

## **The biopolitics of happiness**

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(1) The happiness of mankind has been set as a goal – “the first, if not the only one” – by philosopher and educator Jan Amos Comenius in the 17th century. To achieve this, happiness should comply with immutable human nature, unfolded in an appropriate cultural setting. (2) Human nature was essentially moulded in the environment of evolutionary adaptedness during the Pleistocene epoch (2.6 million to 12 thousand years BC). In this natural environment, humans acquired the capacity to manufacture artefacts. Artefacts were successively transferring humans to novel and continually changing artificial environments and gave birth to culture. Culture has brought forth cities, commerce, markets, arts, philosophy, science, technology and politics. In the 18th century, philosophers of the Enlightenment of continental Europe attributed the cultural ascent of mankind to the power of human reason: they built on tradition of ancient Greek thinkers considering the Logos of the human mind to be isomorphic with the Logos of Nature. In the 19th century, Karl Marx, inspired by the continental Enlightenment, attempted “to lay bare the economic law of motion of society” and apply it to the “scientific management of society”. Marxist communism became a gigantic experiment in the 20th century to test human rationalism. The experiment failed. Instead of achieving rational, fair society of collective happiness, communism “gave rise to institutions that, by their irrationality, had no precedent in history” [2]. In contrast to the continental thinkers, the representatives of the Scottish Enlightenment considered emotions as a prime mover of human action: in the words of David Hume, “Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions”. (3) Conceiving of both biological and cultural evolutions as evolution of cognition, the concept of evolutionary hermeneutics stipulates that all theories and speculations that had been submitted to “experimental” trial and eventually failed should be plainly dismissed in order to free up space for new knowledge [3]. The failure of communism not only proved that the program of the scientific management of society has been a utopia, taking into account the available fragmentary human knowledge, but it also falsified the hypothesis that humans are rational animals. “Communism peeled off cultural layers and denuded humans to their biological core” [2], and thus made the human nature transparent and amenable to exploration. Humans, when acting and judging are not rational, but rather rationalizing. Emotions are inseparable from cognition and even a central part of it. The unceasing speculations on happiness, including the “wisdom” of ancient thinkers, should be revisited in light of what we know today thanks to the progress of science, in particular neurobiology and cognitive biology. In fact, the research on happiness is worldwide becoming a subject of scientific research. It seems that the novel science of felitics may be preferentially institutionalized in post-communist countries, exploiting the lesson drawn from this failed political and social experiment. (4) Ascribing the failure of communism exclusively to its economic inefficiency, communism has survived as a political ideology in the People’s Republic of China. The social system of this country may be denoted by an oxymoron as a “communist capitalism”. Scientists in the democratic world, independently of politicians, should carefully followed this new social experiment, including the initiative of the “Chinese dream” proclaimed in 2012. Along with economic, social and environmental objectives this initiative aims at equity, fairness, social harmony and collective well-being. The concept is based on collectivism rather than individualism, for it sees the subject of the Chinese

Dream is the people of China as a whole, instead of the human individual. A collective happiness rather than the individual ones – anew? There are controversial data on the “Chinese happiness”, some indicating that lifting of hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in the 1990s has been accompanied by an alarming decrease in life satisfaction at every level of income, in both rural and urban areas (e.g. [4]). It has been shown that the Chinese people’s happiness goes down while the economic wealth and social welfare are improving, with a conclusion that “the Chinese people’s happiness is more about individual functional capability rather than social welfare or economic wealth” [5]. However, a more recent paper [6] reported that “the earlier pessimism about China’s well-being, which emphasized declining happiness, may be misplaced” and that all groups report increased quality of life in the second decade of the 21st century. The authors have concluded that social capital, measured as the perceived feelings of safety and security, community participation, and whether society is perceived to be fair, affects reported well-being. Presently we will witness whether this illusionary “bee-hive happiness”, possibly buffered by the environment of Confucian tradition pleading for social harmony, may persist, or whether China, once achieving sufficiently high level of material welfare, will take the same path as apparently did affluent Japan and Singapore, the countries also influenced by the Confucian culture: the path towards individual fulfilment and satisfaction. (5) The progress of science and technology has created a social and political environment entirely distinct from the one faced by the primitive human ancestors, but also from that in which the ancient Greek theorists of happiness had lived. The invention of analgesia and anaesthesia and of voluntary contraception techniques has enabled the reduction of human worry and the progress of economics has substantially raised large numbers of the world populations from poverty over the threshold of material welfare and financial security. We may tentatively assume that a majority of common people, driven by human hedonotaxis, may find their “artificial happiness” and satisfaction in sheer hedonia, amply supported by gadgets of modern technology, while a minority of “magnanimous” individuals would enjoy “cognitive happiness”, derived from and superficially related to Aristotelian eudaimonia.

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