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## **SOCIAL FUTURING – A NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK**

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**Series Editors:**

Petra Aczél  
János Csák  
Péter Szabadhegy  
Zoltán Oszkár Szántó

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explain the normative aspects and logic of the Social Futuring concept.<sup>1</sup> We assume that the ultimate aim of social entities is to enable a praiseworthy life for their individual and institutional members. Therefore, our central issue of analysis is the “good life in a unity of order” that is worth living, preserving, protecting and reproducing.<sup>2</sup>

Social Futuring is a measure of a social entity’s creative intent to comprehend the ever-evolving world, its ability to get things done to preserve and reproduce its way of life, and to control its destiny in general.

The necessary conditions for a social entity’s Social Futuring are that the given entity is self-conscious and constitutes<sup>3</sup> itself, permanently operates in a functional way, and organizes actions that influences its functioning and environment in the future. The sufficient conditions of Social Futuring are that a given social entity is able to facilitate/create changes, or to prepare itself to manipulate changes, to exploit future changes, or to manage the risks of future changes.

The study of human development is an interdisciplinary<sup>4</sup> endeavor ultimately driven by implicit and explicit moral and metaphysical considerations. Historically, reflections on the worthwhile life, the

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<sup>2</sup> This paper is a contribution to the development of the Social Futuring Index (SFI). For the analytical background of Social Futuring, see Szántó (2018). For the philosophical background of personhood and human condition in the context of Social Futuring, see Ábrahám (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Constitutedness in an ontological sense means the essence and existence, potency and actuality of an entity. In political philosophy it means an entity’s peculiar social persona, a unity of order with a character of its own, animated by a distinguished way of thinking.

<sup>4</sup> “We need a certain level of abstraction in different fields to understand broader relationships... The key intellectual ingredients... [of] comparative advantage, are... a broad philosophical, artistic and historical background... understanding of... modern science developed in the Mediterranean area; ... capacity for a high level of abstraction, including the quantitative sciences; ... moral integrity and self-discipline...” Interview with Professor Tamás Roska (Roska, 2012).

image of man and the human condition have been formulated from philosophical, religious, scientific and artistic perspectives.<sup>5</sup>

Philosophy ultimately deals with the issues of “how one ought to live [well]; what course of life is best; [what is] the right conduct of life,”<sup>6</sup> and the nature and proper operation of the unity of order that enables a good human life.

From the religious perspective, transcendental principles provide the fundamental framework for comprehension and interaction and have been an integral and valued aspect of the identity of civilizations, permeating every sphere of life throughout history. Nevertheless, Western civilization has been an exception, as it seems to undermine its own religious and transcendental foundations, particularly in the last 300 years.<sup>7</sup>

The modern scientific perspective is a detached, strictly rational, methodological approach intended to free humankind from the limitations set by Nature, and to change the world. Modern science claims neutrality with regard to ultimate values. Thus, when science faces ultimate choices between values, the risk of reducing persons to physiological processes arises, with all the potential unintended consequences.

Historically, the arts also have also been a unique guide for human comprehension through endeavors that inspire man’s aesthetic sense and emotions.

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<sup>5</sup>Our views on perspectives have been significantly inspired by the work of Tarnas (1993).

<sup>6</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 492d, 500c; *Republic*, 352d. Plato and Aristotle are quoted as published at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>7</sup> “Since the development of the Greek thought... the tendency of Western civilization has been towards rationalism and hence away from the religious life... no such marked turning away from religion is to be found in the history of the world outside the West” (Braudel, 1963, p. 23).

The philosophical, religious, scientific and artistic perspectives of comprehension cross-fertilize and prevail upon each other<sup>8</sup> over time, as exemplified historically by Christianity assimilating elements of ancient Greek philosophy, or the arts invigorating worldviews during the Renaissance, or natural sciences overcoming philosophy, religion and the arts altogether during modernity. Despite such contests, we can argue that sophisticated philosophical, religious, scientific and artistic reflection is a necessary condition for any entity that aspires to a thorough self-consciousness and identity.

Social Futuring is a new multidisciplinary perspective<sup>9</sup> that builds on the findings of the fields mentioned above to map out the characteristics that enable entities to preserve their way of life. Social Futuring is measured by a composite Social Futuring Index (SFI) based upon a range of transparent indicators. We think that there are ways of life in which human persons can fulfill their material, intellectual, spiritual and psychological needs and, in general, flourish better than in others, and are thus worth preserving and reproducing (Haldane, 2009, pp. 37–50). In this paper, we elaborate on the constitutive qualities of this worthwhile, or, in other words, “good life” in a unity of order as a conceptual framework or standard (Strauss, 1953, pp. 35–80) to which the changes in the SFI scores will be interpreted going forward. Such analysis may help social entities to systematically reason about alternative courses of action for shaping their futures.

In Section 1 we start by examining the aspects of personhood, a notion that harmoniously integrates certain features of human persons and social entities. We present an illustrative overview of the

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<sup>8</sup> Philosophical, religious, scientific and artistic achievements from time to time can be, but are not necessarily, in conflict with each other. “Not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God's nature... modifying the first verse of the Book of Genesis, the first verse of the whole Bible, John began the prologue of his Gospel with the words: ‘In the beginning was the λόγος’... God acts, σὺν λόγῳ, with logos. Logos means both reason and word – a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason.... In the beginning was the logos, and the logos is God.” Pope Benedict XVI (2006).

Another example is the Islamic world of the 9–11th centuries which was, in many respects, the most active area with regard to scientific and philosophical achievements (e.g. the works of the ancient Greek philosophers and “scientists” were translated into Arabic in that period).

<sup>9</sup> Social futuring should be distinguished from other academic efforts such as forecasting and foresighting – see Monda (2018); from various discursive approaches about the future, see Aczél (2018); and from ecological-economic sustainability studies, see Kocsis (2018).

formulations about the good life in a unity of order, or *summum bonum* (highest common goods), based upon the thoughts of arguably the greatest moral philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine of Hippo and Kant, followed by the thoughts of a few outstanding thinkers who, ultimately, reformulated the ancients' normative concepts throughout modernity.

In Section 2, building upon our findings, we outline a specific normative basis on which the status and changes of the SFI can be evaluated. We use the overarching term worthwhileness to represent the universal features of a good life in a unity of order. Finally, we identify the pillars in which a series of indicators will culminate in the context of different social layers.

## 2. PERSONHOOD, SUMMUM BONUM AND SOCIAL FUTURING

### 1.A. HUMAN PERSON AND SOCIAL PERSONA

#### Human Person

The subject of Social Futuring is the social entity, an organism as understood based upon the concept of personhood.

Personhood in the context of individuals alludes to the exceptionality of human beings among other sentient things. Besides material constitution it implies cognition,<sup>10</sup> intentional activity and self-consciousness, and an awareness and recognition of the self's state of mind (as distinguished from others), thus permits reference to oneself as *I*. Being *I* pre-supposes mutual reflection about other persons, since *I* makes sense only if there is a *You*. The communication<sup>11</sup> between *I* and *You* through language creates the social relationship between persons.

Persons, while parts of various social entities, are existentially and psychologically individual in nature, "*both wholes and parts – wholes as selves, parts as social selves.*" (Haldane, 2009, p. 226). The art of a worthwhile life is about finding the right balance between the individual self and social circumstances. The human person is a rational<sup>12</sup>, matrimonial<sup>13</sup>, self-communicative, social<sup>14</sup> being endowed

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<sup>10</sup> "Person' signifies what is most perfect in all nature... And because subsistence in a rational nature is of high dignity, every individual of the rational nature is called a 'person.'" Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 29, A. 3.

<sup>11</sup> "Person" in Latin is "persona" rooted in "personare"; i.e., "sounding". "Speech... is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong; for it is the special property of man... in distinction from the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities, and it is partnership in these things that makes a household and a city-state" (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a).

<sup>12</sup> A human being's "soul... in itself [is partly] possessed of reason, [and partly] capable of obeying reason" and "naturally desire[s] knowledge" (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1333a; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a).

<sup>13</sup> "The investigation of everything should begin with its smallest parts, and the primary and smallest parts of the household are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children; we ought therefore to examine the proper constitution and character of each of these three relationships... mastership, marriage, and thirdly the progenitive relationship" (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253b).

<sup>14</sup> "Man is by nature a political animal" (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a). "Man is by nature a social being" (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b). "Nobody would choose to have all possible good things

with free will.<sup>15</sup> Only human persons, living in a social lifeworld<sup>16</sup> can assume responsibility, rights and duties, based upon a perception of what is good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust. Reason, free will and the resultant moral sense allow persons to have hopes and ambitions, to set goals and, with effort and luck, actualize their potential.

Human persons' habituation requires social – predominantly family – nurturing. Attachments imbibed in childhood are essential for bodily, psychological, intellectual and spiritual stability throughout a lifetime. Ways of doing things and ways of thinking unfold through nurturing, in parallel with the development of an understanding of our own way of life and thinking, differentiated from the ways of life and thinking of others, and even from the way of life of one's ancestors. The absence of proper attachments may deprive individuals of the ability to develop meaningful relations with persons and entities during adulthood.<sup>17</sup>

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on the condition that he must enjoy them alone; for man is a social being and designed by nature to live with others; accordingly, the happy man must have society, for he has everything that is naturally good. And it is obviously preferable to associate with friends and with good men than with strangers and chance companions. Therefore, the happy man requires friends" (Aristotle, *ibid.* 1169b). As friends and good men are concerned, Augustine of Hippo explained "Since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special regard to those who, by the accidents of time, or place, or circumstance, are brought into closer connection with you" (Augustine of Hippo, s.l.e.a., *Christian Doctrine*, XVIII).

<sup>15</sup> "Man has free-will... acts from judgment... he judges that something should be avoided or sought... this judgment... is not from a natural instinct, but from some act of comparison in the reason, therefore he acts from free judgment and retains the power of being inclined to various things... and is not determinate to one. And forasmuch as man is rational is it necessary that man have a free-will" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 83, Art. 1).

<sup>16</sup> "The world in which we live–Lebenswelt [Lifeworld], to use Husserl's term–the world of interpersonal attitudes" (Scruton, 2017, pp. 46, 37).

<sup>17</sup> Nobel-laurate James Heckman and Stefano Mosso (2014) summarize the literature (until May 2014) on "determinants and consequences of parental actions and environments on child outcomes and differences in investments received by children of different socioeconomic status" as follows: "Family environments during the early years and parenting are critical determinants of human development because they shape the lifetime skill base... Later-stage remedial interventions are generally less effective, especially if they target IQ. Interventions aimed at disadvantaged adolescents can be effective if they target the enhancement of noncognitive capabilities and provide valuable information that helps them make wise choices."

## Social Personae

The social self emerges in various associations referred to as *Us*. A social persona is a specific unity of order<sup>18</sup> resting upon resilient, albeit evolving, values and norms that characterize its way of life and thinking. Norms and values, embodied in customs, rules and processes, frame members' interactions to comprehend, reason about and organize their lifeworld via the enjoyment of rights and benefits, and to fulfil the proportional duties required by the entity.

The intellectual history of humankind in various civilizations<sup>19</sup> can be described as a quest for a bonding framework of comprehension about the human condition, the establishment of an image of man, and, the creation of social settings in which the needs and interests of individuals can be satisfied in relative harmony with those of the community, and vice versa. In what follows, we examine the *summum bonum* connecting human and social personae. While the Social Futuring concept is applicable to organizations such as family,

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<sup>18</sup> "To establish virtuous living in a multitude, three things are necessary. First of all, that the multitude be established in the unity of peace. Second, that the multitude thus united in the bond of peace, be directed to acting well. For just as a man can do nothing well unless unity within his members be presupposed, so a multitude of men lacking the unity of peace will be hindered from virtuous action by the fact that it is fighting against itself. In the third place, it is necessary that there be at hand a sufficient supply of the things required for proper living" (Saint Thomas Aquinas, on *Kingship to the King of Cyprus*, 118).

"Unity of man is brought about by nature, while the unity of multitude, which we call peace, must be procured through the efforts of the ruler" (Aquinas, *ibid.*). Peace is not a one-off act but a continuous balancing act of goodwill: "a certain natural equity [that] obliges a man to live agreeably with his fellow-men" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II. Q. 114. A. 2).

<sup>19</sup> The terms civilization and culture are often used interchangeably. For the purposes of the Social Futuring project, we use both terms with "at least a double meaning... denot[ing] both moral and material values, ... connoting human excellence or superiority" (Braudel, 1995, pp. 5-7).

Max Weber defines "'order' (*Ordnung*) as obligatory or exemplary ways of acting to which actors orient their actions. Orders have a certain continuity to them; sanctions are also connected to them... A civilization... is a cultural order, to which actors orient themselves and which consists of economic, religious, political, artistic and scientific elements. By being oriented to the order, the actions of the actors are provided with a general meaning" (Swedberg, 2010 pp. 15-30).

Morris (2013, pp. 3-6) uses "Social development [as a term referring to] social groups' abilities to master their physical and intellectual environments and get things done in the world;... the bundle of technological, subsistence, organizational, and cultural accomplishments through which people feed, clothe, house, and reproduce themselves, explain the world around them, resolve disputes within their communities, extend their power at the expense of other communities, and defend themselves against others' attempts to extend power." Morris adds a caveat, namely, "social development scores (do not) imply anything about the moral, environmental, or other costs of social development." It is important to note the difference between the concepts of Social Development and Social Futuring, as the latter's main concerns are exactly the long-term "costs" of the preservation and reproduction of a social entity.

civic associations, businesses, cities, and countries, we focus on political communities in this paper.

## 1.B. SUMMUM BONUM AND POLITEIA<sup>20</sup>

### The Ancients

Aristotle asserted that the goal of human life is to attain “eudaimonia” (usually translated as happiness, but literally meaning “good spirit”) and that “the Good of man is the active exercise of his soul's faculties in conformity with the best and most perfect virtue or excellence [areté]... and is adequately furnished with external goods, and goods of the soul and goods of the body... throughout a complete lifetime... Men do not acquire and preserve the virtues by means of these external goods, but external goods by means of the virtues.”<sup>21</sup> Socrates asserted that this can be attained in the natural order of social life: “gods and men are held together by communion and friendship, by orderliness, temperance, and justice, ... this is why they call the whole of this world by the name of order, not of disorder or dissoluteness.”<sup>22</sup>

Since “the most supreme... partnerships... aim at the most supreme of all goods,”<sup>23</sup> the *politeia* is prior in nature to the individual

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<sup>20</sup> Politeia means “issues of the community/polis”; that is, public affairs or “res publica” in Latin.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a-b, *Politics*, 1323a.

<sup>22</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 508a.

<sup>23</sup> “Every state is as we see a sort of partnership and every partnership is formed with a view to some good... the most supreme... partnerships... aims at the most supreme of all goods; and this is the partnership entitled the state, the political association... while it comes into existence for the sake of life, it exists for the good life. Hence every city-state exists by nature... for the city-state is the end of the other partnerships, and nature is an end... Again, the object for which a thing exists, its end, is its chief good” (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a-b). “The city-state is prior in nature to the household and to each of us individually. For the whole must necessarily be prior to the part; since when the whole body is destroyed, foot or hand will not exist except in an equivocal sense... all things are defined by their function and capacity... It is clear therefore that the state is also prior by nature to the individual; for if each individual when separate is not self-sufficient, he must be related to the whole state as other parts are to their whole... therefore the impulse to form a partnership of this kind is present in all men by nature” (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a). “The virtue of the state is of course caused by the citizens who share in its government being virtuous... since for each individual to be virtuous entails as a consequence the collective virtue of all. But there are admittedly three things by which men are made good and virtuous, and these three things are nature, habit and reason. For to start with, one must be born with the nature of a human being and not of some other animal; and secondly, one must be born of a certain quality of body and of soul” (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1332a).

members. Hence, “all the various pronouncements of the law aim... at the common interest of all... either by excellence or in some other similar way; so that in one of its senses the term ‘just’ is applied to anything that produces and preserves the happiness, or the component parts of the happiness, of the political community.”<sup>24</sup> In Augustine of Hippo’s summary, *politeia* (body politic or political community) is the “measure, form and order”<sup>25</sup> of the *summum bonum* and the common basis of mutual respect among members of an entity.

## Moderns and Discontents

Many modern thinkers approach the human condition in a different way. Thomas Hobbes, while praising “the qualities of mankind that concern their living together in peace and unity,” asserted that “there is no such *finis ultimus* (ultimate aim) or *summum bonum* as is spoken of in the books of the old moral philosophers” (Hobbes, 1651, i. xi. 75). David Hume argued that “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (Hume, 1738, II. iii. 3). Jeremy Bentham maintained that “Nature has placed us under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do” (Bentham, 1789, Chapter I, Section I).

Immanuel Kant’s rational, autonomous but nevertheless socially embedded moral person is supposed to follow a so-called categorical imperative:<sup>26</sup> “act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law,” and “act so that through your maxims you could be a legislator of universal laws.” Supposing “the will of every rational being as a will that legislates universal law” establishes that “one

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<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1129b; *Politics*, 1323a.

<sup>25</sup> “Three things, measure, form, order, are... generic goods, whether in spirit or in body... where they are absent, there is no good... [and] if there had been no order there, some would not have ruled, others been ruled; they would not have lived harmoniously in their element; in fine, they would not have had their members adapted to their places, so that they could not do... things.” (Augustine of Hippo, cca A.D. 399, *On the Nature of Good*, iii and Ixi).

<sup>26</sup> Such a concept claims universal validity because it seems to require the respect of a person, without previous culturally anchored religious or other commitments.

should always treat human persons as ends and not as a means"<sup>27</sup> and that "each must... so conduct himself as if everything depended on him."<sup>28</sup>

While Socrates and Aristotle emphasized the natural order of virtuous human persons within the politeia through participation, rights and duties, Enlightenment thinkers professed the autonomy of the individual. This latter – if taken to its logical conclusion – implies the risk of viewing individuals as apolitical and asocial beings; mere biological systems driven by pain and pleasure. As a consequence, politics and the moral sense are downgraded to mere instrumental means, contractual procedures with the limited objective of creating mutual security for the individuals who happen to exist at the same time and place.

Imre Madách (1862) succinctly captures this dramatic change in the creed of the enlightened man: "My God is me, whatever I regain is mine by right. This is the source of all my strength and pride!"<sup>29</sup> In

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<sup>27</sup> This imperative resembles the ancient maxim, "So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew, 7:12) and is expressed in other canonical formulations of several civilizations such as the Confucian maxim: "What you do not wish upon yourself, extend not to others" (Confucius, 12.2). However, Kant suggests that "practical reason has the right to conduct us, we shall not look upon actions as binding on us, because they are the commands of God, but we shall regard them as divine commands, because we are internally bound by them. We shall study freedom under the teleological unity which accords with principles of reason; we shall look upon ourselves as acting in conformity with the divine will only in so far as we hold sacred the moral law which reason teaches us from the nature of actions themselves, and we shall believe that we can obey that will only by promoting the weal of the universe in ourselves and in others" (Kant, 1781, Appendix, Chapter II. Section II).

<sup>28</sup> "To found a moral people of God is, therefore, a work whose execution cannot be hoped for from human beings but only from God himself. Yet human beings are not permitted on this account to remain idle in the undertaking and let Providence have free rein, as if each could go after his private moral affairs and entrust to a higher wisdom the whole concern of the human race (as regards its moral destiny). Each must, on the contrary, so conduct himself as if everything depended on him. Only on this condition may he hope that a higher wisdom will provide the fulfillment of his well-intentioned effort" (Kant, 1793, AAVI 100-101).

<sup>29</sup> "The best modern parable of progress." *Onwards and upwards; The idea of progress; Why is the modern view of progress so impoverished?* The Economist (2009). Imre Madách describes the general confusion over the desolation caused by the enlightenment (Imre Madách, 1862, Scene III and XII, Phalanstery) thus:

"ADAM: What country is this, and what nation have we got to?  
LUCIFER: Those old ideas exist no more. / Wasn't country a paltry conception?  
Originally begotten by prejudice, / Then cherished by narrowness and rivalry.  
Now the whole earth is one country. / All now are comrades with a common aim,  
And the calm course of their faith ordered life / Has for its guardian—Science which they  
revere.

Friedrich Nietzsche's words (1883), "Formerly all the world was insane... [but now we] are clever... we have discovered happiness."<sup>30</sup> With the enlightenment project things have changed, "the world was not what it seemed... ideas of time and distance, right or wrong, law and justice, and the nature of man's behavior in society, were not to be trusted."<sup>31</sup>

As Max Weber observed<sup>32</sup> (1890s), "The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.' Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct

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ADAM: My soul's ideal is then accomplished, / All now is well, as I desired it should be.  
There is only one thing I regret—country. / That idea might, I think, have remained,  
Under this new regime. Man's heart / Needs limitation, the boundless frightens it,  
It loses in intensity if it is dispersed, / Man clings to what is past and what will be;  
I fear that the inspiring force of this great world / May not replace that of his father's tombs.  
Who for his family will shed his blood / Will the more readily bewail a friend...  
Tell me, what then is the idea / Which is able to unite these people  
And inspire them for one common end?  
SAVANT: With us it is the will to live."

<sup>30</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche published the first part of his "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" in 1883: "I show you THE LAST MAN: 'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?'—so asketh the last man and blinketh... 'Formerly all the world was insane,'... [but now we] are clever and know all that hath happened... 'We have discovered happiness,' say the last men, and blink thereby... They have left the regions where it is hard to live; for they need warmth. One still loveth one's neighbour and rubbeth against him; for one needeth warmth. Turning ill and being distrustful, they consider sinful: they walk warily.... A little poison now and then: that maketh pleasant dreams. And much poison at last for a pleasant death. One still worketh, for work is a pastime. But one is careful lest the pastime should hurt one... Every one wanteth the same; every one is equal: he who hath other sentiments goeth voluntarily into the madhouse" (Nietzsche, 1883–1891).

<sup>31</sup> "At the beginning of the 1920s the belief began to circulate, for the first time at a popular level, that there were no longer any absolutes: of time and space, of good and evil, of knowledge, above all of value. Mistakenly but perhaps inevitably, relativity became confused with relativism... Nearly all the major creative figures [Marx, Freud, Einstein and Nietzsche] had already been published before 1914... the world was not what it seemed... our ideas of time and distance, right or wrong, law and justice, and the nature of man's behavior in society, were not to be trusted... Marxist and Freudian analysis combined to undermine... the highly developed sense of personal responsibility, and of duty towards a settled and objectively true moral code... But it needed the desperate convulsions of the great struggle, and the crashing of regimes... to give modernism the radical political dimension... the sense of a ruined world on which it would construct a new one..." (Johnson, 1999, pp. 7–59).

<sup>32</sup> Max Weber earlier stated: "I believe that we must renounce human happiness [Glücksgefühl] as the goal of social legislation. We want something else and can only want something else. We want to cultivate and support what appears to us valuable in man: his personal responsibility, his deep drive towards higher things, towards the spiritual and moral values of mankind" (Weber, 1993, pp. 339–340).

and personal human relations... If one only found the right concept of the beautiful, the good, or, for instance, of bravery, of the soul... then one could also grasp its true being. And this, in turn... opens the way for knowing and for teaching how to act rightly in life and, above all, how to act as a citizen of the state." (Weber, 1918)

## Moderns after the 1960s

The twentieth century endured large-scale social engineering experiments and a sweeping broadening of the concept of absolute individual human rights. Modern science became the *ultima ratio* in public affairs; aesthetic or religious values lost their authority to inform the good of man<sup>33</sup> (Manent, 2001, p. 19). These developments reignited the debate about the meaning of a good life in a unity of order, as opposed to the enlightenment-inspired, pure reason-based atomist view of the human being.<sup>34</sup>

Liberal-egalitarian views are dominated by the image of the rational, centerless, thus radically free individual of beliefs and desires, endowed with absolute rights, operating in a multitude ordered by contractual procedures. "This kind of life... entails no other obligations than those freely chosen by an individual because of his humanity

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<sup>33</sup> See Manent as Otfried Höffe argues, the arts in particular, even in their own self-understanding, seem to have abandoned any measures of being good or beautiful, and as such lost significance in the Westernized parts of the World: "In the West, art itself had to fight for and gain its own liberties. That happened as people slowly progressed in achieving personal freedoms. Over the course of several centuries, art grew independent of controls. It is no longer expected to be truthful, or even moral. None of these pretenses apply. Instead, simply falling under the category of 'beauty,' art has managed to carve out its own territory. Kant described that concept with the term 'disinterested pleasure,' which implies that just as church and state are separated in the West, our understanding of art is also independent of church, state and even aesthetic ties" (Höffe, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> A narrow cosmological concept of atoms seems to rule social sciences, notwithstanding Leo Strauss' objection: "The fact that the atoms [material objects as compounds of particles] are beyond good and bad does not justify the inference that there is nothing by nature good or bad for any compounds of atoms, and especially for those compounds which we call 'man.' In fact, no one can say that all distinctions between good and bad which men make or all human preferences are merely conventional. We must therefore distinguish between those human desires and inclinations which are natural and those which originate in conventions. Furthermore, we must distinguish between those human desires and inclinations which are in accordance with human nature and therefore good for man, and those which are destructive of his nature or his humanity and therefore bad. We are thus led to the notion of a life, a human life, that is good because it is in accordance with nature" (Strauss 1953, pp. 94–95).

and individual identity.”<sup>35</sup> John Rawls – arguably the most influential liberal-egalitarian thinker – positioned justice as the ultimate good championed by liberal welfare societies, to be followed by lesser (non-liberal, still decent, well-ordered, hierarchical) forms of polities. In Rawls’ understanding, *summum bonum* is attainable<sup>36</sup> subject to (i) the assignment of human rights to all members of society, (ii) a decent consultation hierarchy, and, (iii) a sincere and not unreasonable belief that the law is guided by a common good idea of justice. Social cooperation between free and equal persons is aimed at “the primary social goods... rights, liberties, and opportunities, and income and wealth... [and] a sense of one’s own worth” (Rawls, 1971, p. 79). The inevitably conflicting ideas about “good” are to be distilled into an “overlapping consensus,” that, in turn, will save people from the “great evils of human history” (Rawls, 1999, p. 6).

The Rawlsian welfare-based view implicitly pre-supposes an affluent society, a subject of the ultimate modern social science: economics<sup>37</sup> (Robbins, 1932, p. 16) for which *politeia* is about

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<sup>35</sup> “The libertarian political principle... enjoy[s] the support of rational philosophy... as follows: Once an individual chooses to live, that individual has committed himself to living well or properly, namely, in accordance with his nature; libertarianism is the political theory which best takes into account man’s nature, namely, his essence as a free, rational living being whose conduct can only be made morally worthwhile by the individual himself by sustaining his commitment. This kind of life, with all of the diversity and universality... should be chosen by each individual. This kind of life involves an array of human virtues (honesty, productivity, prudence, courage, fortitude, justice, self-respect, etc.)... [which] must be sustained and practiced by choice and their precise interpretation must be adjusted to the individual’s own case” (Machan, 1998, p. 121).

<sup>36</sup> Human rights take primacy over good and reason: “The philosophical tradition has accustomed us to the idea that anybody who is willing to listen to reason – to hear out all the arguments – can be brought around to the truth. This... ‘Socratism’... contrasted with the claim that our point of departure may be simply a historic event, is intertwined with the idea that the human self has a center (a divine spark, or a truth-tracking faculty called ‘reason’) and that argumentation will, given time and practice, penetrate to this center. For Rawls’ purposes, we do not need this picture. We are free to see the self as centerless, as a historic contingency all the way through. Rawls neither needs nor wants to defend the priority of the right to the good as Kant defended it” (Rorty, 1991, pp. 266–267).

<sup>37</sup> In Lionel Robbins’s classic definition: “Economics is the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means that have alternate uses.” “The prospect that economic logic may pervade the study of all branches of human behavior is as exciting as any development in the history of economics, or, for that matter, in the history of science” (Stigler, 1988, pp. 191–205). See also G. Raditzky and P. Bernholz (1987). Stigler’s view is squarely opposed to Wicksteed’s (1910, p. 160) who argued that in “the very widest definition of the economic life, or the range that should be covered by economic study, would not be taken to extend to the administration, or distribution among varied claimants, of personal and inalienable qualities and powers that flow directly towards their ultimate purpose or expression. The widest definition of Economics would confine their scope to things that can be regarded as in some

managing tensions between human ambitions and scarce resources.<sup>38</sup> Lack of equilibrium destabilizes the political community: “Robbery and Violence are Injuries to the Person of the Commonwealth” (Hobbes, 1651, i. xv. 75). Therefore, economics for utilitarians is about peace and mutual security rather than a moral order,<sup>39</sup> discarding *oikonomia* (household management) with the family at its center in favor of a focus solely on the individual.<sup>40</sup>

In contrast, the ultimately Aristotelian-Thomist position maintains that: “we are in some respects social beings, a genuine aspect of whose *telos* is participation in shared ends... one’s political nature is not independent of that ‘second nature’ which results from being born and raised within particular social groups sharing aesthetic, moral, philosophical, and religious inclinations communicated to successive generations in part through the cultivation of a complex sensibility. Real-world political personae rest upon these cultural identities... the characteristic values of given communities [as] these

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sense exchangeable, and capable of being transferred or applied according to order and agreement. No one would regard the principles upon which I balance the claims of devotion [to God] against those of friendship, or of either against the indulgence of my aesthetic appetites, as within the range of economic science.”

<sup>38</sup> This implies a series of practical mechanisms of justice in exchange in the case of private goods, and distributive justice in the case of common goods. Another mechanism for the distribution of wealth is called a *gift*. As Augustine of Hippo explained, the general logic applicable to both distributive justice and gifts is this: “Further, all men are to be loved equally. But since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special regard to those who, by the accidents of time, or place, or circumstance, are brought into closer connection with you. For, suppose that you had a great deal of some commodity, and felt bound to give it away to somebody who had none, and that it could not be given to more than one person; if two persons presented themselves, neither of whom had either from need or relationship a greater claim upon you than the other, you could do nothing fairer than choose by lot to which you would give what could not be given to both. Just so among men: since you cannot consult for the good of them all, you must take the matter as decided for you by a sort of lot, according as each man happens for the time being to be more closely connected with you” (Augustine of Hippo, *Christian Doctrine*, XXVIII).

<sup>39</sup> Other voices (e.g. that of John Maynard Keynes, in the observation below) do not seem to prevail in mainstream economics: “Economics, more properly called political economy, is on the side of ethics. Marshall always used to insist that it was through ethics that he arrived at political economy... and nearly all English economists... reach economics that way. There are practically no issues of policy... which do not involve ethical considerations” (J. M. Keynes’ letter to William Temple, in Edmund S. Phelps (1985, p. xv)).

<sup>40</sup> Wicksteed suggested that economic inquiry should be started with the most complex person, the Mother’s real-life problems, who lives in the web of interpersonal and institutional relationships, manages her family’s scarce resources, and most importantly, the ultimate limit: her available time. She centers her decisions on human persons as ends since “all human action, including economic activity, is done by persons and for persons... economic activity is not ultimately undertaken by ‘individuals’ for ‘utility’” (Mueller, 2010, p. 129).

might be expressed in the political order of a state" (Haldane, 2009, pp. 231-232).<sup>41</sup>

## 1.C. THE STATE OF PLAY

Social entities, however abundant, always face an objective or subjective scarcity of resources, resulting in peaceful or violent conflicts for control. The management of entities has historically produced various forms of *politeia* from tribes through city-states to empires and nation states.<sup>42</sup> The strength of social entities becomes

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<sup>41</sup> For the sake of full disclosure, we must mention the eternal "theological-political" question problem in Leo Strauss' formulation: "Man cannot live without light, guidance, knowledge; only through knowledge of the good can he find the good that he needs. The fundamental question, therefore, is whether men can acquire that knowledge of the good without which they cannot guide their lives individually or collectively by the unaided efforts of their natural powers, or whether they are dependent for that knowledge on Divine Revelation. No alternative is more fundamental than this: human guidance or divine guidance" (Strauss, 1953, p. 74).

Other thinkers offer further alternatives to the Rawlsian image of society, suggesting a natural-law-informed model of *politeia*. Charles Taylor (1992, pp. 31-38) argues that "The ability for an individual to make choices and have freedom only exists within a social structure/community... Liberalism's core political value of the primacy of rights, affirms the capacities that were nurtured in a society, therefore the obligation to belong to a society should be as fundamental as the assertion of rights... However, by asserting the primacy of rights, one cannot always claim an equally fundamental obligation because at times the assertion of an individual right is achieved at the expense of the society... to assert the [primacy of] rights to the point of destroying a society, deprives the environment for nurturing the required human capacities as well as prevents future individuals in exercising the same capacity, therefore rights cannot be ensured if individual rights are taken as a priority at the expense of society."

In Robert P. George's view, a decent society is characterized by "respect for the human person – the individual human being and his dignity; the institution of the family; a fair and effective system of law and government"; in addition, dynamized by "institutions of research and education; and business firms and associated institutions" (George, 2013, pp. 3-8, 82-84).

See also Taylor (1989; 1991), MacIntyre (1999), Ricoeur (1986).

Beyond political philosophy, other social sciences also offer alternatives to the mainstream scientific individualistic explanations. In sociology, Polanyi (1968 [1957]) and Granovetter (1985) have introduced the concept of embeddedness, emphasizing the significance of social relationships and socio-economic institutions.

<sup>42</sup> The nature and organizing principle of the different forms varies between city-states' dynamism of direct public debates, war, freedom and authority; empires' military might, peace, rule of law, security of property, and limited liberty; and modern representative democracies' commercialization and commercial warfare in the form of nation-states with increasingly heterogenic populations. See Manent (2013). Manent also attributes special importance to Augustine of Hippo's "City of God" (*Civitas Dei*), representing the better nature of human beings that virtually co-exists with the earthly human society (*Civitas terrena*), as a never achievable but always righteous ideal. "City of God" is not to be mistaken for the utopian universal state on Earth.

For Dante Alighieri, in contrast to Manent, the City of God is attainable on Earth and can ultimately evolve: "We must now determine what is the end of human society as a whole... [O]bserve that as Nature... creates for one end the individual, for another the family, for another

evident when they face internal or external challenges that require a response. Norman Davies found that dissolution of political entities in general occurs when “outside pressures may be present, but the essential event[s] pertain to a catastrophic malfunction at the centre; a vacuum is created, the constituent parts disengage, [the elaborate machinery is incapable of responding], and the whole is destroyed.”<sup>43</sup>

The fate of emerging or disappearing social entities depends on their ability to comprehend the ever-evolving world and to get things done. “The choice may be limited, but what an immense privilege to be able to choose!”<sup>44</sup> (Braudel, 1963, p. xxiv). Social Futuring is an endeavor to map out the characteristics that enable entities to make choices and preserve their way of life.

We have briefly highlighted the Western formulations of *summum bonum* and other ways of balancing the needs and interests of social entities and their individual members. We found no consensus either with regard to the definition of a good life in a unity of order, nor regarding the primacy of the individual versus community, nor about the sources of the values and norms of a social entity.<sup>45</sup>

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the village, for still another end the city, for another the kingdom, and finally for an ultimate end, by means of His art which is Nature, the Eternal God brings into being the human race in its totality” (Dante, 1559).

<sup>43</sup> In Davies’ analysis, the potential sources of dissolutions are as follows: “external, internal, voluntary and involuntary factors... via mechanisms [of] implosion, conquest, merger, liquidation and ‘infant mortality’” (Davis, 2011, pp. 732-739).

<sup>44</sup> “The true [persona] of action is he who can measure most nearly the constraints upon him, who chooses to remain within them and even to take advantage of the weight of the inevitable, exerting his own pressure in the same direction. All efforts against the prevailing tide of history – which is not always obvious – are doomed to failure...” (Braudel, 1967, p. 445).

<sup>45</sup> In the absence of a consensus, modern development programs anchor their rationale in some view of human development. “In 1990 the first Human Development Report introduced a new approach for advancing human wellbeing. Human development... is about expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live.” UN Human Development Program (sl.e.a.) The index refers to Amartya Sen’s (1999, pp. 3-14) argument that “the ends and means of development require examination and scrutiny for a fuller understanding of the development process; it is simply not adequate to take as our basic objective just the maximization of income or wealth... economic growth cannot sensibly be treated as an end in itself... viewing development in terms of expanding substantive freedoms directs attention to the ends that make development important, rather than merely to some of the means that, inter alia, play a prominent part in the process”.

The Catholic Church calls for “integral development as development of each man and of the whole man”. (Pope Paul VI, 1967). Integral development requires the integration of various sectors, such as the economy, politics, family life, religion, science, and the arts.

Comprehensive philosophical, economic and psychological “considerations... on the nature of happiness lead [Anthony and Charles Kenny] to believe that overall human well-being has three

However, the fact that we know of a number of social entities that have successfully preserved themselves over longer periods of time suggests that there exists a *modus vivendi*,<sup>46</sup> a lasting integration of communities. Therefore, we can conclude that some communities are better than others at satisfying the needs and interests of individuals in relative harmony with those of the community, and vice versa. There are ways of life through which individuals can afford a relatively good life in a unity of order which they are prepared to protect, preserve and reproduce. We can further conclude that such entities are bound together by shared norms and values and a shared morality. "Morality demands a care for happiness other than one's own... Each of us stands at the centre of a series of concentric circles [of other human persons] ... [in a] process [of] '*oikeiósisis*', which means home-making" (C. Kenny-A. Kenny, 2006, pp. 184-185). A human life is a quest to create an *oikos*, a good life in a unity of order for the individual and for those they care about.

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main constituents, which we will call welfare, contentment, and dignity" (C. Kenny-A. Kenny 2006, p. 8; see also C. Kenny (2011)).

<sup>46</sup> *Modus vivendi* as a "respectable and responsible arrangement given our common fallibility discerning practical truth" (Haldane, 2009, p. 260). "A neither ideal, nor absolutely unacceptable state of affairs, a bearable earthly imperfection and a relative and deficient practicality, a benevolent state of affairs and happiness" (Johan Huizinga, cited by van der Lem, 1993, pp. 152-154).

### **3. WORTHWHILE LIFE, PILLARS AND LAYERS**

#### **2.A. WORTHWHILE LIFE**

The practical goal of the Social Futuring project is to develop the Social Futuring Index (SFI), a composite measure of social entities consisting of a number of indicators in four pillars. The SFI scores will be interpreted from the perspective of the worthwhile life as a standard. Worthwhileness is chosen as a properly precise yet broad enough term that embraces alternative concepts of the good of man (excellence as defined by virtue, duty or utility ethics).

Based upon our intellectual journey, we conclude with reference to four necessary and sufficient features of worthwhileness; namely, Attachment, Care (Material Advancement, Freedom), Peace and Security, and Contentment. The sequence is not intended to allude to any hierarchy: different philosophical, sociological, biological or psychological considerations can result in other sequences.

#### **Attachment**

Attachment is chosen because it is essential for healthy bodily, psychological, intellectual and spiritual human development. Lack of proper attachments in childhood may deprive an individual of the ability to develop meaningful and satisfying interpersonal relationships, affiliations and belongings to social entities in adulthood.<sup>47</sup>

The primary and most formative mode of social existence for human beings is the family (Haldane, 2009, p. 171), the place of rearing, nurturing, education and the reproduction of human beings. It is the family where human persons become conscious of what relationship, dignity, equity, authority and hierarchy are; what is good and bad, just and unjust; what is love and what is generativity (a desire to care for others) (see Erikson, 1986 [1950], pp. 247-274); what is a gift

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<sup>47</sup> On the psychological study of and experiments related to attachment, see Cassidy-Shaver (eds.) (2016); Ainsworth (1982, pp. 3-30); Ainsworth-Blehar-Waters-Wall (1978); and Bowlby (1969).

(giving based upon love), and also reciprocity (exchange based on self-interest).

Since the family is the starting point of the human enterprise of *oikeiōsis*, we consider the proper functioning of the family to be a fundamental and essential feature of the worthwhile life. In absence of *oikos*, there is nothing to preserve, protect and reproduce.

### Care (Material Advancement<sup>48</sup> and Freedom)

Human beings require bodily goods as instrumental means of survival. The provisioning and maintenance of material goods must by necessity entail the accepted practices of production, distribution and acquisition, use and disposition of private or public goods; scalable management knowledge; and, therefore, an image of wealth and the nature and value of work. By virtue of differences in human needs, abilities and luck, the desirable and possible level of equality (through markets, appropriations, social policies, etc.) is a key concern in the political community on an intra- and intergenerationally just and generative basis.<sup>49</sup>

Human freedom is a unique attribute of human beings based upon their rational nature. As Abraham Lincoln noted: “we never hear of the man who wishes to take the good of being a slave.”<sup>50</sup> Freedom is the capacity and ability of self-determination to actualize one’s potential and to establish self-worth. It is the basis of one’s dignity as a person and a prerequisite to providing and caring for the self and other persons. Freedom is the capacity of a person to control their destiny and contribute to the future of the entities they belong to.

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<sup>48</sup> We could have used the term “prosperity” here instead of material advancement. We opted for the latter because prosperity connotes a general well-being rather than intergenerational material advancement. The original meaning of prosperity in Latin (*prosperāre*, based on “pro spere” meaning pro (for) + spēs (hope)), is to succeed, to flourish in general.

<sup>49</sup> Debates about necessity, convenience or excessive wealth, and corresponding questions about desirable and possible levels of equality point to the problem of limits in two senses. First, entities, however rich, are still subject to an absolute scarcity of available resources and goods. Second, even the richest entity cannot share its wealth equally with everyone in the world and still have enough for its own members to live on. See also Mueller (2010, pp. 36–37).

<sup>50</sup> It is “so plain that no one, high or low, ever does mistake it, except in a plainly selfish way; for although volume upon volume is written to prove slavery a very good thing, we never hear of the man who wishes to take the good of it, by being a slave himself” (Abraham Lincoln, 1854).

Since material advancement and freedom require a certain predictability, we consider the proper functioning of a judicial system an essential element of a worthwhile life, in the absence of which one cannot provide for oneself and others, and as a consequence can possess no valuables that are worth preserving and reproducing.

## **Peace and Security**

A social entity ceases to exist if security is not provided that enables its reproduction. Without peace and security, men and women cannot raise children, nor provide for themselves or others. Peace and security is the minimum substance of a “unity of order.” Without order, the generativity of a social entity is severely hindered since its energy is usurped by efforts to establish it. In the absence of internal and external peace and security, individuals and social entities are incapable of making predictions, and hence unable to set goals or influence their future.

## **Contentment**

Contentment is a state of mind, an attitude towards life, and a prerequisite of generativity. Contentment is about being free of unhealthy and unproductive societal comparisons. Traits such as envy and contempt disintegrate the tissues of social life, undermine trust, impede creativity, and obstruct the deployment of human capabilities (Schoeck, 1987). In the absence of some level of contentment, mere material advancement and freedom in security is inefficient at promoting the reproduction of life beyond the sheer biological urge.

The four features are independent of each other in the sense that they may display, to an extent, different dynamics, and the attainment of one might be sacrificed for another. However, the four features, to an extent, presuppose the existence of each other. The well-balanced attainment of attachments and belongings, material advancement and freedom, peace and security, and contentment is

a necessary condition for any entity aspiring for a good life in a unity of order that is worth preserving and reproducing.

## **2.B. DETECTING WORTHWHILENESS, INTERPRETING THE SFI**

The SFI is based upon a range of transparent indicators that inform four pillars which capture the critical fields that influence the ability of social entities to set goals, get things done, and preserve their way of life for the future. The pillars are applied to four layers of social entities based upon our concept of personhood as elaborated in Section 1 (see Figure 1).

### **Pillars**

#### **1. Ecology and Geopolitics**

Geographical position; climate; natural resources (water, arable land, energy capture); physical and virtual communication (defense and interconnectedness); characteristics of the political community.

#### **2. Technology**

Science and technology-driven changes in the natural and human world; role of work as a formative ingredient of human life; changes in the nature of human activities (e.g. robotization, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology).

#### **3. Socio-Economy**

Demographic trends (preservation and reproduction of populations); urbanization; social mobility; economic competitiveness and labor markets; management of human and social capital, education, healthcare, sports, structure of time.

#### **4. Culture and Spiritual Aspects**

The image of the human person, way of life and thinking, identity, self-consciousness, psychological structures, mentality, attitudes, ethics, social propensity to trust and cooperation; secular or religious values and norms exposed to the challenges of mass societies and global communication.

## **Layers of Social Entities**

### **1. Fundamental Cells**

Family and closely-knit permanent entities by birth or strong commitment; in general, kin.

### **2. Civic Associations and Organizations**

Foundations, charitable and voluntary organizations; voluntary (chosen) entities within which participants consider each other close in some crucial respects.

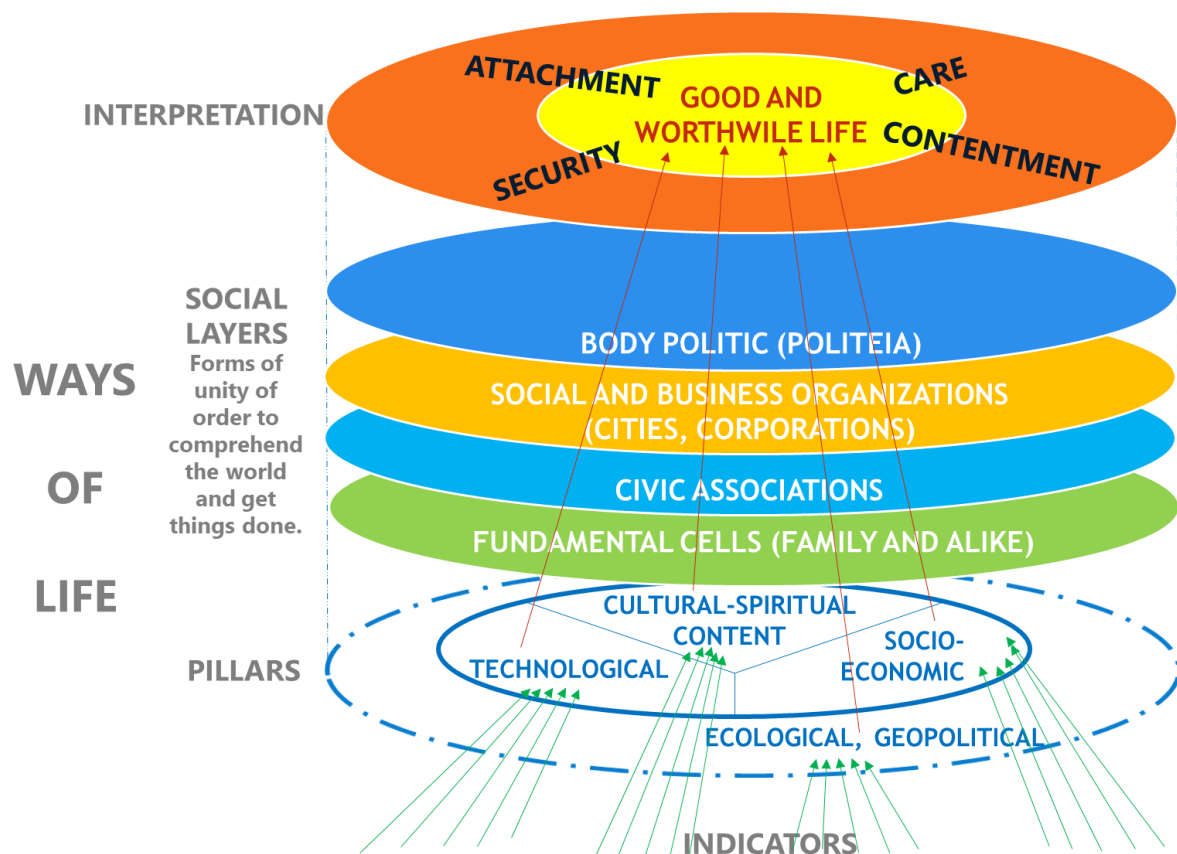
### **3. Social and Business Organizations**

Business ventures, corporations, trade unions, lobby organizations, multilateral agencies, cities; voluntarily (chosen) entities based predominantly upon exchange and material incentives.

### **4. Politeia or Body Politic**

Tribes, countries, nations, civilizations: entities to which participants adhere and belong to on the basis of a common and unique identity, sets of values, ways of life and thinking that establish the integrity of the community.

The nature of the participation in and belonging to entities varies from layer to layer, based on strength of ties, rights and duties, and material and non-material incentives.



**Figure 1: Interpreting ways of life as depicted by the SFI**

The indicators<sup>51</sup> that inform the pillars will be selected in a way that they meaningfully approximate the constitutive qualities of worthwhileness based on which the SFI scores of social entities will be interpreted. The major challenge for our endeavor is to depict the realistic status of preservation and reproduction of the ways of life under consideration.

Mass movements of people, goods, services and capital in modernity offer new opportunities and risks for any given entity. However, slow developments and changes are often obscured at higher levels of

<sup>51</sup> In constructing the SFI, besides the publicly available data sources we intend to extensively rely on information that is available through the methods of network science. From a bottom-up perspective, human life is a continuous 24/7 flow of time in a multifaceted lifeworld. Network science provides information on the actual activities and time allocation of human beings that deepens traditional statistics-based knowledge. The 24/7 cycle is a convenient frame in which to measure core activities such as physiological provisioning, socializing (friends and family), working, learning, reading, listening to music, playing sports, playing, contemplating, and idling, or dropping out through modified states of mind (such as alcohol or drugs).

statistical aggregation.<sup>52</sup> In Fernand Braudel's (1963) formulation, "a civilization attains its true persona by rejecting what troubles it in the obscurity of that no man's land which may already be foreign territory. Its history is the centuries-long distillation of a collective personality, caught like any individual between its clear, conscious objective and its obscure, unconscious fate, whose influence on aims and motives is often unobserved" (Braudel, 1995, pp. 31-32).<sup>53</sup> The twenty-first century is not different: Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2013, pp. 9-10) highlights the key opportunities and risks in his paper on "Immigration and National Identity in Norway, Migration Policy Institute (Washington DC)"; namely, whether "it is possible to be a good Norwegian citizen who is committed to the democratic values of society without sharing the majority's *way of life* in every respect"? Whether or not one "see[s] a possibly irreconcilable conflict between the Muslim faith and Norwegian identity"? Whether "there is a need to expand the conceptualization of what it meant to be Norwegian... [with] a concern to strengthen social cohesion in the country through common values"?

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<sup>52</sup> Two mistakes social scientists are prone to commit is averaging data that are qualitatively different and comparing non-comparable units. For example, a recurring error amongst historians, as Pomeranz (2000, pp. 3-10) points out, is comparing the most advanced regions of a civilization with the whole of another and drawing a conclusion with regard to the superiority of the former.

<sup>53</sup> Braudel clearly differentiated between the true persona of a social entity and a partial assimilation of technical aspects of life: "The history of civilizations... is [a] continual mutual borrowings over many centuries, despite which each civilization has kept its own original character. ...even supposing that all the worlds' civilizations sooner or later adopt similar technology, and thereby partly similar ways of life, we shall nevertheless for a long time yet face what are really very different civilizations" (Braudel, 1995, p. 8).

## CONCLUSION

I hope that this paper has shown the logic of the normative aspects underlying Social Futuring, defined as a social entity's creative intent to comprehend the world, its ability to get things done, and to control its destiny. I also hope that the paper demonstrates our determination to be as transparent in the interpretation of the SFI as possible via disclosure of our philosophical and (social) scientific underpinning.

We have assumed that the ultimate goal of social entities is to enable a good life in a unity of order that is worth preserving and reproducing. We started with a concept of "personhood" for both human beings and social personae. We reviewed ancient and modern formulations regarding the *summum bonum* and other concepts with regard to the balance between the needs of social entities and their individual members. Focusing on the *oikeiōsis* enterprise, we distilled four necessary and sufficient features (Attachment, Care [Material Advancement and Freedom], Security, and Contentment) of human life. We suggested that these features provide an appropriate normative basis for measuring the status and evaluating the changes in the state of affairs of a social entity. Finally, we provided an overview of the pillars and social layers as a basis for the development of the SFI.

There are many ways of life. Scholars and lay people alike sense that some entities are better than others at satisfying the needs of individuals and communities. Some entities seem to be better at creating relative harmony between individual ambitions and those of the community, and vice versa. Our aim with the Social Futuring project and the SFI is to contribute to an informed discussion about where we stand we are in relation to living worthwhile human lives, and how we can create a home that is worth preserving and reproducing.

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**Social Futuring Center (SFC)** is a multi-disciplinarian research unit of the Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB). Our aims are to develop the conceptual and normative framework of social futuring, to construct the **Social Futuring Index (SFI)** and to manage the **ConNext 2050** research project. The main scope of its research is the analysis and interpretation of social futuring of different social entities, focusing on short and long-term future changes (2017-2050). The SFC periodically publishes **working papers** that highlight the findings of its research. They are published to stimulate discussion and contribute to the advancement of our knowledge of multidisciplinary matters related to philosophy, sociology, psychology, bionics, informatics, economics, political science, environmental studies, futures studies, network science. SFC working papers are available online on the **www.socialfuturing.com** website.

