S. Iokhan, "Communication and value," in *Proc. International Conference Values and Communication in Modern Society*, Ed. by S. V. Klyagin (Izd. Politekhn. Univ., St. Petersburg, 2012), pp. 5–11.
11. A. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (Harper & Brothers, 1954).
12. The Index of Satisfaction with Life in the Countries of the World. Center for Humanitarian Technologies (2016). <http://www.gtmarket.ru>.
13. E. N. Osin and D. A. Leont'ev, "Approbation of Russian-language versions of two scales for rapid assessment of subjective well-being," in *Proc. III All-Russian Sociological Congress* (Inst. Sots. RAN, Moscow, 2008). <https://publications.hse.ru>.
14. N. M. Bradburn, *The Structure of Psychological Well-Being* (Aldine, Chicago, 1969), pp. 5–6.
15. Aristotel, *Works in Four Volumes*, Vol. 4 (Mysl', Moscow, 1983), pp. 53–293 [in Russian].
16. A. S. Waterman, *The Psychology of Individualism* (Praeger, New York, 1984).
17. The Happiest Countries Are Named. <http://www.ria.ru/society/html>. Cited March 16, 2016.
18. C. D. Ryff, "Beyond Ponce De Leon and life satisfaction: New directions in quest of successful ageing," *Int. J. Behav. Dev.* **12** (1), 35–55 (1989).
19. E. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle. Psychological Issues* (1959). <http://www.studfiles.ru>.
20. C. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*, 2nd ed. (Mariner Books, 1995).
21. C. G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (N.Y. Harcourt, 1933). <http://www.slideshare.net>.

22. G. W. Allport, *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1961).
23. M. Jahoda, *Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health* (Basic Books, New York, 1958).
24. C. D. Ryff, "Psychological well-being in adult life," *Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci.* **4** (4), 99–104 (1995).
25. T. D. Shevelenkova and T. P. Fesenko, "Psychological well-being of the person," *Psikhol. Diagn.*, No. 3, 95–129 (2005).
26. N. N. Lepeshinskii, "Adaptation of C. Ryff's questionnaire Scale of Psychological Well-Being," *Psikhol. Zh.*, No. 3, 24–37 (2007).
27. M. D. Merino and J. Privado, "Positive psychological functioning. Evidence for a new construct and its measurement," *An. Psicol.* **31** (1), 45–54 (2015).
28. A. Sen, J. Stiglitz, and J. Fitoussy, *Mis-Measuring Our Lives: Why GDP Does not Add up: The Report on the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress* (N.Y. New Press Distributed by Perseus Distribution, 2010). <http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussy.fr>.
29. O. A. Kislitsina, *Measuring the Quality of Life/Well-Being: International Experience* (Inst. ekon. RAN, Moscow, 2016) [in Russian].

Translated by K. Lazarev