

Darija Rupčić Kelam,¹ Ivica Kelam²

¹J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lorena Jägerova 9, HR–31000 Osijek

²J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Education, Cara Hadrijana 10, HR–31000 Osijek

¹ darijarupcic@gmail.com, ² kelamivica@gmail.com

The Mythical Pursuit of Happiness
– a Mirage of Happiness

A Brief Overview of the Philosophy of Happiness

Abstract

According to some authors, there are several significant projects on the human agenda in the twenty-first century. One of them is the pursuit to find the key to personal happiness. Increasingly, people are beginning to see that systems once created to strengthen a nation, such as the education, the health system, and the welfare system, should serve the happiness and well-being of the individual, not the other way around. Thus, the right to the pursuit of happiness has been transformed into a natural right to happiness. Harari argues that GDP per capita, as a primary measure of national performance assessment, should be supplemented or replaced by GDH – gross domestic happiness. In this paper, we will examine some of the dominant ideologies and strategies aimed at achieving this goal. Optimization of human experience, self-deception strategies, and the doctrine of harmony all serve as filters of the reality of the individual. It is necessary to deceive people, to bring them into the state of cheerfulness, to become a cheaper, more productive, and optimal worker in service of capital. The very idea of achieving social harmony is a control mechanism aimed at maintaining balance within the corporate community. Nevertheless, what lies behind the tyranny of unity and the pursuit of happiness is turning into a life that conceals reality and leads to a more profound and further depletion of the range of social, emotional, and personal relationships. Can recognizing a wide range of human emotions, as well as the essential determinants of a human being, such as caring and empathy, help us to live an authentic and happier life? The safety concept of life, guided by the ideology of harmony and motto, which Bauman portrays with the words “do not rock the boat”, is the idea of life against adventure, chance and risk is proven to be a false alternative to a life of rebellion and the desire to change one’s mind and thus the desire for real happiness, as opposed to the illusion of happiness.

Keywords

happiness, ideology, emotions, tyranny, illusion, Alain Badiou

Introduction – a Project of Lasting Happiness

According to some authors, such as Harari, there are several significant projects on the human agenda in the twenty-first century, such as the centuries-old struggle of human being against ageing and death, expressed in the eternal pursuit of immortality. One of the projects is finding a recipe for personal happiness. Increasingly, people are beginning to see that systems once created to strengthen a nation, such as the education system, the health care system, and the welfare system, should serve the happiness and well-being of the individual, not the other way around. Thus, the right to the pursuit of happiness has been transformed into a natural right to happiness.¹

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Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus. Kratka povijest sutrašnjice*, translated by Marija Perišić, Fokus komunikacije, Zagreb 2017, p. 36.

In ancient Greece, happiness was defined as the highest, supreme good, and the goal of all our striving. However, happiness (*eudaimonia*) can only be achieved by living a life of virtue. Epicurus viewed happiness differently than his contemporaries. According to him, worshipping gods is a waste of time since there is no life after death, and happiness in this world is the sole purpose of life. In ancient times, this attitude was rejected by most people and philosophers, but today Epicureanism has become the prevailing life philosophy of the contemporary human being. The contemporary human being is sceptical of the existence of the afterlife, which prompts them to search for immortality and, more importantly, to seek his happiness. The difference between the conception of happiness between the philosopher Epicurus and the contemporary human being is that happiness is no longer a personal responsibility and pursuit, but has become a collective project. Many tasks have been put before the governments of the states today, such as efforts to eradicate wars, eliminate existential insecurity among citizens, provide quality health-care for all citizens, prevent economic crises and ensure material well-being and a sense of security, and ultimately a sense of happiness.

According to the philosophy of utilitarianism, the supreme good is the happiness of the most significant number of people, and the sole aim of the state, the market, and the scientific community is to increase the global happiness of as many people as possible. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Western countries established large systems of education, healthcare, and social care, intending to strengthen nations rather than secure personal well-being. Positive effects were various, such as enhancing a sense of responsibility and solidarity for others. However, according to Harari, in the late 20th century and early 21st century, things have changed, and people are taking Bentham's utilitarian vision much more seriously. People increasingly believe that the systems that once served the happiness and well-being of the nation should now serve the happiness and well-being of individuals.

Harari points out:

“The right to the pursuit of happiness, originally envisaged as a restraint on state power, has imperceptibly morphed into the right to happiness – as if human beings have a natural right to be happy, and anything which makes us dissatisfied is a violation of our basic human rights, so the state should do something about it.”²

Harari suggests, therefore, that GDP per capita, as a primary measure of national performance assessment, should be supplemented or replaced by GDH – gross domestic happiness. According to some authors, for example, William Davies, in his book *The Happiness Industry – How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being*, emphasizes that there are two significant reasons for sociological origins and the nature of why the science of happiness, expressed in the intense pursuit of personal happiness, became so important in the early twenty-first century. The first is sociological and concerns the very nature of capitalism and the pressure it creates on individuals, and the impact and exposure to technological devices in the workplace, which cause too much pressure and stress. People use various meditation techniques against stress, and ultimately use self-deception techniques offered by the so-called happiness science, positive psychology, and various gurus, so he points out:

“As such, they are never directly addressed by the psychologists, managers, economists, and neuroscientists who advance this science. The first concerns the nature of capitalism. One of the attendees at the 2014 Davos meeting made a remark that contained far more truth than he probably realized: ‘We created our own problem that we are now trying to solve’. He was talking

specifically about how 24/7 working practices and always-on digital devices had made senior managers so stressed that they were now having to meditate to cope with the consequences.”³

The second reason for the increased interest in the pursuit of personal happiness is alarming, concerning the overall impact of technology and how it manipulates users’ posts on social networks, primarily Facebook.⁴ Thanks to social networking algorithms, they organize and conduct content that appears on users’ news feeds, thereby manipulating the emotions of social network users, causing them to feel inadequate, dissatisfied, unsuccessful, and unhappy. In this way, the emotions that people express through social networks influence the emotions of other users of a network and without direct personal interaction among them. Until recently, such a case of a scientific attempt to manipulate others’ feelings was only possible within research psychology laboratories, hospitals, workplaces, various self-help groups, focus groups, etc.

Nevertheless, this is no longer the case, as evidenced by the following example. In July 2014, scientists employed by Facebook published an academic paper containing details of how Facebook had successfully altered hundreds of thousands of its users’ moods by manipulating their news feeds.⁵ Davies says that, because of this paper, there was an outcry. The aforementioned mood manipulation had been done clandestinely. However, as the dust settled, the anger turned to anxiety: would Facebook bother to publish such a paper in the future or simply get on with the experiment anyway, and keep the results to themselves?⁶

All of this points to the fact that the pursuit of an individual’s happiness and being happy is a fragile and challenging endeavour. The question that arises is the following – if the contemporary human being managed to control wars, famines, and infections; if humankind experiences prosperity and if life expectancy has increased dramatically, shouldn’t people be happier than ever? The facts show exactly the opposite. The number of suicides in contemporary and developed Western society has increased. What is particularly interesting is the fact that, according to some studies, there is a paradox of high rates of suicide in happy places.⁷ It is a fact that the contemporary Western human being has all the abundance at his disposal. Still, at the same time, a significant problem causes him to feel emptiness and dissatisfaction with life.

According to Harari, it seems that we have reached the glass ceiling of happiness, supported by two pillars, one is biological, and the other is psychological.⁸ Specifically, people have their expectations and those expectations make them unhappy, despite the favourable objective circumstances in which

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Ibid.

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William Davies, *The Happiness Industry. How the Government and the Big Business Sold Us Well-Being*, Verso, London – New York 2015, p. 9.

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Ibid., pp. 10–11.

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Cf. Adam D. I. Kramer, Jamie E. Guillory, Jeffrey T. Hancock, “Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks”, *Proceedings of the National*

Academy of the Sciences 111 (2014) 24, pp. 8788–8790, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1320040111>.

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W. Davies, *The Happiness Industry*, p. 11.

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Cf. Mary C. Daly *et al.*, “Dark contrasts: The paradox of high rates of suicide in happy places”, *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 80 (2011) 3, pp. 435–442, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2011.04.007>.

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Y. N. Harari, *Homo Deus*, p. 41.

they live. The expectations of the contemporary human being from himself, society, and others are increasing, which in turn reinforces his sense of dissatisfaction. At the biological level, we are limited and determined by biochemistry. According to the utilitarian attitude, prevalent in contemporary society, feelings of pleasure and pain are the only ones that determine everything we do and think.

Such an attitude is today part of scientific orthodoxy and the prevailing attitude of contemporary human being. Specifically, the biomedical sciences claim that happiness and suffering are nothing more than the balance of bodily senses and chemistry in the brain. If this is the case, and if science is right, then the only way to ensure lasting satisfaction and happiness is to manipulate the system of biochemical processes in the human brain, biochemical manipulation, which has become a practice in the last few decades.⁹ For example, according to one study, more and more schoolchildren are taking stimulants like Ritalin. In the United Kingdom, the number of children using Ritalin increased from 92,000 in 1997 to 786,000 in 2012.¹⁰ Although the original goal of drugs such as Ritalin was to treat attention disorders, according to some studies, they are now being taken by healthy children to improve outcomes and to meet the increasing expectations of teachers and parents.¹¹

However, if we identify happiness and achieving happiness only with fleeting feelings of comfort, then the constant pursuit of these experiences causes a feeling of emptiness and despair because happiness thus eludes us and causes the opposite, suffering and dissatisfaction. The contemporary human being should understand that there are no shortcuts and quick solutions when it comes to a lasting sense of satisfaction and fulfilment and that the pursuit of happiness is a long and painstaking process of working on oneself. However, the contemporary human being is prone to quick-moving solutions, and for the current neoliberal system, happiness is reduced to pleasure and the immediate absence of suffering and pain.

Boredom is today seen as completely undesirable and is treated as a mortal sin. Leisure is impregnated with new content, new experiences, new quests for adventure, to distract the contemporary human being from the suffering and loneliness that make them look deep into themselves and start to work more seriously on themselves and their relationships with others. We ask ourselves, together with Harari, if the great project of the twenty-first century is to secure global happiness, does it mean that a person needs to be reprogrammed and improved to enjoy a lasting sense of happiness and pleasure?¹² Or is there some other way to happiness?

The Illusion of Happiness – the Mythical Pursuit of Happiness

The great promise that science offers in the form of a great project for the moral improvement of people creates the feeling that if we self-deceive ourselves, no matter how big or negative the problem may be, an individual can turn everything into something positive and become happier. Various gurus and life coaches promote the so-called positive approach to thinking by advocating transformational positivity, which in humans should produce shifts and changes in thinking, lead to changes in consciousness itself, and solve all human problems. Their so-called positive approach bears a great deal of resemblance to the academic equivalent found in positive psychology, which

promotes optimism and a positive attitude in every situation, which increasingly turns into a kind of global religion and mantra.¹³ What positive psychology promotes is the mantra that our happiness is a personal choice and that we are responsible for its realization. However, what is forgotten is that extreme consumerism, egocentrism, and individualism are at the root of all dissatisfaction and, ultimately, unhappiness. Keeping in mind that positive psychology and transformational positivity will not bring us personal satisfaction and happiness as long as there are conditions that prevent them. In this context, Davies claims:

“Positive psychology, which repeats the mantra that happiness is a personal ‘choice’, is as a result largely unable to provide the exit from consumerism and egocentricity that its gurus sense many people are seeking.”¹⁴

It is precisely the overwhelming need to emerge from such a state of constant desire and imposed need that consumerism imposes on the contemporary human being that may be a step towards healing. Some of the gurus and life coaches advocate vague and obscure theories of how happiness is achieved through increasing concentration and the release of positivity. In this way, positive potentials connect, increase, and the person and organization to which they belong thus grow together, increase mutual strength, and thus both agents become factors of good that transcend their frames. Therefore, according to these theories, the happiness of an individual depends on the organization to which they belong, where they work, and to which they should subordinate all their potential and think positively.¹⁵

In other words, today’s human being should channel positive emotions through the corporations and institutions in which they are employed and disseminate them, thus influencing the overall community culture. It is crucial to point out that the moral and ethical issues of the business of corporations are not questioned since such issues are considered to be pointless. Everything is subordinated to corporate harmony, which means creating such conditions

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Ibid., p. 45.

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Sarah Harris, “Number of children given drugs for ADHD up ninefold with patients as young as THREE being prescribed Ritalin”, *Daily Mail* (29 June 2013). Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2351427/Number-children-given-drugs-ADHD-nine-fold-patients-young-THREE-prescribed-Ritalin.html> (accessed on 27 February 2020).

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C. Ian Ragan, Imre Bard, Iliana Singh, “What Should We Do about Student Use of Cognitive Enhancers? An Analysis of Current Evidence”, *Neuropharmacology* 64 (2013), pp. 588–595, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropharm.2012.06.016>.

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Chris Hedges, *Carstvo opsjena. Kraj pismenosti i trijumf spektakla*, translated by Zoran Bošnjak, Algoritam, Zagreb 2011, p. 139.

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Plenty of literature was published regarding this issue, here are some examples: Carl Cederström, *The Happiness Fantasy*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2019; Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America*, Metropolitan Books, New York 2009; Edgar Cabanas, Eva Illouz, *Manufacturing happy citizens: how the science and industry of happiness control our lives*, Polity Press, Cambridge; Ronald Pulser, *McMindfulness: How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality*, Repeater, London 2019; Micki McGee, *Self-Help, Inc.: Makeover Culture in American Life*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005.

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W. Davies, *The Happiness Industry*, p. 7.

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C. Hedges, *Carstvo opsjena*, p. 141.

for good, profitable business, whereby the actions of the individual employee are subordinated to the interests of the corporation. The individual employee is expected to be positive, efficient, smiling, flexible, always available to the corporation.¹⁶ Thus, the personal happiness of an employee depends on the successful business growth of the corporation or the institution in which that individual is employed; that is, if the corporation makes increasing profits every year, consequently, the personal happiness of its employees also grows. The basic idea is to grow and merge an employee's self with a corporate we or a collective. It is the corporation that determines its employee's identity and offers the path to happiness, personal fulfilment, and salvation.¹⁷

The purpose and objectives of the corporation should never be questioned, especially by the employees. To question and criticize a corporation means to become an obstacle to development and a negative phenomenon in the corporate universe. Some of the main ideologies and strategies aimed at achieving the goal of being a successful and profitable corporation that serve as filters of the reality of the individual are optimization of human experience, self-deception strategies, and the ideology of harmony.¹⁸ It is necessary to deceive people, to bring them into a state of cheerfulness, to become a cheaper, more productive, optimal worker in the service of capital. If we are not happy, then indeed something is wrong with us.¹⁹ For a corporate state, positive psychology has the same function as eugenics for the Nazis. It addresses the undesirable qualities that do not lead to progress. According to Adams *et al.*, the task of positive psychology was used for corporate shaping of the behaviour of its employees, to prevent critical questioning and, at the same time, to hide the actual image of corporate governance and to shift the blame for the employee's unhappiness on themselves.²⁰

It is precisely this idea of achieving social harmony that is a control mechanism aimed at maintaining harmony within the corporate community. However, what lies behind this tyranny of harmony and the pursuit of happiness is the turn into a life that conceals reality and leads to a more profound and further depletion of the range of social, emotional, and personal relationships. In this way, the individual is forced to live an inauthentic, false life, decomposing their humanity ever more deeply, making them unhappy, contrary to what they strive for. The obsession with happiness is a belief that is imposed on us in our contemporary culture when reality becomes frightening and depressing, forcing many people to escape from reality. Various gurus and life coaches are trendy in the last decades in the West and, in recent times, in Croatia, such as the very popular Ana Bučević. Urging their followers to use various visualization techniques, something they call the law of attraction, to be in a vortex, and to have a positive attitude and that they believe they can do anything if they visualize it and want it hard enough.

Nevertheless, those who follow this advice collide very quickly with reality, with devastating effects, since it forces the victim to blame himself and bear responsibility for his pain, suffering, and failure. Because, according to the interpretation of life coaches, everyone who suffers and somehow goes through traumas must only think positively, thus overcoming their negativity. Well-known expert of positive thinking, Vincent Norman Peale, in his book *The Power of Positive Thinking*, an international bestseller sold in over 15 million copies, promises to his readers to achieve a happy, satisfying, and worthwhile life.²¹

Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, one of the many experts who specializes in optimizing the human experience, points out, in his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, that two strategies must be adopted to improve the quality of life. First, to try to match external conditions to our own goals, and secondly, to change how existing external conditions become part of our experience so that we can better adapt them to our own goals.²² Exploring what the so-called optimal experience is,²³ he discovered that what makes an experience a genuinely satisfying state of mind is the consciousness he called flow. During this condition, people perceive the experience of deep satisfaction and happiness, creativity, and complete involvement in the life they fulfil. The author uses the flow as mentioned earlier to describe those circumstances and occasions when we feel enthusiasm, a feeling of deep joy, which we cherish for a long time and which becomes a guideline in our lives. These moments are often not just passive when we receive impressions from the outside while relaxed. They occur when our body and mind strain to their limits and voluntarily invest the effort to achieve something difficult and worthwhile.²⁴ The optimum condition occurs when there are some order and meaningfulness in our mind and consciousness. This happens when we are focused on realistic goals, and when our ability matches the opportunities for action. What is a crucial characteristic of an optimal experience is that it is a goal in itself; it is autotelic because, as an activity, it has intrinsic value and is itself a reward.²⁵

Our degree of happiness, Csikszentmihaly points out, depends ultimately on how our mind filters and interprets everyday experiences. Happiness depends on inner harmony and our ability to control life circumstances that are unpredictable and beyond our control. It is quite well known that there are people who, despite very unfavourable material conditions, are happy and satisfied and can make others happy. On the other hand, some people have everything, and yet they are unhappy. To become happy, we must be independent of the social environment and external circumstances and become, according to the author, less sensitive to rewards and punishments we receive from the outside.²⁶

According to Csikszentmihaly, the very essence and meaning of socialization are to make people dependent on social control through their predictability to

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Jessica Pryce-Jones, *Happiness at Work – Maximizing Your Psychological Capital for Success*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2010.

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Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America*, Metropolitan Books, New York 2009.

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Cf. Srikumar Rao, *Happiness at Work: Be Resilient, Motivated, and Successful – No Matter What*, McGraw Hill, New York 2010.

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C. Hedges, *Carstvo opsjena*, p. 147, 149.

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Cf. Glenn Adams *et al.*, “The Psychology of Neoliberalism and the Neoliberalism of Psychology”, *Journal of Social Issues* 75 (2009)

1, pp. 189–216, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12305>.

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Cf. Vincent Norman Peale, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Simon and Schuster, New York 2003.

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Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, New York, Harper Colins 2008, p. 32, 207.

23

Ibid., p. 3.

24

Ibid., pp. 72–73.

25

Ibid., p. 67.

respond to a system of rewards and punishments. All social control is based on one fundamental task, which is to make it a threat to survival instincts. Every desire that is part of human nature, such as sexual desire, aggression, longing for life, security and protection, receptive to change, and adaptation, as the author points out, is integrated into the system of social control by politics, religious organizations, corporations, and all kinds of advisers.²⁷

The information which we allow to reach out to our consciousness and on which we focus is essential. Information is what determines the content and quality of life. The form and content of life thus depend on the way we focus our attention. Attention is the most critical tool that helps us to improve the quality of experience, and consequently, life.²⁸

Therefore, it is crucial to refocus and impregnate attention with content that will distract people from all the essentials and most profound feelings and aspirations in the functioning of these organizations. As Csikszentmihaly further points out, the optimal member of the organization is a person in better shape, happier, more productive, and cheaper for the employer. The optimal worker complains less and opposes less, obeys more, and is healthier. Such a worker is in a “state of cheerfulness”, which is his “psychological capital” by which they contribute to the organization in which they are employed.²⁹ All this points to the fact that self-deception is a psychological and socially useful situation, and so-called positive psychologists and various life coaches charge their knowledge and services profoundly and earn profits from others. Davies cites a Gallup study that estimated the cost of employees’ unhappiness and the importance of so-called human capital as a resource, as well as maintaining a “state of joy” for individual corporations:

“Across 142 countries in which Gallup measured employee engagement, 13% of employees are engaged in their jobs, while 63% are not engaged, and 24% are actively disengaged. Active disengagement in the workplace represents an immense drain in terms of productivity and profitability, even for highly developed economies. Gallup estimates, for example, that it costs Germany €112 billion to €138 billion per year (\$151 billion to \$186 billion) and the U.K. between £52 billion and £70 billion (\$83 billion to \$112 billion) per year.”³⁰

American philosopher David Jopling states that it seems the more the illusions of happiness, which he calls “life lies”, are present in an individual, the more they have a more significant impact on reducing the range of human being’s consciousness of self, others, and the state in which they are, and the one they needs to confront. Self-deception strategies serve as filters of reality, which fit human understanding into packages easily digestible to make some sense, justification, and serve their purpose.³¹ Jopling further points out that the more one reduces the range of consciousness, at the same time they reduce the ability of receptiveness and openness towards others and all of reality, and thus reduces the ability of intelligent interaction with all the effects and consequences of the real world.³² Furthermore, he warns of disastrous moral consequences and the impoverishment of the self-deception society:

“The capacity to experience a large range of inter-personally specific reactive emotional states (e.g., sadness, shame, despair, loss, melancholy, bitterness, frustration), and the corresponding ability to experience a range of inter-personally-specific reactive moral attitudes (e.g., disapproval, approbation, gratitude, resentment) may be diminished, as negative, ambiguous or un-supportive information is systematically re-interpreted through the lens of positive illusions. With diminished vulnerability, in other words, the self-deceived person is distanced from aspects of his or her own humanity.”³³

Empathy, Caring for One Another, and Love as Possible Effects of a Truly Happy Life

The discussion leads us to the following question: is there is a danger that promoting national happiness through corporate governance of human behaviour and action can have these consequences? Can the state adopt different ideologies and strategies to avoid these problems? In other words, could the state only focus on improving working and social conditions as strategies to promote national happiness, rather than focusing on the personal responsibilities of individuals? We claim that current ideologies and strategies for promoting happiness are problematic in the ways outlined by Davies, Ehrenreich, etc. However, even ideologies and strategies that avoid these problems are still problematic. Social order and control imposed by corporations and states are inconsistent with the uncertainty and instability required for true happiness. We propose that there is a solution to this and, in the next section of this paper, we will try to answer these questions.

The security concept of life, guided by the ideology of harmony and the proverb that Bauman picturesquely describes with the words “No excesses!”³⁴ or colloquially said, “Do not rock the boat”, the concept of living against adventure, chance, and risk, proves to be a false alternative to a life of rebellion and the desire to change one’s mind, and thus a desire for real happiness, as opposed to illusions of happiness.

Our age, according to Bauman, is an era of immature individualism and a search for a good life, limited only by the demand of tolerance expressing only indifference, and life is separated from moral preoccupations limited to minimalist morality.³⁵ Such a life is far from the authentic and happy moral life of a human being of ancient times, for example, when the connection between being moral and being happy was strongly emphasized. On the other hand, the greatest fear and anxiety is caused by the fear of disturbing the order and system, the fear of curiosity, the fear of the ambivalent free conscience of the individual, which cannot be stereotyped and which is not gullible. Because all of this could disrupt the false image and sense of security and false harmony within any organization or relationship. Bauman concludes that some kind of campaign is underway to level the differences and eliminate all the “wild”,

26
Ibid., p. 1.

27
Ibid., p. 154.

28
Ibid., pp. 30–32.

29
Ibid., p. 83.

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Gallup, “State of the Global Workplace”, *Gallup*. Available at: <https://www.gallup.de/183833/state-the-global-workplace.aspx> (accessed on 10 February 2020).

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David A. Jopling, “‘Take away the life-lie...’: Positive illusions and creative self-

deception”, *Philosophical Psychology* 9 (1996) 4, pp. 525–544, p. 526, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089608573198>.

32
Ibid., p. 535.

33
Ibid., pp. 535–536.

34
Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmoderna etika*, translated by Dorta Jagić, Sintagma, Zagreb 2009, p. 9.

35
Ibid.

all autonomous, self-contained, arbitrary, and uncontrolled sources of moral judgment.³⁶ Bauman vividly described it in words:

“For any social integrity relying on uniformity and encouraging disciplined, coordinated action, the stubborn and supple autonomy of moral self is a scandal. On the dashboard of society, it looks like a germ of chaos and anarchy within the order.”³⁷

The quest for harmony at all costs puts people in a state of psychological blindness and sleep, and the tyranny of harmony leads to a life of fantasy that hides reality. Autonomous moral impulses must be tamed at all costs, twisted and exploited, and the moral self must be reeducated, cultivated, and have its vitality narrowed down. Positive psychology and the ideology of harmony at all costs, in the service of corporate and state administration of morality and everything untamable, is a complex activity that only encourages and continues to generate precisely what it stands for, and that is ambivalent morality. All such operations boil down to spin and represent an incarnation of assault on both the community and the individual and his authentic individuality. The feeling of unhappiness, loss, caused by isolation, and loss of a sense for community, serve as food for reinforcing such tendencies to stifle anything different and anything that might raise doubt, question, or rebellion against the false image of harmony.³⁸

Political scientist Robert Lane points out that people in western countries live in material abundance but refuse to face reality, which results in increased unhappiness, dissatisfaction, and depression. All of this, in turn, increases mutual distrust between people, distrust of political and social institutions that should serve the common good, diminishes faith in the strength and responsibility of the individual, and tragically contributes to the collapse of feelings of solidarity, erosion of empathy, compassion and, ultimately, humanity.³⁹

For the self to become moral, it must, first of all, surrender or renounce one part of the self, sacrifice one’s self-interest and subordinate it to another; Thus, the actual reality of self is to be for another, to care for others. However, today all this is disturbed by the ideology of false harmony and the fear of such an ambivalent moral self. Therefore, the false promises offered by this ideology of imposed harmony through positive psychology intensify inner anxiety, a feeling of exhaustion, a sense of alienation, false enthusiasm, and loneliness. By doing so, they are destroying personal relationships between people and leading beyond what the individual seeks, namely happiness and inner satisfaction. We ask ourselves – what can help? In such constellations, is there room for hope? The answer can only be one, which is a return to real, authentic life and relations and the development of empathy, compassion, solidarity, and care for each other.

We ask again if there are potential ideologies and strategies for the promotion of national happiness? Current major ideologies and strategies, which focus on security and control, may not be adequate, as we mentioned above. But what about others? What about strategies that provide individuals with the necessary resources and opportunities to take risks, make sacrifices, have adventures, and be open to uncertainty?

Are there, we ask further, strategies that can help individuals achieve a happy life, real satisfaction, and fulfilment despite adverse life circumstances and a lack of state strategies to improve conditions that would promote happiness and satisfaction? What are the potentials in the individual and society that enable the achievement of happiness and well-being of the entire society?

Why are the citizens of some countries happier than others, and why do they become happier? Can and should the state renounce the provision of conditions for the happiness of its citizens or shift it to the personal responsibility of each citizen or is it the state that needs to provide favourable conditions for its citizens in search of happiness?

We ask ourselves further, what if the state fails in this task? Is it then possible for an individual, left to himself, to realize his full potential and be happy? What can an individual do in such circumstances, and can they do anything at all? We believe that, in unfavourable circumstances, it is much more challenging to achieve a state of a fulfilled and happy life, but it is not impossible. Happiness is not entirely an individual affair, and there must be some favourable conditions that only the state can offer, such as overall existential security, eradication of poverty, and violence connected to it. The state has a role in it and must secure the conditions of affluence; we can make the pursuit of happiness our own goal. However, we must be aware that there are some individual and personal limitations to embracing the chaos of the unknown and uncertainty of the pursuit of happiness. Still, we claim that the part of society that is capable of this must be responsible for those who can not do this. Where do we turn for help, we wonder? Is there room for hope in constellations like this? There can be only one answer, and that is a return to real, authentic life and relationships, and the development of empathy, compassion, solidarity, and caring for each other. The answer is the personal efforts of exceptional individuals and groups of people to improve conditions conducive to self-realization and happiness. The answer we offer is given in the consideration of the relationship of philosophy, the philosophical way of thinking and happiness of the French philosopher Badiou.

Metaphysics of Real Happiness – Longing for Philosophy as Its Justification

Alain Badiou is a contemporary philosopher who tried to answer the question we opened and offer a solution. In dealing with the metaphysics of real happiness in his book *The Metaphysics of Real Happiness*,⁴⁰ he tried to give an answer that would go towards resolving this situation, which would be an attempt to justify the necessity of philosophy today and the desire for it. Looking at the long history of the development of philosophy and its directions and basic ideas, most philosophers have dealt with the fundamental question of Being, and the question of achievement and possibility of happiness themselves, and have identified happiness with virtue and life in accordance with it. For Badiou, happiness is the sign of every approach to truth, and so the real

36
Ibid., p. 21.

37
Ibid.

38
C. Hedges, *Carstvo opsjena*, p. 165.

39
Robert Lane, *The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2001, p. 31.

40
Alain Badiou, *Metafizika stvarne sreće*, translated by Antonia Banović, Dorotea-Dora Held, Multimedijalni Institut, Zagreb 2016.

purpose of life is to reflect on happiness. Since philosophy has been doing it from the very beginning, it is, in its essence, the metaphysics of happiness itself.⁴¹

According to Badiou, philosophy is more than ever on the defensive today, and this, he believes, is a reason to support the longing for philosophy even more. This support is linked to the possibility of real happiness, the longing for philosophy represents both the longing for revolution as a change in opinion but also a longing for real happiness.⁴²

It is not about happiness as a peaceful life and daily pleasures and all that is generally considered “happiness”. It is not about the “happiness” that comes from satisfying the small and personal, with what capitalism and its “democracy” offer to privileged citizens. It is already about real happiness. Thus, Badiou emphasizes the connection between truth and happiness. Philosophers do not need to interpret the world from the comfort of their room, but rather to change the world and, when asked how to change the world, he answers that human being should live in the truth that is freedom, which brings us closer to true happiness. Badiou sees happiness as an act of truth. Happiness, which, according to Badiou, stems from rebellion, logic, universality, and risk, is a formula that is also the general formula of the desire for revolution.⁴³

According to Badiou, philosophy is a logical rebellion. Philosophy is a merge of longing for revolution and request for rationality and, as such, longing and desire for philosophy is a longing and yearning for revolutionary thinking and true happiness. Happiness is that which is motivating against established forms of opinion and affirmative experience of breaks with that final rebellion against existing social injustices and inadequacies.

Philosophy, therefore, proposes a new logic and represents a demand for rationality and, as a movement towards change, liberates real happiness from its illusion, which is satisfaction. The basis for the desire for philosophy lies in the engagement of thought and the realization of the universal. Philosophy exists in a movement that is always the engagement of the risky, the contingent, and a bold endeavour. Philosophy is a bet and uncertainty.⁴⁴

Badiou frames his discussion of philosophy here through the notion of “philosophical desire” which he states is “the desire for a revolution in thought and existence – as much collective existence as personal existence – and with the aim of real happiness, distinguished from that semblance of happiness which is satisfaction”.⁴⁵

The modern western world, with its logic and security concept of false harmony and the absence of any unforeseen event and risk, as we have also pointed out, is a world that standardizes, levels, and commercializes, and exerts intense negative pressure on all determinants and dimensions of that desire. This world becomes unfit for rebellion, the ultimate goal of which is freedom.⁴⁶ Furthermore, this world is also unfit for logic because it is subordinated to the illogical dimension of communication that offers an instant spectacle with no root, no memory, no profoundness. This world destroys all connections and communications that go on indefinitely without real meaning and change within relationships and invalidates in the essential logic of time.⁴⁷ This world puts enormous pressure on both thought itself and its principle of consistency, dispersing it, splitting it into fragments of the incomprehensible. For Badiou, real happiness, therefore, belongs to the realm of concentration and intensification of all that is intolerable to a world that disperses, fragmented, and destabilizes relationships. Thus, this world puts much pressure on

everything universal and singular, on the whole. Finally, this world is against everything wild, unpredictable, elusive, against risk and adventure, against anything that might undermine its fragile and hard-earned security, within which every relationship is set and petrified. That world is a world that is against all the wild, unknown and ambivalent, on the trace of Bauman's earlier statement. However, real and true happiness lies in this bet, uncertainty, in the unknown, it cannot be calculated; it is against every certainty and concept of security.

As opposed to the longing for philosophy as the longing for a revolution that forms the intricate knot of rebellion, logic, universality, and betting, there are, according to Badiou, four main obstacles and inevitable pressures, and these are: 1) the rule of commodities, which makes rebellion almost impossible; 2) the rule of communication without depth, logic, and relationships; 3) the rule of monetary universality as a levelling factor of everything; and 4) the rule of the production and technical specialization that excludes any bet and uncertainty and fragments thinking, leaving out the wholeness, concentration, and coherence. All these pressures interconnected by assessing personal safety against any risk tend to reduce one's real life and happiness to its semblance, which is consumer satisfaction.⁴⁸

Therefore, Badiou, and we follow, asks the following question: can philosophy respond to this challenge and how? Is it capable of it? What philosophy proposes and suggests is a revolution in thinking, which becomes a place for shaping the philosophical imperative.

Furthermore, what is this imperative? According to Badiou, that imperative is the return to being, the imperative of breaking this levelling principle of trading and commodifying everything, patiently searching for the truth. It is necessary to stand up against routine and safety, expose and face the contingency and risk, go on an adventure, and put everything at stake, which allows our existence to rebel and walk towards something new. For example, Bauman proposes re-personalizing morality, restoring moral responsibility to the individual as the last anchor, shelter, and hope of morality, unleashing the morality of artificially constructed universal codes of ethics and new enchantment with the world, the spontaneity of life processes, inclinations resistant to predictability, and rational justification.⁴⁹

It is necessary to find one's own path because philosophy is a path to the adventure of the unknown and against all certainty. According to Badiou, it is necessary to rebuild and re-establish the continuity of thought, its concentration, to establish and give itself time, to slow down and retain that intrinsic slowness, and to give itself time to think as the time once invoked by the great philosophers. There is no time for that today. It needs to be found again,

41
Ibid., pp. 10–12.

42
Ibid., p. 13, 17.

43
Ibid., p. 18.

44
Ibid., p. 17.

45
Ibid., pp. 17–18.

46
Ibid., pp. 18–19.

47
Ibid., p. 20.

48
Ibid., p. 22.

49
Z. Bauman, *Postmoderna etika*, pp. 45, 47–48.

invented. It is precisely this construction of our own time, Badiou points out, that must be the guiding principle of the philosophical style we may demand from philosophy today.⁵⁰

The desire of philosophy, which is also revolutionary desire, must, for Badiou, be to find a fixed point from which to interrupt the speed and incoherence of contemporary culture to say ‘*this* is good and *that* is not’. Finding this fixed point, which Badiou calls truth, opens the space for reconstruction of time through the rooted ‘slowness of investigation’. What such a philosophy requires of us is one clear and firm anchor, and one new figure of the subject as the ultimate differential in which the singular, event, and truth are rationally linked. It is necessary to provide the world with a new figure of the subject. The new figure of the subject thus becomes the new maxim of philosophy. It is a subject that becomes the site of possible rationality and the point of truth of events. It is a singular subject, because an event is what constitutes it in some truth, the subject being the point and node of the occurrence and event of the truth.⁵¹

Therefore, Badiou advocates a determined, founding, originating philosophy, philosophy of truth, and singularity, ready to welcome an unforeseen event, to rethink it, and to provide one shelter or an anchor for the desire for such a philosophy. Thus, happiness exists only for the individual, for the subject who accepts becoming the subject. Herein lie its singularity and new maxim. Only such a philosophy can and should say what a happy life is. Real happiness is subordinated to a risky venture and an encounter that invites us to choose. That choice and decision is the experience of the absolute. Only here and in that decision does the subject stand or fall and becomes or disappears.⁵²

Conclusion – Happiness as an Emancipatory Process of Humanisation

It follows that, according to Badiou, real happiness is in an unexpected encounter. To live means to live absolutely, radically without comfort, safety, superficiality. Therein lies the experience of the absolute, and thus of freedom. This alone is pure happiness, unlike its surrogates, which only provide instant gratification. This encounter with the possible unpredictable and the unknown is related to the moment when the subject emerged. Only here can we experience true happiness. Becoming the subject of a certain truth, and thus a participant of the absolute can be in the modality of encounter.

Thus, the subject’s path becomes a path of perseverance and persistence, diverting from the well-established, familiar, and safe paths, and accepting the consequences of that diversion. This instance of diverting from one’s path is an adventure into uncertainty and a solitary endeavour. In a way, this carries with it a kind of idea of creation that requires a departure from the subject, from oneself. Therefore, each existence is capable of more than its self-preservation. In the event of a singular truth, the subject is born and constituted, and in the element of that truth, the effect of the subject is born. The effect of this is real happiness and joy.⁵³

What philosophy needs is to experience the truth, to fight for it, to intercept it, to decide for the truth, to embark on an adventure, to go on a path, to stand up, to walk, to move up and forward, to turn off the beaten paths and persevere in the paths of the impossible, to be faithful to the exiled, the excluded, under the imperative of the true Idea that governs our lives by happiness.⁵⁴ In other

words, to be an eternal exile from a land of ease, conformism, and comfort, to be uncompromising and against comfort and safety, to go out of your way means to become a subject and to meet happiness. It is this instance of turning off the beaten path that only leads to true happiness.⁵⁵

The moment when the subject discovers an event as a discovery of a world that did not exist before, and which now exists as a possibility, and discovers an active ability that they did not know they possessed and the possibility of which they did not even see is a moment of realization that real happiness exists and a moment of real happiness alone. This event carries with it a transformative force; it becomes an authentic, intense, absolutely happy, though anxious, moment of one's life. It is revealed as one part of the world that did not exist before, except as a negative compulsion. It carries the unknown and uncertainty, but also the cry of transformation and the possibility of happiness and self-realization. That is the real power of an event that is the germ of happiness.⁵⁶

Therefore, the real world is placed in something impossible from the perspective of that world under the pressure of this new event. The event is a break with that usual, well-known existence in the world. The impossible becomes possible. Then comes the happiness revealed to the subject as an opportunity for a different world and existence. Thus, the new subject is simultaneously both inside and outside the world, altered in the world, immanent but displaced and out of it as an exception. The subject, as an immanent exception in the world, is displaced from it and undergoes an emancipatory process, and remains without its homeland, left to itself, and weakens all identity ties.⁵⁷

Happiness is, therefore, a kind of affect and excess. It moves us beyond the established patterns and allows us to create something new in the world, but as an exception. However, the subject must remain disciplined, faithful, and loyal to that happiness and continuously find new forms of representation of the real. Thus, the point where discipline, responsibility, faithfulness, and freedom intersect becomes the point of origin of the subject. Happiness is, therefore, on the side of creating something new and different, an affirmation of genericity and originality. It is a dialectical negation of pleasure, which is a form of subjective death. Since the subject is immersed in the steady patterns and the world as it is, they are slowly dissolving and dying. That is why happiness is an emancipating process of transcending, subjecting the individual, and their self-realization.

The answer to the question at the beginning of this title about how to change the world could be, as Badiou points out, that the subject becomes part of the consequences which stem from participating in the event that has the potential of change within the subject itself. It is necessary to be indeed dissatisfied with existing relationships, embark on the adventure of the unknown, get off

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A. Badiou, *Metafizika stvarne sreće*, pp. 36–37.

51

Ibid., pp. 42–43.

52

Ibid., p. 49.

53

Ibid., p. 53.

54

Ibid., pp. 42–43, 46–47.

55

Ibid., p. 54.

56

Ibid., p. 65.

57

Ibid., p. 69, 71.

the beaten path, pay the price for it, and only then we will be able to be truly happy. It is in this change, and its possibility that happiness lies, and to change that does not mean to achieve some result, but to rest in the change itself. Happiness is, thus, an imminent realization of the possibility of the impossible. It is necessary to live a genuinely absent but present, fulfilled, happy, and authentic life. The subject thus becomes an ontological absolute random point of exception and the place of birth of truth. Happiness is, therefore, an exception, an excess, a possible aberration, and something extraordinary but immanently present in the world. It is a victory over finality and task. From the perspective of a happy life, philosophy just serves to bring about such a life.

Darija Rupčić Kelam, Ivica Kelam

Mitska potraga za srećom – opsjena sreće

Kratak pregled filozofije sreće

Sažetak

Po nekim autorima, postoji nekoliko značajnih projekata o ljudskom pitanju u dvadeset i prvom stoljeću. Jedan je od njih potraga za ključem osobne sreće. U porastu je vjerovanje među ljudima da sustavi koji su nekada bili stvoreni da bi osnažili naciju, poput obrazovnog sustava, zdravstvenog sustava i sustava skrbi, trebaju služiti sreći i dobrobiti pojedinca, a ne obratno. Time se pravo na potragu za srećom preoblikovalo u prirodno pravo na sreću. Harari tvrdi da se BDP po glavi stanovnika, kao glavna mjera uspješnosti države, mora dopuniti ili zamijeniti BDS-om – bruto domaćom srećom. U ovom članku ispitat ćemo neke od vodećih ideologija i strategija usmjerenih na postizanje toga cilja. Optimizacija ljudskog iskustva, samo-obmanjujuće strategije i doktrina harmonije služe kao filtri zbilje pojedinca. Važno je zavarati ljude, dovesti ih u stanje radosnosti u kojem bi postali jeftiniji, produktivniji i optimalniji radnici u službi kapitala. Ideja postizanja društvene harmonije upravljački je mehanizam usmjeren na održavanje balansa unutar korporacijske zajednice. Ono što se nalazi iza tiranije jedinstva i potrage za srećom pretvara se u život koji zakriva stvarnost i vodi k dubljoj i daljnjoj potrošnji društvenih, emocionalnih i osobnih veza. Može li nam raspoznavanje širokog spektra ljudskih emocija i bitnih određenja ljudskog bića, poput brige i empatije, pomoći živjeti autentičnijim i sretnijim životom? Pojam sigurnog života, vođen ideologijom sklada i devizom koju Bauman opisuje riječima »ne talasaj«, ideja je života protivnog avanturi, šansi i riziku kao dokazano lažna alternativna životu pobune i žudnje za promjenom mišljenja, a time i žudnje za stvarnom srećom, usuprot iluziji sreće.

Ključne riječi

sreća, ideologija, emocija, tiranija, iluzija, Alain Badiou

Darija Rupčić Kelam, Ivica Kelam

Die mythische Suche nach Glück – das Trugbild des Glücks

Ein kurzer Überblick über die Philosophie des Glücks

Zusammenfassung

Einigen Autoren zufolge gibt es im einundzwanzigsten Jahrhundert etliche bedeutende Projekte zur Frage des Menschen. Eines davon ist die Suche nach dem Schlüssel zum persönlichen Glück. Unter den Menschen wächst der Glaube, dass Systeme, die einst geschaffen wurden, um eine Nation zu stärken, wie das Bildungssystem, das Gesundheitssystem und das Fürsorgesystem, dem Glück und dem Wohlergehen des Einzelnen dienen sollten und nicht umgekehrt. So wurde das Recht, Glück zu suchen, in ein natürliches Recht auf Glück überführt. Harari stellt

die Behauptung auf, dass das Pro-Kopf-BIP als Hauptmaßstab für die Leistungsfähigkeit eines Landes durch das BIG – Bruttoinlandsprodukt – ergänzt oder ersetzt werden muss. In diesem Artikel werden wir einige der führenden Ideologien und Strategien untersuchen, die dieses Ziel anvisieren. Die Optimierung der menschlichen Erfahrung, selbsttäuschende Strategien und die Doktrin der Harmonie fungieren als Filter der Realität eines Individuums. Es ist wichtig, die Menschen irrezuführen, sie in einen Zustand der Freude zu versetzen, damit sie billigere, produktivere und optimalere Arbeitskräfte im Dienste des Kapitals werden. Die Idee, gesellschaftliche Harmonie zu erreichen, ist ein Lenkmechanismus, der darauf abzielt, das Gleichgewicht innerhalb der korporativen Gemeinschaft aufrechtzuerhalten. Was sich hinter der Tyrannei der Einheit und dem Streben nach Glück befindet, verwandelt sich in ein Leben, das die Realität verschleiert und zu einer tieferen und weiteren Abnutzung sozialer, emotionaler und persönlicher Beziehungen führt. Kann uns das Erkennen eines breiten Spektrums der menschlichen Emotionen und bedeutenden Bestimmungen eines Menschenwesens wie Fürsorge und Empathie helfen, ein authentischeres und glücklicheres Leben zu leben? Die Vorstellung von einem sicheren Leben, geleitet von der Ideologie des Einklangs und dem Leitsatz, den Bauman mit den Worten „Keine Schwierigkeiten bereiten!“ ausmalt, ist die Idee eines dem Abenteuer, der Chance und dem Risiko entgegengesetzten Lebens, als nachgewiesene falsche Alternative zu einem Leben der Auflehnung und der Sehnsucht nach Meinungsänderung, und damit auch der Sehnsucht nach dem wahren Glück im Gegensatz zur Illusion des Glücks.

Schlüsselwörter

Glück, Ideologie, Emotion, Tyrannei, Illusion, Alain Badiou

Darija Rupčić Kelam, Ivica Kelam

La quête mythique du bonheur – l'illusion du bonheur

Un bref aperçu de la philosophie du bonheur

Résumé

Selon certains auteurs, il existe quelques projets importants liés à la question humaine au XXI^{ème} siècle. L'un d'entre eux est la quête du bonheur personnel. La croyance selon laquelle les systèmes qui avaient été autrefois créés pour consolider la nation, tels que le système éducatif et le système de santé et de soins, doivent servir le bonheur et le bien-être de l'individu, et non inversement, est en augmentation. De cette manière, le droit à la quête du bonheur s'est transformé en droit naturel au bonheur. Harari affirme que le PIB par habitant, en tant que mesure principale pour quantifier la réussite économique d'un pays, doit être complété ou échangé par le BIB – bonheur intérieur brut. Cet article va questionner certaines des idéologies et stratégies dominantes orientées vers la réalisation de cet objectif. L'optimisation de l'expérience humaine, les stratégies auto-illusoires et la doctrine de l'harmonie servent comme filtres pour la réalité de l'individu. Il est important de tromper les gens, les mettre dans un état de joie, afin qu'ils deviennent de la main d'œuvre bon marché, qu'ils soient plus productifs et produisent des résultats optimaux. L'idée d'acquiescer l'harmonie sociale est un mécanisme de gouvernance visant à maintenir l'équilibre au sein des communautés corporatives. Ce qui se trouve derrière la tyrannie de l'unité et la quête du bonheur se transforme en une vie qui masque la réalité et mène à une nouvelle et plus grande consommation des liens sociaux, émotionnels et personnels. L'identification du large spectre des émotions humaines et des déterminations essentielles de l'être humain, telles que la considération et l'empathie, peut-elle nous aider à vivre une vie plus authentique et plus heureuse ? Le concept de vie sûre, soutenu par l'idéologie de l'harmonie et la devise que Bauman décrit par les mots « ne fais pas de vagues », est l'idée d'une vie qui s'oppose à l'aventure, au hasard et au risque, en tant qu'alternative mensongère à une vie de révolte, et en tant que désir pour le changement de la pensée, et ainsi le désir pour le bonheur réel, contrairement à l'illusion du bonheur.

Mots-clés

bonheur, idéologie, émotion, tyrannie, illusion, Alain Badiou