

# Ghostbeing: Interpretation of *The Process of Wellbeing* by Iza Kavedžija through a Hauntological Perspective

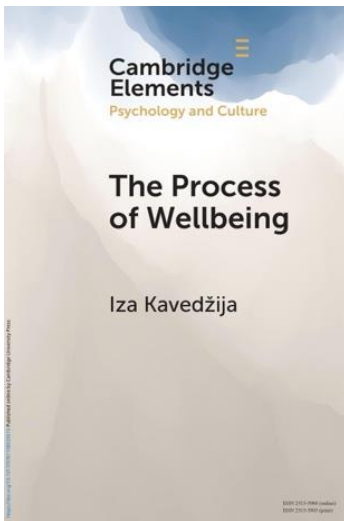
Sheng-Hsiang Lance Peng\*

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## Abstract:

This review uses hauntological frameworks to scrutinise Kavedžija's work, *The Process of Wellbeing*. Throughout the discourse, I encapsulate the notions, conceptualisations, and instances expounded in this scholarly work, positing that the integration of hauntology into wellbeing perspectives proffers substantive insights. Elaborating on Kavedžija's contentions, I accentuate the importance of interconnectedness between historical antecedents and contemporary circumstances in configuring the comprehension of wellbeing.

**Keywords:** wellbeing, hauntology, interconnectedness



## Human Flourishing:

### Conviviality, Care, and Creativity

Examining the essence of living well with others, *The Process of Wellbeing* (Kavedžija, 2021) challenges traditional social science perspectives that often focus solely on problems and pathologies. Published in the *Elements in Psychology and Culture* series by Cambridge University Press, it offers a fresh outlook on individuals and society by redirecting attention from pathology to positive aspects. Wellbeing, explored in this publication, is not a mere absence of suffering but a nuanced interplay with the challenging facets of human experience. While understanding social problems is crucial, a comprehensive grasp of wellbeing requires an exploration beyond simplistic dichotomies, acknowledging the interconnectedness of suffering and wellbeing across various cultures.

Hauntology, a term rooted in Derrida's philosophy (2012), refers to the study of the persistent presence of the past in the present, where

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\* PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, shp48@cam.ac.uk

spectres or hauntological elements continue to influence contemporary experiences. In the context of wellbeing, I coin the term “ghostbeing” to encapsulate the lingering echoes of past experiences, cultural influences, and societal expectations that subtly shape individuals’ perceptions of their own wellbeing. Applying hauntological perspectives to Kavedžija’s work involves examining how the spectres of cultural norms, historical contexts, and personal experiences affect the construction and understanding of wellbeing. By adopting this approach, I aim to unveil the hidden layers of influence, offering a nuanced exploration of the interconnectedness between the past and present in the conceptualization of wellbeing.

In her exploration of wellbeing, Kavedžija intricately delves into the discourse through three fundamental themes: conviviality, care, and creativity. Haunted by the spectral echoes of past social interactions, conviviality emerges as an ongoing, beautiful process, demanding craftsmanship in navigating relationships. Kavedžija’s lens reveals the ethico-political dimensions of living well together, presenting it as an ever-evolving, dynamic entity shaped by lingering ghosts from previous social encounters. Within the landscape of human relationships, care becomes a defining moral practice that transcends the boundaries of the tangible and the intangible. Kavedžija’s perspective unveils care’s dual nature – nurturing and taxing, a gift and labour – entangled with the threads of institutional regimes. The moral practice of care, haunted by ghosts of benevolence and malevolence, emerges as an interaction of haunting influences. Anthropological insights on creativity unfold within the hauntological paradigm, emphasising its responsiveness, iteration, and dual potential. Kavedžija’s exploration of creativity, haunted by subtle vestiges from past imaginative endeavours, acknowledges its transformative power. The liminal stage, akin to a haunted time of potential and possibility, underscores how creative attunement with spectral forces shapes uncertainty into potential, revealing a hauntingly supportive foundation for wellbeing.

Kavedžija challenges the notion that wellbeing is a luxury reserved for those with leisure, arguing that reflections on the good life are integral to every human society. She dismisses the idea that concerns about wellbeing are post-materialist, emphasizing the universal significance of understanding diverse ideas about the good life. She then brings attention to specific cases. In Sierra Leone, particularly among the Kuranko people, the impact of hardship and adversity has not prevented contemplation on wellbeing. For the Kuranko, the emphasis is on coping with life’s burdens, balancing personal needs with social obligations. The struggle for a better life underscores the universal dilemma of balancing individual aspirations with communal responsibilities, highlighting the

tension between scarce resources and the demands of social harmony. Jackson's storytelling approach (2011) captures the ambiguity inherent in these existential issues, recognizing the elaborate interdependence among causes and effects in navigating a changing world and shaping lives for the better. Stories, with their multiplicity of meanings, offer valuable insights into how individuals can thrive in the face of life's challenges, making them well-suited for an exploration of wellbeing.

The exploration of the Kuranko example triggers profound contemplation on how individuals shape their self-perception in the quest for wellbeing. Hauntologically, Kavedžija contends that there is a connection between these aspects, underlining the importance accorded to relationships by groups like the Kuranko. They navigate the spectral echoes of openness to others while acknowledging the challenge of truly deciphering their thoughts and motivations. Conversely, those viewing humans as discrete entities may find it more straightforward to express emotions and intentions. These haunted perspectives on selfhood entwine with the fabric of wellbeing, proposing that negotiating the spectral balance between societal expectations and openness to others stands as a central challenge in cultivating haunted wellbeing. In the exploration of wellbeing across diverse cultural realms, it becomes imperative to delve into the spectral array of conceptualizations surrounding personhood.

Discussing the challenges of framing wellbeing as purely subjective, Kavedžija contests the misleading nature of the term "subjective" in capturing the multifaceted features of individual involvement. While acknowledging the personal and interior aspects of wellbeing, she critiques the academic notion of a self-contained individual, highlighting a dissonance with the realities of people's lives.

### **Whispers of Wellbeing: Ghostly Ties in Interconnected Relationships**

To grasp the core of wellbeing as a dynamic process, Kavedžija asserts that it unfolds in an ever-changing environment, akin to navigating undulating waters rather than walking a stable path. Creative processes thrive in complex, collaborative interactions within an ever-changing environment, demanding improvisation. Embracing uncertainty, seen as a fertile ground for creativity, implies openness to external influences and ideas. Life's navigation is intertwined with others, shaping possibilities and constraining choices within networks of care. Viewing wellbeing as a social navigation prompts reflection on agency and control. Although entanglements with others limit individual agency, recognizing dependence on others becomes the foundation of agency itself. Processual creativity, valuing input as both productive and constraining, transforms uncertainty into a resource. The temporal aspect

of wellbeing emphasises the importance of leeway, resisting efficiency-driven narratives. Time proves crucial for enskillment, creativity, and the mastery of convivial arts, highlighting the interconnected temporalities of care. While contemplating the fluid and interwoven aspects of wellbeing, Kavedžija puts forth:

It is necessary to shift the focus away from individuals, and to conceive of persons as continuously constituted through interactions and their caring relationships with others. Wellbeing is never an achievement, in other words; it is not something to be attained or possessed. It is, rather, a quality of how the multiple relationships that constitute our lives unfold over time (58).

The quote encapsulates a haunting perspective on wellbeing, accentuating its elusive, ephemeral nature that defies conventional notions of attainment or possession. The rejection of wellbeing as a mere endpoint challenges linear narratives, echoing the hauntological notion that time's imprint persists and actively shapes the dynamics of the present. When viewed through the lens of hauntology, wellbeing becomes a spectral quality, a manifestation of the relationships and interactions that persist across time. The assertion that wellbeing is not an achievement but a quality of unfolding relationships introduces a temporal dimension, aligning with hauntology's emphasis on the enduring influence of the past. In this hauntological interpretation, the subjectivity of wellbeing is inseparable from the relational context. Acknowledging the social and relational qualities of wellbeing, Kavedžija urges a departure from an individualistic focus. Instead, it calls for an exploration of individuals intimately connected within the tapestry of their relationships, resonating with the hauntological concept of being haunted by interspersed pasts. This perspective challenges traditional views of wellbeing, urging us to navigate its complexities through the ghostly echoes of our shared histories and interconnected relationships.

As she approaches the end of her writing, Kavedžija concludes by proposing a novel perspective on wellbeing inspired by Singh's research (2017) on forest patrolling in India. Singh illustrates how local residents, by investing time and care in forest preservation, form affective attachments, treating the environment as a shared commons rather than a resource for exploitation. This connection between affective states, care, and wellbeing highlights the interdependence of conviviality and care in cultivating wellbeing for all parties involved. Kavedžija suggests reimagining wellbeing as an "affective commons" (61), where shared emotional resources thrive in circulation, challenging the notion of scarcity and foregrounding a generative logic of flow. This perspective

encourages viewing wellbeing as a collective endeavour rather than an individual pursuit.

In conclusion, considering the hauntological perspective on wellbeing as both relational and processual prompts an expanded focus beyond individual, subjectively experienced wellbeing. Kavedžija spotlights the crucial importance of attending to the interlocking of relational threads shaped by care, skills, and practices. Wellbeing, as a phenomenon characterized by perpetual evolution, finds its flow influenced by a diverse array of convivial arts and creative practices. It is paramount to explore the broader spectrum of convivial skills within their specific contexts, alongside creative and caring practices. This prompts a question: How do individuals craft the pathways through which the essence of wellbeing traverses? Venturing into the varied tactics people create these conduits provides a richer understanding of the sophisticated entanglement of factors – the ghostbeing – that shape the movement and modulation of wellbeing.

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