

BARTŁOMIEJ KOTOWSKI

# Popkulturowy all inclusive

Socjologiczno-antropologiczny szkic o szczęściu

SŁOWIAŃSKIE SZCZĘŚCIE  
POP





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### SUMMARY

Reaching happiness – so easy and yet so complicated. Every single person wants to be happy. The idea of happiness and felicity is being implanted in us since early childhood. For anybody can reach happiness. It is an exposed element of everyday life, also in marketing. At first sight, one cannot find apparent happiness in one's daily routines and everyday chores. One may, however, conjure reality in such a way that it becomes beneficial and favourable to one's satisfaction. We ensure prosperity by putting a "penny for good luck" in our purses and wallets, we keep a rabbit's foot keychains or porcelain elephant figures (always with the trunk up) for good luck, we hang horseshoes above the front door (as a symbol of wealth). If somebody loses in a card game we usually comfort them with "unlucky at cards, lucky in love." If something bad happens to somebody else – we say with relief: "Luckily, it wasn't me!" Let us not forget about the four-leaf clover, keeping our fingers crossed for someone, or even breaking a glass or a plate – everything can assure our good fortune!

Happiness is manifested physically mainly in the upper parts of the human body, emitted by the head, chest, and hands. The idea of happiness has got an enormous power and its sense or experience depends on the individual's imagination. Visions of luck and multiple ways of experiencing it, as well as the very pursuit of happiness itself are realized individually by everyone. They are accepted and chosen to explain the purpose of life and sense of existence in the world. Happiness is imagined, but only what is truly achieved can lead to feeling lucky and fortunate. Its whole secret lies in ambiguity, elusiveness and multidimensionality as luck is an autotelic value and the more choices there are, the more opportunities to be happy may come.

Infinite and unrestricted possibilities for interpretation of emotional state and happiness are consistent with postmodern axiological pluralism. The concept of happiness is blurred, flowing and multidimensional, but above all it is a plenipotent element with a tendency to hyperindividuality of a person. Anything can induce the feeling of individual happiness – seeking sensations, life without worries, reaching goals, dreams or even pure chance. It is often accompanied by emotions such as enthusiasm, delight, rapture or exaltation. Happiness is a form of delight that requires an individual to recognize the meanings within the concept and its properties. Importantly, happiness is in itself proportionate to the pleasure perceived by the individual. Its pursuit is a noticeable if not characteristic feature of postmodern society. However, for it to be achieved, it must be based on social bonds and actions consistent with the values of the individual. What I am trying to demonstrate in this book, forced into rigid frameworks and definitions, knowledge of one's own or somebody else's happiness is not essential to its experiencing. After all, there are no records of happy people, no statistics and people are not categorized from this point of view.



Millions of people all over the world live happily, have their moments of pure joy and delight or pursuit their dreams. And maybe there's the rub – the magic, ambiguity, elusiveness, and above all, the endless possibilities of interpreting happiness.

Belief that happiness lies in possession of objects and therefore material well-being is characteristic for consumer society. Achieving happiness in shopping and entertainment centres has an autotelic dimension and is superficial. Happiness, however, has various origins. It comes from inside of us. It is an emotional state experienced within, and surely it would not be possible to achieve without social bonds and actions consistent with the values of the individual. The need for happiness or, in other words, being happy, is a continuous process which consists of the collision of happy moments, in other words - achieving happiness “here and now.” Everyday experiences of small pleasures (moments of happiness) are interwoven into everyday life and often fraternized with it, giving a sense of satisfaction in life at the moment they occur. Experiencing happiness is a need that results from the individual experience of a person.

Mass culture is a culture of happiness. Together with its elements and products, it is a very important element of everyday life. Youth music has a great impact not only on the identity of the young generation, but above all on perceiving, learning and interpreting the world. Favourite genres of music among Russians are different types of rock, pop and classical music. Among the Poles and Ukrainians are pop, disco and classical music. The most popular type of music listened to, both behind the eastern border and in Poland, is pop music. It is preferred mostly by young people, white-collar workers and nurses. Pop culture calls for happiness and enjoying life. The surrounding reality imposes a constant quest for meaning in sense and individual transmission. This transmission takes place in various social and Internet media (youtubism, facebookism, etc.) and it is gaining more and more power in popular culture. Postmodern world, full of contradictions, flow and diversity, is filled with not only shifting various styles around and freedom of choice, but above all it is a space in which individuals constantly strive to satisfy their dreams and desires for happiness in a manner unrestricted by any rules. And pop culture has become its base. The space of individual's personal activities is not banal and limited because it is overfilled with unique autotelic properties. They do not submit to any standardization. Freedom of an individual from everything and everyone is restricted by no limitations (rooftopping.) It is distinguished by multidimensionality, heterogeneity in thinking and actual activities anchored in everyday life. Pleasure is an important factor in mass culture. Happiness is understood as the collision of moments of happiness that are interwoven with everyday life. Popular culture strongly exposes and determines collecting inner experiences and emotional states. The emotion of happiness composes of various factors. In order for a person to achieve happiness (moments



of collision), not only are moments of great exaltation and rapture necessary, but also small, ephemeral joys of daily life.

Songs, both their lyrics and the melody, the performer or finally the music style, are not without significance in the context of happiness. Listening to one's favourite music (be it a song or a genre) can undoubtedly sustain or bring contentment. The lexical resources, contexts, and functions of songs about happiness are varied and have different sources as they are connotational. Synonymic and phraseological forms anchored in the surrounding reality and the various types of cultural context of off-road happiness are postmodern. Happiness is expressed with various, positively marked words and phrases which are often fixed in the surrounding reality. The content of the songs is multi-functional, unlimited by form, which means it is dynamic, and, above all, socially and culturally embedded. Listening to one's favourite music, participating in festivals, discos, watching TV or playing computer games – all these elements are the undisputed attributes of everyday life of the postmodern era. Since, for participants of popular culture the most important thing is pleasure understood as a momentary collision of flashes of happiness interwoven with everyday life, therefore, popular culture – the culture of happiness, should be treated through the generated meanings and processes which create a sense of happiness and pleasure and are produced by the individual at the moment of their reception. Because they are flexible, language, thought and culture are factors that respectively establish each other and exert mutual influence.

Character of the language contained in the songs of happiness is one of the signature features of mass culture. Linguistic and cultural analysis of the lyrics presented in this book makes it possible to conclude that the language of happiness, understood both as a colloquial term as well as some kind of activity and skill, found in the songs is noticeably positive. It has rich lexical resources reflecting the variety of forms and functions of happiness in song lyrics, and has many functions performed by the creators and performers of these texts. It is multi-layered by intensity of synonyms and idiomatic forms, which allow not only to understand and create the reality of everyday life, but also give vent to the visions of happiness, i.e. to transmit them in popular culture. It is a means to achieve abstraction and illusion of happiness (through antinomies, particularly evident in proverbs and sayings) understood as contentment with life but also to understand and express the collision of moments of happiness with everyday life. Happiness and the language in which we express it, are positively associated and universally desired in popular culture. Proverbs, aphorisms and Slavic (Polish / Ukrainian / Russian) sayings are fascinating cognitive sources of happiness. This is an interesting phenomenon especially at the confrontational level. The lexical resources to determine the emotional state of happiness are very large and diverse. Following daily routines can give / induce the sense of happiness (determinant of habits) from



past events. This sensation is conditioned by the individual's feeling of security and blissful anticipation of foreseeing consequences of some phenomena. Determinant of habits is the behaviour adopted by individuals which is anchored in everyday life and popular culture through routine actions and repetition of patterns. The validity of the determinant of habits is usually perceived when an individual feels its lacking. This lack may apply to phenomena of all kinds, including linguistic ones, and is clearly visible in song lyrics. This determinant is carried out mainly in the texts of popular music and is associated with love – for which it is an equivalent to the feeling of happiness. Metaphors, metonymies of the world outside the everyday life create a kind of picture of happiness that is appreciated and felt by individuals only after it is gone. It is at the moment of its loss that its validity and value is glorified and treasured.

Determinant of the present serves to analyse happiness transmitted in the real time, here and now. It is embedded in the space between what was (i.e. the past, there and then) and what will be (i.e. the future.) The determinant of the present is, therefore, the real happiness, that is, the collision of the moment in its course (at the moment it occurs) and the perception of the individual. It is diverse in its shades and hues. Its characteristic is the transmission of the moment of “here” and “now.” It is not plenipotent either backwards or forwards. Happiness is therefore located in events in the space and time that do not go beyond the present. An important element of the determinant of the present (here and now), which serves to achieve the moments of happiness by individuals, are attitudes affixed to egotistic hedonism or hedonistic materialism and they can also, to some extent, be identified with the culture of consumerism.

In this book all the elements that express and serve to achieve happiness by individuals have been labelled as the determinant of desires. The space-time of this determinant, though transmitted in the present "here and now", is oriented forward, for the future. It is located on the axis of space-time before the determinant of habit and present respectively, because it concerns future events, that is, everything that has not happened yet, but is in the plans, desires, dreams and wishes of individuals. In this context, happiness is the object of desire. Happiness is fragmentary in its nature when perceived as satisfaction with ones' lives and their pursuits. It is the sum of the collisions of happy moments. It is a condition yearned by individuals, and occurring when they attain the desired meaning of their existence. Happiness understood as an ephemeral, elusive moment, sweeps us away and becomes a peculiar stroke of luck on the axis of everyday life, which stands out. The experience of happiness is conditioned by the individual's desires and their individual choices.



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The analysis of happiness in popular culture conducted in this book focuses on the lyrics of Slavic songs, particularly in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian. And cultural background is an indispensable element of the argument. For, lyrics of songs play an important role in the process of achieving happiness by individuals. Songs release new and/or reminisce from the subconsciousness the collisions of moments of happiness from the past events (determinant of habits) and they can activate them through present moments (determinant of the present) thus directing and introducing the individual (determinant of desires) into the state of happiness. Happiness itself is just as ambiguous as its concept. As evidenced in the following chapters of this book, one learns about happiness mainly by contrasting the everyday life and various antinomies. The expressiveness of these antinomies is clearly visible not only in song lyrics, but also in everyday language and in proverbs and sayings.

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