

## PRAGMATIST PHILOSOPHY AND THE ECONOMICS OF HAPPINESS

Guido Baggio

One of the consequences of the actual economic crisis has been the new boost that the notions of human happiness and well-being experienced in the public debates. The 28 June 2012 the General Assembly of UN adopted a resolution that recognizes “the relevance of happiness and well-being as universal goals and aspirations in the lives of human beings and the importance of their recognition in public policy objectives, recognizing also “the need for a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth”. Yet in 2008 the President of the French Republic asked Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean Paul Fitoussi to create a Commission with the aim of identifying the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, including the problems with its measurement, and to assess the feasibility of alternative measurement tools.

Economists, sociologists, and psychologists elaborated researches and theories about happiness and well-being. However, the concept of “happiness” has not been given a uniform, invariable definition. In several economic, sociological and psychological theories and empirical researches we in fact find such concept employed as a wide semantic container implying a variety of methodological standards. In spite of the variety of definitions, almost all theories and inquiries make use of an hedonic approach to the concept of ‘happiness’, highlighting the central role of the emotional dimension on the subjects’ behavioral attitudes. In the hedonic approach happiness is the result of the avoidance of pain and of the seeking of pleasure and satisfaction.

The paper aims at highlighting how a pragmatist approach can profitably contribute to new theoretical interpretations and practical applications on the economics of happiness. In particular, I would like to sketch a theoretical reflection on individualistic assumptions of some theories of happiness and sketch a theoretical framework that would overtake the tension between a *hedonic* and an *eudaimonic* idea of happiness.