

Happiness: Towards a philosophical approach to economic wealth

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Abstract:

Like all knowledge, wealth in economics poses problems of genesis, identification, scientific, representation, scope, and so on. To study the complexity of this paradigm and, eventually, to demystify it, we need to place it within different disciplinary fields. This interdisciplinarity consists of deciphering the inner workings of this conceptual and representational alchemy of intangible capital.

Similarly, research into happiness as economic wealth is still in its infancy. There is still no unanimously accepted philosophical or scientific construct. From a conceptual point of view, happiness is a paradigm that coagulates a multitude of designations, to the point where it is complex to analyze it from a philosophical, epistemological, and historical perspective. Studying the history of the genesis of economic happiness requires us to call on the disciplines that drive this approach, in particular philosophy. This disciplinary field would enable us to assimilate the archaeology of philosophy and, ultimately, the intellectual trajectory of our knowledge to demystify the complexity of economic wealth from a purely philosophical angle. Our article attempts to answer the following question: To what extent does happiness constitute a complex object of study for wealth creation?

Keywords: Happiness, wealth in economics, demystifying complexity.

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السعادة: نحو مقاربة فلسفية للثروة الاقتصادية

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الملخص

مثل كل المعرفة، تطرح الثروة في الاقتصاد مشاكل تتعلق بالنشأة، والتحديد، والعلم، والتمثيل، والنطاق، وما إلى ذلك. ولدراسة مدى تعقيد هذا النموذج، وإزالة الغموض عنه في نهاية المطاف، نحتاج إلى وضعه ضمن مجالات تخصصية مختلفة. يتكون هذا التنوع بين التخصصات من فك رموز الأعمال الداخلية لهذه الكيمياء المفاهيمية والتمثيلية لرأس المال غير الملموس.

وبالمثل، فإن البحث في السعادة باعتبارها ثروة اقتصادية لا يزال في مراحله الأولى. لا يوجد حتى الآن أي بناء فلسفي أو علمي مقبول بالإجماع. من وجهة نظر مفاهيمية، فإن السعادة هي نموذج يضم العديد من التسميات، إلى درجة أنه من الصعب تحليلها من منظور فلسفي ومعرفي وتاريخي. إن دراسة تاريخ نشأة السعادة الاقتصادية تتطلب منا الاستعانة بالتخصصات التي تحرك هذا النهج، وخاصة الفلسفة. من شأن هذا المجال التأديبي

أن يمكننا من استيعاب علم آثار الفلسفة، وفي نهاية المطاف، المسار الفكري لمعرفتنا لإزالة الغموض عن تعقيد الثروة الاقتصادية من زاوية فلسفية بحثية. يحاول مقالنا الإجابة على السؤال التالي: إلى أي مدى تشكل السعادة موضوعاً معقداً للدراسة لخلق الثروة؟

الكلمات المفتاحية: السعادة، الثروة في الاقتصاد، إزالة الغموض عن التعقيد.

Introduction

The study and understanding of a paradigm as vast as wealth in economics cannot be achieved without opening up our knowledge and/or ignoring philosophical, epistemological, historical, theoretical, economic, econometric and other detours. Our approach consists of highlighting the genesis of intangible capital, dissecting its evolution, its components and its impact on wealth creation. This intellectual approach helps to demystify the complexity of intangible capital.

In particular, philosophical instruction concerns the role of happiness as the foundation of the notion of immaterial wealth. The conceptualization of happiness is embodied in philosophical foundations from antiquity to the present day, namely: Plato (no date), Bentham (1781; 1834), Kant (1785; 1855), Al-Fârâbî (1781), Halv y (1901), Schopenhauer (1912), Freud (1929), Michalos (1985), Citot (2006), IZA institute of labor economics (2009), Paturet (2012) and Senik (2014).

To examine the theme of happiness is first and foremost to ask the question of man in the face of this paradigm, both in terms of its genesis, its foundation and its evolution throughout history. In order to identify the multiple aspects of this economic wealth, it seems necessary to link it with other concepts and disciplines. The aim is to study the interactions that exist and that can be a source of ambiguity and equivocation for anyone.

In order to apprehend an in-depth conceptualization of happiness, it is necessary to assume it to be a polysemous concept common to philosophical, epistemological, economic, ideological, cultural, anthropological, sociological, technical, legal and other disciplines. From this perspective, happiness is identified as a complex form of knowledge, with references in a large number of disciplines. It generates ambiguity in economic science because, generally speaking, debates around this paradigm are confined to a single discipline. However, to understand it and dispel ambiguities, it needs to be integrated into a multi-disciplinary approach, to facilitate understanding of its various contours and its capacity to create economic wealth.

Philosophically speaking, the conceptualization of new wealth in economics has given rise to the concept of happiness, considered as a form of immaterial wealth within a society. The philosophical debates surrounding this concept are complex, from the philosophers of antiquity to the present day, whether in terms of its representation, identification, measurement, codification, etc., in order to establish specific criteria common to all individuals. The content of happiness is indeterminate. It is complex to identify an agreement on a particular and precise economic wealth that would constitute happiness. The conceptualization of happiness within the philosophical sphere would enable us to better assimilate the ambiguity of this concept and its capacity to create economic wealth. In this vein, the philosophical approach provides a detailed analysis of the concept of happiness as a basis for wealth creation, through two theories.

Our article attempts to answer the following question: To what extent is happiness a complex object of study for wealth creation?

Throughout this article, we will refer primarily to the authors of this discipline to demystify the complexity of happiness as economic wealth. We will refer to philosophical advances from the philosophers of antiquity to contemporary philosophical thought. This will shed light on how this "good" and this form of wealth can be produced, and how it can be attained. We will demonstrate that this form of immaterial wealth poses a certain complexity and ambiguity in the history of philosophical thought.

1. The wealth of happiness as a specific good

All disciplines and methodical, scientific research are unanimous about the purpose of the various fields of science. The idea is that the fields of investigation seem to have in view a "bien" they wish to achieve. Understanding the nature of the "bien" to be investigated provides insight into the characteristics of the "biens" assimilated to each science. The perfect representation of the "bien" is the fundamental object of all sciences, arts, and disciplines.

The purposes of the disciplines differ, which explains the divergence in terms of representation of the "bien" about all sciences and fields of thought. At the level of some disciplines, particularly philosophical ones, the result is more important than the processes that bring them about. To demonstrate the divergence of ends and goods, Aristotle (undated, p. 36) states that « health is the goal of medicine; the ship is the goal of naval architecture victory is the goal of military science; wealth, that of economic science ».

Human actions converge towards a finality with a specific goal that each individual wants to achieve for himself and, through which, the human being seeks everything else. The common finality of our wishes and desires is the "bien", more precisely, the supreme good. To this end, knowledge of purpose as well as the supreme "bien" that man wants to achieve and of fundamental importance to individuals.

When we associate "bien" with all the sciences, one concept emerges and is unanimously agreed upon within the scientific community, that of happiness (Aristotle, undated). Achieving this wealth means that the individual leads his or her life well; and acts well in terms of making supposedly rational choices and decisions. Happiness is an immaterial wealth that can be represented as « a definitive, perfect good, self-sufficient in itself since it is the end of all possible acts of humanity. Happiness is unquestionably the greatest of goods, the supreme good» (Aristotle, undated, p. 51). This immaterial wealth corresponds to a certain activity "of the soul" consistent with human virtue and the ethical dimension. As for the other "biens", they are necessarily included in happiness.

This reasoning evokes the divergence in perception and representation of the wealth "of happiness" from one individual to another, due to the fact that man is multiple; he is plural. Thus, « When we assimilate a science to a specific good and for a specific purpose, the logic is the same concerning happiness; each individual has his own representation of this wealth, and it is with regard to the essence and very nature of the concept of happiness that opinions diverge» (Aristotle, undated, p. 40).

On an individual level, each person seeks their own happiness and, therefore, their own intangible wealth. Some individuals classify happiness in material "biens" such as material wealth and pleasure, on the other hand, other individuals place happiness beyond apparent and physical goods; this is immaterial wealth.

The representation of happiness therefore varies from person to person; when an individual is ill, he represents happiness in health, while a person who suffers from material poverty, places happiness in tangible wealth. On the other hand, a person who is ignorant and aware of his ignorance directs his wealth towards intellectualism. The representation of happiness depends on the image that the individual gives to a specific good, precisely, on the image that an individual himself makes of it, and on the value attributed to this wealth.

Similarly, happiness can be an ideal of the imagination. In this sense, « human happiness is not an ideal of reason but of the imagination, which rests essentially on empirical foundations. Man vainly hopes to determine an action through which he could obtain the totality of an effectively infinite series of consequences» (Kant, 1785, p. 54).

For this author, while everyone seeks happiness in their own way, none of them really knows what would make them happy. The construction of a codification that presents a general and definitive assent to happiness becomes even more complicated. This intangible wealth is not universal, and there is no standard model that would suit everyone. In fact, happiness takes the form of a lack. It is an ephemeral "good", and therefore indeterminate. Human beings find it difficult to determine with certainty what might well make them happy. The construction of intangible wealth becomes complex.

The human being seeks to be happy in the life he leads and to remain happy. But at the same time, they are unable to achieve happiness. For Freud (1929, p. 14), "only contrast is capable of relieving any person of intense enjoyment, i.e., he needs lack, unhappiness, this feeling puts him in tension". It is the ephemeral satisfaction of this tension that this author calls happiness. He considers that man can only enjoy pleasure in a state of contradiction and conflict. Stability provides only limited enjoyment. In other words, the human capacity for happiness is limited by its very nature. Human faculties for happiness are already limited by their constructs. There is no pleasure in itself, only pleasure about displeasure.

Unhappiness, on the other hand, is more accessible to the human being (Freud, (1929, p. 14) calls happiness «that which results from a rather sudden satisfaction of needs having reached a high tension and is only possible by its nature as an episodic phenomenon». Any persistence of a situation that gives rise to desire, enjoyment and pleasure generates only ephemeral well-being; only the contrast is capable of dispensing intense enjoyment, while the state itself provides only a limited quantity. This ephemeral nature makes it impossible to capitalize on this wealth in the long term, since its value may diminish or even disappear.

In phase opposition, Al-Farabi sees happiness "as a good desired for its own sake, which does not serve to attain another good at a later date; it represents the supreme finality of all the goods that man wishes to attain" (Al-Farabi, 1895, p. 157). According to another approach, happiness is «

the ultimate goal that does not serve as a springboard to satisfy any other good". He also adds that "happiness can be achieved through voluntary acts, which can be on the one hand cognitive and characterized by its immaterial aspect, and on the other, through tangible and physical acts»(Al-Farabi, 1895, p. 80).

Beyond this concert of common opinions, Aristotle (no date) considers that there are three ways of representing happiness. Individuals find happiness according to the type of life they lead: a materialistic life (1), a political and social life (2) and an intellectual life (3).

- For vulgar and coarse people, the economic wealth of happiness is represented in the satisfaction of their pleasures. The distinction between the concept of happiness and pleasure was fundamental to ancient philosophers. "Happiness is not found in the pleasure a person seeks to satisfy. The pleasure sought is linked to a material good" (Aristotle, undated, p. 42). This approach can be an illusion. Happiness is not to be found in the hedonistic behavior of individuals. Aristotelian logic considers pleasure to be a reducer of long-term wealth creation and happiness. It is not represented as the finality and ultimate goal. For individuals, pleasure is merely a means to another, higher good; the latter is synonymous with immaterial wealth, which is happiness;
- People who place happiness in social and political life assume that the ultimate purpose of their existence is in glory, success and honours. The idea is that distinguished minds consider happiness to be identified with glory. Achieving wealth through fame and honours is an individual behavior conducted within a society. The aim is to validate personal superiority while making it public. As a result, there is a fundamental limit to the representation of happiness. The paradox of this line of reasoning is that the happiness associated with political life originates externally, and is therefore an exogenous state of mind that does not come from within the individual. It is granted to him from the external environment by society. The conclusion is that the individual will be unable to achieve happiness the day glory, success and honours no longer come since they belong to those who bestow them rather than to those who receive them; this contrasts with Aristotelian happiness, which is a personal "good", an endogenous wealth that cannot be taken away from the person who possesses it;
- Intellectuals identify happiness in their wisdom. They reach the ultimate purpose of life in contemplation. Happiness for this third type of life is an endogenous state intrinsic to each person. "The happiness of sages and intellectuals tells us about the fundamental nature of happiness" (Aristotle, undated, pp. 43-44). This statement is crucial for this philosopher, since happiness, as economic wealth, is found within oneself and does not depend on the vagaries of the external environment. It is an endogenous wealth. For people who lead an intellectual life, happiness is the result of a voluntary enthusiasm that is pleasurable to the individual and relatively continuous. This latter form is not the "good" that individuals are seeking; it is only a "good" that presents a sought-after utility given other goods.

« Man must produce his wealth of happiness. This form of individual wealth depends on the wisdom and discipline of each individual. Happiness does not come from outside, but is achieved through courage and willpower » (Citot, 2006, p. 37). For this author, « happiness is essentially based on subjective and abstract elements; this form of wealth is characterized by its immaterial aspect».

Paturet (2012, p. 12) describes happiness as « a state of satisfaction and fulfillment, sought by all people for a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being. This state does not consist solely in an absence of pain or sorrow». From this conceptual alchemy, he manages to distinguish between happiness and pleasure, in order to further codify immaterial wealth in the form of happiness.

2. Virtue as the foundation for building happiness

Plato (no date, p. 77) states that «human virtues can take four forms: the virtue of justice, the virtue of moderation, the virtue of courage and the virtue of the scholar». Each of these cardinal virtues is based on human sensitivity and behavior. Courage regulates combative sensibility; temperance regulates pleasurable sensibility. Justice governs rational sensitivity, and prudence governs reckless sensitivity.

To explain the relationship between virtue and happiness, Aristotle (no date) states that individual goods can be divided into three classes: external goods, bodily goods and soul goods. Thus, «Virtue is neither

a natural quality nor the result of convention; it is the science of the good» (Encyclopaedia Universalis, 2006, p. 251).

Aristotle (no date) sketches out what a happy person is: a person who seeks to achieve wealth (happiness) as the goal of his or her choices. The author begins by constructing a "theoretical" idea of happiness, and argues that this wealth can only be attained in a progressive manner, following the virtuous actions undertaken by each individual. When an individual pursues virtue, he or she desires it for its own sake. Ultimately, it leads him to achieve his own immaterial wealth.

However, human virtue differs from person to person. In this perspective, Aristotle (no date) considers that virtue can be identified in two forms: on the one hand, the intellectual virtues, which encompass a number of characteristics: Practical intelligence, wisdom and prudence. These virtues have as their object the human acts of practical life; on the other hand, the moral virtues represented by temperance and generosity, which have as their object knowledge, learning and contemplation. Both forms of virtue are ordered and acquired for a properly human good. These human virtues are also called cardinal virtues.

The soul corresponds to virtue (ethics). The existence of people who act and behave well is itself full of ambiguities. Being virtuous is human behavior. An object has virtue for a person when he or she feels affection for it and attributes value to it. «Science charms the one who loves science, glory charms the one who loves honors, just behavior charms the one who loves justice, virtuous actions charm the one who loves virtue» (Aristotle, undated, p. 58). From this advance, if a person doesn't find happiness in virtuous acts, he's not virtuous. De même, on ne peut pas considérer un individu juste s'il ne se plaît pas à appliquer la justice. On ne peut appeler une personne « libre » if it does not present a charm to acts of freedom. This reasoning indicates that virtuous actions and acts in conformity with virtue are the supreme happiness of every person. The happiness that every person aims to achieve can only come about through "rational behavior" in terms of choices and actions.

Happiness is desired economic wealth, and is attainable by everyone; every individual can reach the state of happiness unless nature renders him incapable of any virtue.

The man who seeks happiness only through virtue cannot become miserable, since his thought pattern does not allow him to commit reprehensible evil deeds. Virtue enables every individual to make the most of the best possible circumstances.

The multiplication of human virtues further complicates the unique representation and specific codification of wealth in economics. Similarly, other factors may explain the human complexity of achieving intangible wealth.

For Bentham (1834), virtue can be considered « a state of mind which contributes most to happiness. Virtue maximizes pleasures and reduces pains. Vice, on the contrary, is that which diminishes happiness and contributes to unhappiness» Bentham (1834, p. 18). The author sees virtue as a state of mind and a realized act that can either increase happiness or conversely diminish it. Like any "rational" person, man knows how to make the best use of the tools at his disposal. It is virtue that teaches every "rational" individual to do good, and to achieve immaterial wealth.

For his part, Kant (1855, p. 35) describes virtue as «a moral force of the will. It shows the will of a person in the fulfillment of his duty under a moral constraint that imposes itself by its own legislation, insofar as it constitutes itself as a power that executes the law».

The automatism of reflection evoked by this author rests essentially on the ability of every individual to overcome biases and obstacles (imposed essentially by nature). This strength of resolve is the form of virtue in its general acceptance. «

Nature constitutes the fundamental obstacle to every person, and presents itself in disharmony with moral resolve. Man finds himself between these two moral and natural resolutions, and opposes them to the maximum of his reason; at this level, virtue intervenes as a constraint exercised on oneself» (Kant, 1855, p. 56).

3. Happiness, an economic asset of complex study

The representation of new economic wealth (happiness) varies not only from person to person, as a result of individual representations of this wealth, but also at the level of the same person. «

A person's representation of happiness differs from one situation to another, and may take other forms for that person from one era to another. In other words, an individual's ideal wealth at age 20 is not the same ideal wealth at age 40, nor is it the same ideal wealth at age 60. Happiness as wealth is represented as a lack that needs to be filled for a given period of time. When this gap is filled, happiness converges towards another specific good. The individual's idea of this wealth changes in content » (Aristotle, undated, p. 40).

While everyone pursues happiness in their own way, no one really knows what it takes to achieve economic wealth. Its representation is not universal. There is no standard model that everyone can agree on. This economic wealth takes the form of a lack. It's an ever-changing, unsettled good, and therefore complex to determine in a single form. No one can determine with certainty and according to principles what would make them happy. This multiple vision of economic wealth and the absence of unanimity further complicate its identification, determination, measurement and, ultimately, scientificity itself.

To address this complexity, Aristotle (no date) assigns happiness to a specific purpose. He considers that human beings cannot assert whether they have been able to achieve economic wealth and happiness during their lifetime: No one can advance whether he has been able to achieve happiness while he is still living, and everyone must wait until the end to know whether he has been able to achieve this wealth (Aristotle, undated).

This absurdity advanced by the author further complicates the determination of happiness. He also adds that «

the human being can only admit his happiness after his death and that he can, with assurance, only call a man happy when he is outside the reach of all suffering, pain and misfortune » (Aristotle, undated, p. 62).

The study of non-material wealth, which may be associated with happiness, is complex and ambiguous in its perception and conceptualization. As a result, the analysis of happiness is equivocal. Its nature is enigmatic. Human beings represent happiness in the goods at their disposal, and assign them a subjective value. The complexity of this economic wealth lies in its nature, its determination and the social representation on which it is based.

What also complicates the state of happiness is human nature and behavior, based on the principle that man, by nature, seeks to satisfy his multiple utilities at the same time. Individuals tend to make multiple decisions for different goods, further complicating the social representation of happiness. The interaction of different goods to be satisfied over a given period of time is a source of fragility and complexity, and consequently a source of ambiguity for analysis.

The various goods that impose themselves on the human being confront each other to find their place in the utility of every person. The multiplicity of goods can create a field of complexity insofar as their utility is reduced when the human being acquires these goods in his assets. This uncertainty, in terms of decision-making (between goods), can lead to behavioral destabilization for individuals. The lack of awareness of the multiplicity of goods that human beings have to deal with accentuates the complexity, ambiguity and paradox of happiness.

Senik (2014) demonstrates the paradox. The complexity and dichotomy between abstract happiness and the concrete economic wealth of individuals according to two aspects: on the one hand, comparison and, on the other, the social representation of happiness. In his economic demonstration of happiness, Senik (2014, p. 35) points out that «these two phenomena contribute in a similar way insofar as they make a person's happiness depend not on his material wealth and absolute standard of living, but via the deviation from a reference level constituted essentially by the tangible or intangible wealth of another person or that which man himself has been able to achieve in the past».

Esterlin and Angelescu (2009) defend this reasoning according to the perspective theory, also known as the gap theory. This theory was developed by psychologists such as Michalos (1985). The authors explain the paradox and complexity of happiness by assuming that human beings, through their behavior and mental accounting, are self-centered; their happiness depends solely on their level of pleasure and desire.

To further assimilate this relationship, Michalos (1985) extends this reasoning by analyzing the paradox between material wealth and happiness. Increased material wealth, if it brings no benefits, can reduce

happiness. This theory is based on the assumption that, through their psychological make-up, individuals can only be sensitive to this increase when they are exposed to variations in the gap.

For their part, Kahneman and Tversky (1979) present a series of biases and anomalies in the behavior and choices of individuals with regard to individual egoism and rationality. The authors evoke the loss aversion hypothesis. For these authors, individuals feel the severity of losses more than of gains. This aversion is based on two variables: on the one hand, the initial endowment effect and, on the other, attachment to the status quo. Their analysis explains why individuals are attached to the assets they possess and, consequently, place these endowments at a premium.

Later, Esterlin and Angelescu (2009) present their paradoxes with reference to the theory of Kahneman and Tversky (1979). They consider that individual happiness is assessed in relation to a reference group or social norm. However, individual happiness only depends on the deviation from someone else. Increasing material wealth does not systematically increase everyone's happiness. This dilemma is explained by the fact that, if material wealth leads to a similar increase in the stock of assets of individuals, the happiness gap will remain unchanged and, consequently, happiness will no longer be affected, in a positive way, by the increase in concrete wealth; hence the dichotomy between these two forms of wealth.

These multiple approaches to economic wealth and the absence of unanimity within society further complicate the construction of economic and strategic choices. The identification, determination, measurement and, in fine, the very scientificity of such a paradigm are becoming increasingly important, hence the need to approach and conceptualize wealth in economics according to other disciplinary approaches.

4. Conclusion

Throughout this article, we have attempted to answer the following question: To what extent does happiness constitute a complex object of study for wealth creation?

Philosophically speaking, our conceptualization of immaterial capital through the notion of happiness, from the philosophers of antiquity to the present day, has enabled us to clear up any ambiguities in our knowledge. At a personal level, every individual tends towards his or her own state of happiness, and therefore his or her own immaterial wealth. Some people classify happiness in material " goods such as material wealth and pleasure; on the other hand, other people represent happiness beyond apparent, physical goods. None of them really knows what would make them happy.

The construction of a codification that presents a general and definitive assent to happiness becomes even more complicated. The representation of this intangible wealth is not universal; there is no standard model that would suit everyone. In fact, happiness, as material wealth, takes the form of a lack, it is a " bien " ephemeral, complex to determine. Individuals find it difficult to identify with certainty, and according to principles, what might well make them happy.

We have shown that the complexity of achieving happiness is explained by the nature of this intangible wealth. Representations of happiness vary from one individual to another. The representation of happiness also depends on the image that each person gives to a specific good, precisely, on the image that a person makes of it and on the value attributed to this wealth.

The first of these encompass a number of characteristics: Practical intelligence, wisdom and prudence. While the second, moral ones, represented by temperance and generosity, are concerned with knowledge, learning and contemplation. Another factor that makes happiness more complex is its representation. People find their happiness according to the type of life they lead: materialistic life, intellectual life, political and social life...

The study of happiness is equivocal; its nature is enigmatic. Individuals represent happiness in the goods at their disposal, and assign them a subjective value. The complexity of this intangible wealth lies in its nature, its determination and the social representation on which it is based. What's more, the individual representation of happiness differs from one situation to another, and may take on different forms for a person from one period to another.

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