

## Success Philosophy: Historical Transformation of the Concept and Modern Aspects of Understanding

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**Abstract:** The study deals with the success philosophy its historical and cultural transformation. How often in modern life do people face a need to evaluate the actions of others? They have to correlate it to a certain arbitrary scale where the highest estimate is success and the lowest a failure. These estimation standards of certain people's actions especially actively apply to famous and creative people-politicians, athletes, TV presenters, musicians, etc. The first, perhaps the most eye-catching, level of success is the monetary, financial success. But is it the main and only, the most important and most valuable measure of success? We have analyzed the understanding of success in the ancient biblical time, magic art, antiquity, ancient Chinese philosophy, early Christianity, the renaissance, protestantism and philosophy of pragmatism. The social and philosophical aspect presents the modern understanding of success. The relationship between the objective (external) and subjective (internal) types of success is analyzed; a positive essence of the success as the single desire to achieve a goal and subsequent emotional satisfaction of the choice of ways to achieve the desired are determined. The criteria to achieve positive success in practice and the factors being obstacles to such achievement are presented.

**Key words:** Success, assumption, successfulness, work, objective and subjective success, internal and external success, desire

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### INTRODUCTION

Every person needs in his/her life that other people positively acknowledge his/her personal actions, initiatives, achievements. Recognition of the subject's achievements by family members, colleagues and strangers is called success. The main motivation for a person involved in any social activity is success. It is expressed in the fact that his/her work is recognized and appreciated. The modern pace of life in the conditions of constant competition disposed of the principle of achieving success as much as possible by linking it directly to the financial benefit. So, the success was seen only in the applied action-economic result paradigm. But is the external success principle so one-sided as just recognition of personal merits by others, is it so short as a falling star moment this aspect was noticed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Faust at the beginning of his path: "Poor devil what can you give?.../ And Honour's fine and godlike charm, That, like a meteor, dies?" (Goethe, 2002) (Part One. Faust's Study). Are we not looking, followed by billions of people who lived before us in the world, in the recognition of personal merits for anything more profound, valuable and long-lasting?

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study analyzed the concept of success in the historical periodization from the ancient times to the present and the characteristic features of understanding of success in a particular era were identified. Comparative analysis of the understandings of success in the historical periodization shows that the meaning of success was understood differently in different times and it is not an accidental phenomenon.

The concept of success as prosperity is found in the first book of Moses from the Bible describing the events of archaic time of the 3rd-2nd millennium BC and it is connected with the personality of Joseph (Joseph was the youngest of twelve sons of Israel; his brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. There Joseph proved himself a clever interpreter of dreams and vivid economic manager and he became the first assistant to the Pharaoh). "And his master saw that the Lord (was) with him and that the Lord made all (that) he did to prosper in his hand". Or: "The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing (that was) under his hand because the Lord was with him and (that) which he did, the Lord made (it) to prosper". The success is here as a quality given by God to the actions

of a chosen person and it is consistent with the basic theological principle “everything is from God”. In ancient traditions, the processes of success were considered as those that can be controlled by such methods as magic art, spells, witchcraft. Indeed, there is a correlation between any two events and phenomena. The social world is woven from the cause and effect relationship. Someone’s success in ancient times might have been considered as such an effect, the cause of which is hidden from people. Ceremonial rituals served for somewhat of propitiation, attraction of otherworldly forces for material wealth, love and glory in this world. Secret knowledge, spells, sacrifices-all of this was aimed at achieving a long life, well-being on a hunt, victory in a military conflict. Thus, the category of success in ancient times had a sacred meaning.

The ancient philosophy does not have any steady category of success. Indirectly, “it was addressed by the ancient Greek poet and philosopher Hesiod (8th century BC) in his poem” *Works and Days*, “he reflected on the social causes and personal predicament of wealth and poverty as success and failure”. Plato paid some attention to the phenomenon of success in his dialogues. Exploring existence, justice, interaction between good and evil he considered the personal qualities that are characteristic for the representatives of the Hellenic civilization such as desire for fame and desire for recognition. In the ancient Latin language, the word “success” includes a lot of options: progressus, processus, profectus, proventus, fortuna, eventus, successus, prosperitas, emolumentum. So, one word is used in relation to a human being, the other to a war; one writing relates to a living subject and quite another to a dead one.

However, the ancient Greek philosophers had no concept of art formed later from the trinity of Poiesis-Mimesis Techne and in our view, the category of success can be shown through the principle of the great Roman general Julius Caesar: *Vedi-Vidi-Vici* (came-saw-conquered). Here, as in all knowledge of ancient thought being able to expand and become more complicated over time, the philosophical essence of the category of success is behind such qualities as: space, action and result (consequence). As we can see, originally binding to military strategic and tactical activity, the phenomenon of success in this sense bears in reality such qualities as efficiency of the applied forces and their effectiveness at the right time and in the right place.

The Chinese strategist and philosopher of the 6th century, Sun (2005), researcher of the famous treatise *The Art of War*, devoted much attention to the strategic success technology in solving all levels of conflicts from a psychological rivalry to open hostilities. He wrote about the way how in the framework of Daoism to succeed in

emerging controversial situations using physical force only in extremely rare circumstances. According to him, striving to win with a thought is needed even before the beginning of open confrontation, thereby achieving success without any losses. The Sun Tzu’s well-known thesis “It is best to win without fighting”. Contemporary reading of the Sun Tzu’s texts says that the nature of competition has not changed and virtually not transformed in the last 2.5 thousand year. The competition in the modern business relationships is similar to a military rivalry except for a failure to use firearms massively to defeat a competitor (although, such cases are common now).

The Christian turn of worldview in the Middle Ages led to a new perspective on the phenomenon of success. Now a life full of prosperity, happiness and fame is considered manifestation of demonic pride. “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” so sounds, out of Jesus mouth, a New Testament phrase that has become widespread in the Middle Ages. The antique feeling of success is replaced and now the success is treated as an assumption that is a correct and fast completion of earthly life (death) and entry into the true paradisiac existence. The biggest religious festival named the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary became the ideal of such assumption. Any righteous death of a priest, monk and faithful worshiper was called an assumption from now.

The Renaissance epoch was primarily a revolution in the system of medieval values and in the evaluation of all things and attitude to them. A belief emerged that an individual was the highest value and therefore, the human actions and daily work are internally caused by the achievement of success. It was the time that the idea of Christian holiness faded on the background of a newly revived ancient idea of heroism with a new filling of Machiavelli (2015) completes his treatise *The Prince* with apotheosis of prowess (virtu). Courage at a war in a campaign becomes only one of the virtues; self-sacrifice is no longer the dominant value and during the Renaissance epoch the main quality of a personality becomes success in achieving a goal. Although, the category of success is still unavailable (the category of virtu covers it), the meaning of this phenomenon is clearly present, it gradually joins the leading cultural values of the epoch. Machiavelli (2015) completes his treatise *The Prince* with the apotheosis of virtu. And this personal quality is the main condition of success political according to Machiavelli (2015) as opposed to meanness of a soul and failures following from this.

The Protestant reform started by Luther in Europe opened up a different understanding of the category of success which was neither in the antiquity nor in the Catholicism, although, it was anticipated in the Renaissance. Now this phenomenon of obtaining vital goods by some people against the background of others acquired a religious-bourgeois character being understood as an individual exclusivity in the face of the Most High. A desire to be chosen led people to active employment in their profession and independence. Now there was no fear of a systematic, meticulous, hard work which could not be regarded any longer as a sin of pride. The condition of success was economy and thrift in respect to the values bestowed by God: time, health, property. The Protestant ethics (labor, entrepreneurship) was a key to the emergence of a new social class the bourgeoisie. The principle of good work becomes the highest challenge in desire for salvation of the soul. The one who purposefully works in his/her life will be able to rise in the social hierarchy, whatever low-class person from the birth. The principle "if you are a street sweeper, then be the best street sweeper" originated in this period.

Jean Calvin became a successor of the Reformation. He simplified and strengthened a thesis about divine predestination as much as possible and reduced it to an absolute fanaticism: some people are chosen by God even before their birth and the other come into the world a priori for poverty and sorrow. Calvinism recognizes good and successful business management as the most visible sign of being chosen and it acknowledges business passivity or financial failures as destiny of people with a generic brand. The Protestantism's deification of diligence resulted in Jean Calvin's ban on the begging and monasticism. Such poor people were not allowed to Geneva, where Jean Calvin was the head of the city and once appeared they were expelled.

In the Anglican Church, Baptists and Puritans, an everyday economic and financial practice was formed; it rested on the success ethics. A woman sitting by a window with embroidery or reading, her husband turning the leaves and recording in a household book the housing expenses such scenes of everyday life became very representative of Protestant families in Europe. Spreading further around the world, the Protestantism played a key role in the philosophy, economy, politics and worldview of inhabitants in the countries of the New World, Australia and Oceania.

The phenomenon of success becomes gradually an object of philosophical research. In 1870, a scientific group of employees from the University of Cambridge, the so-called "metaphysical club" (William James, John

Dewey, Charles Sanders Peirce), created a philosophical theory of pragmatism (from the Greek "Pragma" is a deal, action). The pragmatism considers actions, purposive activity as the central defining characteristics of human existence. Human thinking is seen as a means of adapting an organism to the environment with the aim of successful actions. The value of thinking is caused by its efficiency at achieving success in solving life's problems. Thus, the pragmatists formulated an idea of the rational thought value to ensure success. This utilitarian theory was applied in the business ethics which declared the method of achieving success by any means as acceptable. In this sphere of activity, the path to success was freed from the moral dominating component. So, an enterprising individual gained absolute freedom but lost his/her previous true human qualities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

If one imagines a successful person, then most likely he/she will look like a secured, statuesque, authoritative individual being healthy, beautiful and fashionable. Torn, dirty clothes or a sickly look do not relate to a person having success in society. So who are they the successful representatives: public figures and generals such as Julius Caesar, I. Napoleon, O. Bismarck; financial magnates of the Rothschild family, mythical Uncle Sam or animated Scrooge McDuck whose favorite occupation is swimming in his own money; perhaps artists of genius Raphael, Monet and Warhol?

Trying to bring the success of the category of the examples of great personalities' lives we come across with the impossibility of unambiguous estimation of a personality's life as constantly successful or permanently unsuccessful. Everyone had his/her ups and downs, good and bad luck streaks in life. For example, in addition to the dizzying highs and unprecedented "twisting-in" the history, the artillery lieutenant, Corsican Napoleon Bonaparte was very little known and needed till his 27 year. As M.A. Rothschild was twenty years his parents died he was left with four younger brothers on his arms and numerous debts. To all the above, it is necessary to accurately distinguish between success in life and after life.

Neither Diogenes (who lived in a barrel) nor V. Van Gogh (the only artist in the history of world painting who did not sell a single picture in his life) nor V.A. Mozart (buried in a common grave for the poor) felt truly the financial and career success in their personal life. However their names gained fame, millions of fans and actually creative immortality only after their earthly life. Does a category of persons need to die at first to have

success? And global fame will definitely come only after this physiological action. Therefore because of a multidimensional phenomenon of success, only the lifetime success directly focused on the career development and the attainment of any social benefits will be considered hereafter. However, these narrow limits also include many contradictions, problems and even secrets.

The modern psychological science distinguishes two kinds of success: objective and subjective (Hammer, 2008). The first is measured by such characteristics as a size of the fee, amount of the organized projects and level of the held position in the organization's hierarchy. Subjective success means a set of individual's or individual's inner circle judgments about personal professional achievements and results. These are the parameters of job and career satisfaction. A problem occurs as to the interdependence of these two types of success which includes some questions and contradictions now.

Can be a person considered organically (internally and externally) successful, if he/she did not make his/her desires, dreams come true, face the matters out, achieve in his/her life what he/she dreamed of in his/her childhood and adolescence? Probably not because there is no visible manifestations of objective success here. But a person him/herself can be narcissistically satisfied with his/her life away from the cameras, intrusive paparazzi, discreditable press articles and he/she can experience his/her happiness of existence in a small world of his/her family, real friends and like-minded colleagues. Can we consider an individual integrally successful, if he/she constantly turns all his/her ideas and projects into reality, achieves any his/her goals but he/she does not feel any satisfaction or grace from it? Of course not, because the objective success obviously contradicts the subjective feeling of success. Many people can be jealous of such person's expensive clothes, fashion accessories, luxurious lifestyle but such person may experience internal frustration with his/her life, be tormented by pangs of conscience about the way to achieve seemingly luxury living.

Modern popular science works cause success not as a fantastic form of existence but as a constant work dedicated on the implementation of own goals and settings (though it is worth noting that the success in the arts is still associated with such non-analytical categories as genius, talent, hypnosis and even mysticism (Kayukov, 2010). Jim Rohn, CEO of an American company, practitioner and philosopher in business, states: "Success is not a miracle or mysticism. Success is a natural consequence of the constantly applied basic principles". Can we then insist that creation of some subjective axioms and targets in him/herself can make any

business in the social world successful? How are the purely personal motivations transformed into an explicit social action which gives a carte blanche to its creator as an unlimited right to supremacy among the equals?

The biggest obstacle in achieving success appears to be a subjective factor. Lack of organization, ignorance, personal fears of the unknown, complexes and insecurity are signs of failure. According to the above researchers in the organization and achievement of own external success consistent with the internal procedures of success, the main (basic) rules and settings can assist; all actions should often be correlated with them. The success is conditioned by: great desire clear goal efficient action plan positive attitude to the surrounding world belief in personal success the best possible education self-confidence.

This composition of the success components is to a certain extent, quite persistent and popular with some additions and changes. However, all these considerations about success place greater focus on subjective volitional qualities of an individual personality. No analysis of the social, cultural, natural and moral qualities is implied here.

A subject can embody, bring up in him/herself and accumulate with time all these settings in the real world with the help of his/her work. "Success is very largely a matter of adjusting one's self to the ever-varying and changing environments of life in a spirit of harmony and poise" (Napoleon, 1928). The only thing that does not depend on personal efforts is a great desire and love to any business or activity. The nature gives this aspiration to a person. An individual focused on success will not try to seek recognition in the field to which he/she has no desire since it will naturally cause internal disharmony and lead to imbalance of the inner man. Thus, the first setting "a great desire" is a link between external success and internal subjective satisfaction from the applied actions and the choice of ways to achieve the objective success.

## CONCLUSION

What are the results of modern science in the understanding of success? The formulation is stated below: successful activities are associated with the ability to keep up-to-date with actions and do not be late in such actions with the ability to feel a situation, to apply the means adequate to the tasks, rather than contradicting them. Each step leading to the set and desired goals is achieved in a timely manner and it brings a deep sense of happiness and satisfaction (Zeiwald, 2008). Such external manifestations of success as a bright career rise, material wealth, authority among people and prestige of the activities can coincide but they can also withstand

(that often happens) the more profound and valuable manifestations of the person's success such as: urgency and relevance of activities, legality and humanity towards achieving personal success. However, any study of the phenomenon of success brings us so much closer to understanding of the phenomenon as it moves us away from it. "I returned and saw under the sun that the race (is) not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill but time and chance happeneth to them all", says King Solomon in Ecclesiastes or the Preacher. Success is not completely standardized, it is not subject to artificial cultivation, it is accidental and inconsistent. The category of success stands alongside with the most mysterious phenomena-fate, chance and chaos.

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