Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney

University of Lodz

POLAND AND THE EUROPEAN UNION —SELECTED PROBLEMATICS

During my third year of studies, I began searching to answer some of life's major questions. One of my obsessions was understanding what happiness is and how to be happy. Initially, my reflections were infantile. However, later, I started conducting proper research, reading books and scholarly papers. The deeper I delved into the subject, the larger my questions and doubts became.

And there is nothing surprising about that because over the centuries the very word *happiness* and its nature have acquired an abundance of meanings, associations and opinions, all of which have been heartily debated. This was rightly observed by Władysław Tatarkiewicz in his monumental work on the subject, *Analysis of Happiness* (1978). According to this eminent Polish philosopher, the basic problem we face when philosophizing on human happiness is the term's ambiguity.

As a result of my research, I managed to distinguish four basic types of happiness:

1. Happiness as "highly positive developments"—that is, developments that positively influenced the life course of an individual, inducing a state of happiness. Examples of such events include being admitted to a university, getting one's dream job, publishing with a prestigious publisher, going on a wonderful holiday, the birth of a healthy child, getting married and organizing a superb wedding party.

2. Happiness as "incredibly pleasant moments"—understood as experiencing a sense of inner fulfillment: falling in love with reciprocity, appreciating the pleasure of a good meal, achieving satisfaction with the proper execution of a task, or enjoying a Saturday evening spent with family and friends.

3. Happiness as "possession of the highest human good," that is *Eudaimonia*, of which Herodotus, Aristotle and Boethius wrote. Here we can distinguish

two categories: tangible goods, which improve one's standard of life (a new car or house, a modern computer, brand-new clothes), and intangible goods such as morals or internal peace.

4. Happiness as "satisfaction with one's life"—or the overall balance of one's life. If it is positive, a person's life can be assessed as a happy one. As Władysław Tatarkiewicz put it in his study, "happiness is full and lasting satisfaction with the entirety of one's life" (1076: 74). Similarly, Johann Wolfgang Goethe observed in one of his letters, "I am happy, and I wish to live my life again" (qtd.: Kirsch 2016). We find similar thoughts in the writings of Katherine Mansfield, a New Zealand born, English novelist, who—in her *Journal*—thanked God for the very fact of her existence (1964: 49). Contrary to *Eudaimonia*, this category is subjective, because it is measured by satisfaction with life and not by the possession of goods.

All these categories have one thing in common: they describe something that is both positive and valuable. The popular understanding of happiness includes a highly favorable development we are part of. When we talk about such a series of positive events or fortunate life circumstances, we might name them success, prosperity, good fortune or a stroke of luck. Such experiences run the continuum from relief to contentment to moments of pure joy. We experience happiness of the first kind when the lock of an attacker's gun trying to kill us gets jammed or when we manage to leave a building just before the terrorists' bomb explosion. But happiness also means being born in a well-off family, being in good health, having access to tangible and intangible goods, and being loved and enjoying other people's appreciation. Moreover, it can also be felt during temporary events, such as a holiday at the beach or a New Year's Eve party.

The issue is obviously much more complicated, yet all concepts, categories, reflections and comments on happiness are linked by a certain condition. We can find this condition in the famous work of Agnolo Bronzino (1503–1572), an Italian painter, draftsman and poet from the Mannerism period. The work *Allegory of Happiness* is on display at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. At the center of the painting, we see the Allegory of Happiness with the Horn of Plenty. She is flanked by Cupid, Justice and Prudence. Above the head of Happiness is Fame sounding a trumpet, and Glory holding a laurel garland. At her feet are Time and Fortune, the latter with the wheel of destiny and the enemies of Peace lying humiliated at her feet. In other words, through this iconographic presentation, its creator suggests that the prerequisites of happiness are Peace and Security.

Indeed, the etymology of the word Peace can be helpful. The word comes from Latin *PAX* meaning "consensus, tranquility, a moment of rest, lack of conflict or hostility, harmony."[1] The English word *peace* was first used in the 13th century as a greeting "Peace be with you," which was inspired by the Hebrew word SHALOM, meaning "being healthy, calm, in a proper shape of mind." A close word is the Arabic *salaam*, which does not only denote peace but also equity, fairness, safety, happiness, well-being, prosperity, integrity, fortune and friendship. "Peace" can be found in nearly all dictionaries and encyclopedias of the world, and yet a clear and unambiguous definition of the word does not exist. There are even more doubts when it comes to the context of political science. According to Joachim Kondziela, "peace" is a "verbal understanding" between states, nations and politicians as to the scope of values, which—when being defined—result in a clear divergence of opinions (1975: 32). This is complicated by the fact that, in popular perceptions, peace constitutes something of unquestionable value and indisputable parameters.

The notion of peace serves as an intuitively understood code, an incontestable axiom in foreign policy, at least in its declaratory dimension. "Peace" is also an existing or desired state of affairs. It is an ideal that humankind believes in and strives for. It is the concept that expresses the most sublime ideals and humanitarian values of man. Yet—as seen by realists (today neo-realists)—it can be also a "dangerous illusion." Although this general way of understanding peace does not usually cause controversy, difficulties immediately appear when to this general notion we attribute more substantial and clearly defined content resulting from the needs and expectation of individual states. Then, this extra-semantic level of understanding becomes more complicated.

According to Kukułka, "peace fosters the nurturing and development of all kinds of creative international order and humanist aspects of world civilization." It not only covers different levels of society, such as the individual, class, nation, international system or state, but also various issues of social development centered around cooperation, social order, conflict, and domination, among others (1982: 61). It is the ethical dimension of peace that promotes its understanding as a "value in social life," as observed in the European Union context by Roman Kuźniar in his work *Prawa człowieka. Prawo, Instytucje, Stosunki międzynarodowe* [*Human Rights. Institutional Rights, International Relations*] (2000: 269).

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[1] If not indicated otherwise, all translations are mine.

As early as the beginning of the 17th century, the famous English poet and preacher John Donne maintained in his *Meditations* (XVII) that:

> No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.

Beyond any doubt, man is a social being; a human being never lives alone. Isolation or separation does not help when it comes to personal growth: it does not foster self-development; it does not forge an individual's identity. As observed by Professor Józef Tischner, a lonely man can only build a hiding place for himself, or herself, whereas building a home requires the presence of at least two—you and me.

> Man cannot settle down in loneliness. Lone people build cells, others construct hiding places. The very essence of reciprocity consists in offering to another man of what is only possible thanks to the presence of another human being. (qtd. Bobko 2003: xviii)

Since ancient times, most human beings have wanted to live in an ideal world, a world free of conflict, happy and peaceful, in which they could fulfil their dreams and satisfy their wishes. This theme—since the dawn of our civilization—has been present in our reflections on the human condition, yet this does not mean that it has been fully exploited. On the contrary, it is still quite relevant nowadays. The overwhelming desire for peace and almost endless human imagination have pushed humans to develop new ideologies or belief systems, most often in utopian contexts.

The term "utopia" is a relatively new one—its use can be traced to the Latin title of the essay (1516) of the same name by Thomas More. The origins of *utopia* are ambiguous as it could have come from either the Greek *outopos* (Greek: ou—no, topos—place: *non-place*, *a place nonexistent*) or *eutopia* (meaning *a good place*). Quite possibly this ambiguity was deliberate: one can suspect this, judging by the history of creative and abstract human thought, preoccupied with the project of creating an ideal political system, based on solidarity, justice and equality. The term "utopia" has since been used to describe those motifs and storylines in literature and pseudoscience that express the human desire for a better world. The biblical paradise is the first example of utopia. An-

cient Greeks had their own paradise topos—namely Arcadia. Then we should mention Plato's dialogue, *The Republic.* Over time, the image of utopia has changed and evolved, sometimes taking rather surprising forms, depending on the epoch. This striving for happiness, so deeply rooted in human nature, leads people to adjust their expectations to pre-existing utopian visions or create them according to their own imagination. As a result, it is possible to imagine an unlimited number of combinations of ideal worlds created by a sublime awareness. Yet, we should remember here that each of these ideal worlds is modified according to the individual beliefs, opinions and desires of their creators.

In his book *Spotkania z Utopią* [*Meetings with Utopia*] (1980), Jerzy Szacki enumerates many of the books devoted to this subject. The majority of the works he mentions condemn the present zealously and with great pathos, yet do not provide practical solutions. Instead, they propose escaping into a dream world. We are told what good is, but not how it can be achieved. We are told what evil is, but not how to replace it with good. Such utopias are quite often created by those members of society who are well-ingrained in their social environment, ready to follow its order even, yet want to do so by embarking on voyages to happy islands where they share this comfortable lifestyle only with a small circle of good friends. *Utopian* works demonstrate how different the images of utopia may be and how they have changed over time. However, the experiences of past generations have taught us that even the most beautiful ideas, when transformed into reality, become tainted, being lost in the barrage of information, or simply become irrelevant.

Examples of utopia are also found in Polish literature, in particular during the years when Poland did not exist on the map of Europe. In the early 19th century, Wojciech Gutkowski wrote the novel *Podróż do Kalopeii* [*A Voyage to Kalopeia*] (1956). The work was a classical utopian novel of the age of enlightenment. It depicted an ideal society that rejected private ownership and adopted only the best laws. Its citizens pursued life in a state of ideal harmony, equality and prosperity deep in the interior of the Australian continent. "Kalop" is a Pole (Polish: *Polak* read backwards). The Poles fled to this distant continent to seed a new society, organized according to entirely new rules, ones having nothing in common with Australian reality. There they secured a *utopian viability*, far from Europe and its influence on the development of the Polish society, and most importantly far from Poland's political reality.

As observed by Karl Mannheim, when literary utopias are turned into reality, they become ideologies, which—with their negative undertones—are in fact

dangerous for the very existence of the society in which they were born (Shils 1974: 83–89). It is enough to mention communism or Nazism amongst those dangerous ideologies. This makes us pose the question of whether contemporary Europe, the European Union, is an answer to these concepts of utopia? For nearly 70 years we have lived in peace, even if there are some threats to our security. Do we live or—thanks to the European Union—aspire to live, under the rule of law with an improved social order, one that that has ended the wars that had plagued Europe for centuries? Have we instituted sustainable peace on the continent? The optimists claim that this is almost so—with the disappearance of basic causes of wars such as uncontrolled power, rivalry between nations and individuals, and conflicts between interest groups. The existence of universally recognized laws, to some extent, blocks violence and the violations of rights, both in individual and social relations. Moreover, some are of the opinion that the European Union is too powerful a political organism to be threatened by an external attack.

The European Union was established through and by its founding treaties. And even if one of the revised treaties, the so-called *Constitutional Treaty* adopted in 2004, was not ratified by all Member States, the treaties in force (including the currently in force Lisbon Treaty), form the constitutional foundation for the existence of the European Union as a community of law. During the Polish accession process, we witnessed a lively discussion over our Europeanness. Some may disagree with the statement that Poland has come a long and difficult way back to Europe, with one of its milestones being the accession referendum in June 2003 (with 77.45% voting for accession to the EU). Having looked back at over a thousand years of Polish history, we are aware that there were long periods of our non-presence in Europe, in geopolitical terms and—by the same token—absence from the mainstream, socio-political and civilizational development of the continent. Nevertheless, Poles were able to preserve European values: because of these very values they often died for Europe and, even more frequently, for Poland. Fortunately, we do not need to die for Europe or for Poland anymore. Thanks to the European Union, Poland has made its return to the group of seven or eight major powers in Europe, as used to be the case in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The origins of the idea of a united Europe can be found in Poland, too. After one of the bloodiest battles of the November Uprising, the Battle of Olszynka Grochowska (25 Feb. 1831), one of its veterans, Wojciech Bogumił Jastrzębowski (1799–1882), wrote a piece titled *Konstytucja dla Europy (Wolne*

chwile żołnierza polskiego, czyli myśli o wiecznym przymierzu między narodami ucywilizowanymi). [*A Constitution for Europe. (A Polish Soldier's Free Moments, or Thoughts on an Eternal Covenant Between Civilized Nations)*]. It was not by accident that the work was published on 3rd May 1831, that is, on the day of the anniversary of Poland's Constitution of 1791.

Even if, Jastrzębowski's ideas did not enjoy much attention as a utopian concept during his lifetime, over the years, his work has gained greater appreciation as the first outline of a constitution for a united Europe. He wrote (http://agad.gov.pl/wp-content):

> 1. There is no stranger phenomenon below the sun than the fact that people most of all desire peace and they least care to keep it.

> 2. European nations should renounce their independence and fall slaves under the laws accepted by all these nations. "All nations belonging to the eternal alliance in Europe should be equally subject to the European laws. Existing monarchs would become patriarchs, fathers of nations who stand guard over both local and European rights. A patriarch elected by a nation would be its guardian and the executor of national laws, whereas a Congress itself would be the guardian and executor of European laws.

> 3. There would be no states but only nations in Europe. "Existing hitherto geographical borders of countries (a main cause of the bloodshed in Europe) would be abolished forever."

> 4. The highest authority would be the Congress, composed of representatives of all the nations of Europe. […] Each nation would delegate an equal number of plenipotentiaries, who would be elected by the national Parliament, to the European Congress. […] The European Congress would be a permanent institution, and it would perform its activities each year in different headquarters of the European nations.

> 5. The first duty of the European Congress would be to enact European laws, which should begin with an article of the following meaning: Peace in Europe is stable and eternal.

His Treatise on an eternal covenant between civilized nations and the Draft Constitution for Europe cannot be classified as belonging among totalitarian utopias, universal social projects requiring a total overhaul. The author did not comment on economic and social relations, religion, morality or customs.

In principle, Jastrzębowski did not criticize the old elites. He saw the dynasties ruling at his times as remaining in power as long as their members followed the laws of nations and participated in the international cooperation system.

Those who would not would be called barbarians. In Jastrzębowski's writings, we see nothing on bloody carnage. This well-educated Warsaw University graduate wrote his treaty under the influence of his experience from the Olszynka battlefield, assuming "that the bloodshed is not in vain, that it will release sometime [...] the blissful fruits of desired by the human race, peace."

Jastrzębowski's ideas were firmly rooted in Enlightenment-era thought, with its deep faith in reason, progress and the laws of nature, which—in time—would find its expression in ideal laws governing all of mankind. The young scientist must have remained—at least partly—under the influence of romanticism, in particular, the idea of "adjusting one's strengths to the ideas put forward" (meaning pursuing ambitious goals). Jastrzębowski's ideal Europe was a federation of nations, speaking different tongues with full respects to national identities, yet subject to the rules of a common political system. Studying Jastrzębowski's "Treaty" and the "Constitution" one may obviously speculate whether they were entirely the author's new ideas or just his reception of earlier concepts, such as the "Perpetual Peace Project" by Immanuel Kant of 1795, known at Jastrzębowski's times through several translations. The great philosopher from Königsberg had also assumed the establishment of a federation of peoples, which—in time—would cover the entire world and guarantee an end to war. We can also cite other similar examples—e.g., some declarations by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1771–1861). Yet, Jastrzębowski's writings are characterized by a number of original ideas, such as guaranteed equality for dispersed nations (such as Jews or Gypsies). Hence, Jastrzębowski's writings certainly deserve reading anew, and attempts to recognize the author as one of the patrons of our contemporary united Europe should by no means be treated as mere propaganda.

Despite various political, cultural and social problems, the Europeans who established the European Communities, resulting in the shape of the modern Union, have every reason to be proud of their work. Granted, not everything is perfect in this European project and its practical application, but the EU is not a utopia; instead, it is a reality and as such it can never be perfect. A number of fundamental issues require corrections and amendments. Nevertheless, none of these issues should overshadow or question the ideal behind the European integration project or its institutional expression and mechanisms.

Nobody can doubt the benefits—both tangible and intangible—of membership in the European Union. It is quite easy to notice the changes in our little homelands that have been possible thanks to Union membership. In this way,

the WE ARE EUROPE project has managed to mobilize local communities to realize changes in their personal lives and in the lives of their cities or neighborhoods through Union funds and initiatives.

The European Union is not a utopia and the privilege of being a European and benefiting from membership are more and more closely linked with the obligation of solidarity within Europe. This very privilege also entails responsibility for our European homeland and the condition of the European project and the enduring vitality of our civilization. No doubt, exercising this obligation makes our dreams come true, and our major dream is to BE HAPPY AND TO LIVE IN PEACE.

And this dream has nothing to do with a utopia. We do not need to travel to *Kalopeia*, because we can be happy and live a peaceful life here and now. Receiving this is of particular importance for Polish men and women, but we should also remember that building the European community and solidarity is also a particular responsibility of the Polish people. This stems from our identity, from over a thousand years of common European history, from our utopian dreams about independence, happiness and peace. Being part of Europe, we share its lot and we should not demand one-way solidarity, e.g., funds and protection without offering anything in return.

Perhaps, we should realize that we are not only children of Europe but also children of the World. And it is up to us what this world will be like.

And our ideas cannot remain dreams; they must become a reality in which we accept variety and value all people regardless of national identity, ethnicity, religion, political party, gender, age, sexual orientation, or race.

Such values as solidarity, mutual knowledge and understanding of diversities should be a prerequisite for cooperation not only in Europe but in also the world, on both macro and micro scale, also at the local level. As a result, our present and our future, based on happiness, security and peace, can become be a reality and not a utopian dream.

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