

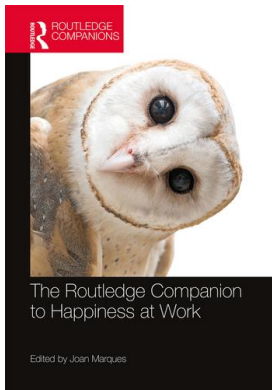
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HAPPINESS IN PROFESSIONAL WORK FORMERLY AND NOWADAYS AS PERCEIVED BY WOMEN AGED 60 OR ABOVE

Analysis of Studies in Socio-philosophical Perspective

Agnieszka Smrokowska-Reichmann and Edyta Janus

Introduction

Retirement is not only the moment of concluding our professional life, but also a chance to reformulate our existing way of life and to enter into a new social role. However, for many people in older age this change is very difficult, filled with decline and loss in the realms of biology, psychology, and society. People no longer feel “useful”, especially when they are forced to retire (Bonk & Retowski, 2013). Yet for many seniors, retirement is an eagerly anticipated period of life, full of new possibilities for spending time or simply resting. People approaching retirement may have more fears and devalue themselves, however when they stop working, they can find pleasure in it (Stuart-Hamilton, 2000).

The question arises whether relationships between happiness and work exist, and if so, what they are? Both aspects of life are critical in anthropological understanding and have long been the subject of scientific enquiry: in psychology, sociology, economy, andragogy, or political science. However, the authors of this chapter chose a different approach and refer to some concepts regarding happiness and work formulated within philosophy. Philosophy has many definitions, but typically it is regarded as a general study of the world, which sometimes looks to synthesise theories of empirical science, explore their foundations, and sometimes is even ahead of the empirical sciences (Ajdukiewicz, 1949; Jaspers, 1998). Throughout their research, the authors frequently found consideration of the empirical research against the background of philosophical speculation allows for a deeper and therefore more precise approach and understanding of an issue, therefore providing great analytical value.

There is a consensus among various scientific disciplines that work is a conscious and deliberate human activity, “intended for transforming the environment” (Szewczuk, 1998, p. 654), and which aims to meet human needs through the provision of goods and services (Pilch, 2003, p. 781). In the view of philosophy, work is usually presented as a universal value which generates other values, thereby allowing a working person to develop not only in the physical, but also in the mental,

spiritual, and moral dimensions (e.g. the Protestant work ethic; Weber, 2011). This Universalist understanding of work in philosophy is perfectly illustrated by the words of Stanisław Brzozowski, a Polish philosopher of labour who, at the beginning of the 20th century wrote: “Work has shaped our most fundamental thoughts to such an extent that we are not able to imagine a state of mind in which it would not play any role” (Brzozowski, 1910, p. 147). Work, considered in antiquity and medievalism to be something humiliating, even degrading; to be a domain of slaves and lowborn people (especially so of manual labour), has gradually undergone rehabilitation also within philosophy. Eventually, even separate philosophical schools appeared, each referring to work in a particular way, such as Pragmatism (James, Dewey), or Praxeology (Kotarbiński).¹ In the philosophy of Marx, it is work that makes a person become a human. Brzozowski, who generally agrees with Marx, broadened the definition of work, giving it an almost metaphysical stature.

Nothing is presented to us in the form of a naked, unchanging being. Everywhere and always we deal with our own actions, with work (...). We do not know reality itself, we do not know, given to us as a model, either the absolute good nor the beauty. Truth, good and beauty are for us not things but tasks on which we should work to complete.

(Brzozowski, 2008, p. 4)

Therefore, according to Brzozowski, human work is the activity of intelligent beings (although animals perform as many activities, they do not work). People, intelligent beings, need work to get in direct contact with objective reality and get to know it through their efforts.

If work is not and should not be seen (only) as a burden, but (also) as an enrichment of the human personality and a way to self-realisation, then it is natural that another category which should be considered is the happiness felt by a working person. As with work, the empirical sciences, especially positive psychology, have contributed much to the understanding of happiness. Philosophers, too, have long considered happiness, provoking many disputes and controversies. Differences are encountered even in the very definition of happiness, and are continued when differentiating its forms, evaluating its extent and intensity, etc. This likely stems from the fact that the happiness does not easily undergo methodological operationalization (Janus & Smrokowska-Reichmann, 2018).

The authors of the chapter consider the 20th century definition of happiness, formulated by Władysław Tatarkiewicz, as particularly apt, according to which happiness is a full and lasting satisfaction with one's whole life (Tatarkiewicz, 1979). This definition is appropriate particularly when conducting research with older people, who are able to look back at their whole life with greater perspective. While researching this chapter together, the authors noted that “the contemporary philosophical concept of happiness is close to that of psychology, since in both modern philosophy and psychology happiness is defined by a person's psychological condition” (Janus & Smrokowska-Reichmann, 2018). In particular, positive psychology, mentioned above, often accords with philosophical thought regarding happiness.

As we know, the philosophers of ancient Greece devoted much effort to contemplating happiness. Here, the ethical intellectualism of Socrates is perhaps the best known view, according to which the pursuit of happiness is the same as the pursuit of knowledge: “Only good gives true happiness and benefit. Virtue is the true good. Virtue is only one, because every virtue is knowledge. By acquiring knowledge, we gain the good, and with it benefit and happiness” (Tatarkiewicz, 1997, p. 75). On the other hand, Aristotle adopted a more pragmatic attitude (as we would say nowadays), considering happiness to be an autotelic goal of a human's every action. In order to lead to happiness, this action must be based on the so-called rule of golden mean, that is, a balance between the two extremes, “of which one comes from excess, and the other one from deficiency” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, from: Sarnowski & Frykowski, 1993, p. 29). Two other great ancient philosophical schools (often mistakenly presented as opposed to one another), Epicureanism and

Stoicism, show very similar understanding of happiness. According to Epicurus just the absence of suffering means happiness, whilst true peace of mind, that is, ataraxia—resembling happiness felt by gods—is achieved by those who have few needs, benefit from goods in moderation, and retain their independence from the world (Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus, quoted in Laertius). In turn, according to the Stoics, happiness comes from keeping our distance from the world and keeping an inner serenity (Hersch, 2001). As Seneca points out: “(a sage) needs many things in life, but to live a happy life it is necessary to have only the spirit which is healthy, sublime, and totally contemptuous of fate” (quoted in: Sarnowski & Frykowski, 1993, 35). The three ‘A’s of stoicism—Apatheia (indifference to the blows and smiles of fate), Autarky (self-sufficiency), and Ataraxy (a state similar to the existence of gods)—are a prescription for achieving perfect happiness.

Not only are these parallels such as the one above among the ancient philosophers surprising (upon reflection, it may become even understandable), but also the fact that modern philosophy came full circle in many respects, drawing abundantly from its ancient roots. For example, when writing about happiness Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was clearly referring to the philosophy of Aristotle (the importance of action, to the right extent, and of keeping harmony in life as substantial conditions for happiness). Furthermore, Arthur Schopenhauer wrote similarly to the Epicureans: “People’s happiness should not be measured by pleasure, but by lack of suffering” (Kaszyński, 2002, p. 90).

The empirical sciences, too, have visible components of ancient philosophical conceptions. For instance, Janusz Czapiński’s compelling modern psychological “onion happiness theory”, clearly refers to Aristotelianism. It proclaims that the main aim of human action is the pursuit of happiness. The author distinguishes three layers in the structure of happiness, hence the name “onion theory”. The core is constituted by the inner will to live while emotional experiences and general satisfaction with life form the middle layer, and so-called domain satisfactions are the external layer (Czapiński, 1992).

The positions outlined above show humans as active beings who achieve happiness through their actions. However, human action is not always identified strictly with work in philosophy (nor psychology or sociology). An example here is the leading philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas who, despite Marxist inspirations in his ideas, criticises Marx, accusing him of absolutising work (Habermas, 2000). According to Habermas, it is not work which is the determinant of society, but rather communicative interaction (so-called communicative action). Nevertheless work, and particularly professional work, is undoubtedly a crucial part of human life, influencing a person in many spheres.

Materials and Method

The study participants comprised 63 women aged over 60 years who attended classes for seniors in the form of lectures and workshops as part of the Unending Youth University Program at the John Paul II Hospital in Krakow. The participants were selected using the nonprobability sampling technique. The inclusion criteria were:

- ✓ Gender—only women. Since the number of men participating in lectures and workshops was very small, it was decided to include only women. Men make up only 8% of participants in the Unending Youth University program. (It should be noted that men participating in the courses were also invited to participate in the study. However, they did not give their consent to be interviewed.)
- ✓ Age—60 years of age and over.
- ✓ Professional work history. (The majority of people who attend classes at the Unending Youth University program at the John Paul II Hospital are no longer professionally active. They are

pensioners, retirees. It is noteworthy that the youngest people participating in the study were born in 1959, the oldest in 1948 and earlier. It is also worth noting that the increase in women's participation in the labour market in Poland occurred only after the Second World War. This increase took place gradually but systematically and is visible in data regarding female participation in employment in Poland; in 1950 it was around 31%, at the beginning of the 70s the number had grown to a level of 40%, and from 2014 has been standing at nearly 49% (GUS, 2018). The data explains the limited possibilities for sampling in terms of a professional activity criterion, particularly among the oldest women, where the large group of them had never been professionally active.)

- ✓ Active participation in lectures and workshops dedicated to seniors taking place at John Paul II Hospital in Krakow.

An original authorial interview scenario was prepared to serve as the research tool. The interview had a categorised form and contained 11 questions together with a personal data form. The interview took the following form: questions in the first section of the interview addressed the professional life of the respondents. Those in the second section concerned the way the respondents perceive work currently. It was suggested that when answering these questions the participants should pay regard to their thoughts about the work of their children, grandchildren, or other family members. The questions asked in the first section focused on how the respondents see happiness in relation to their professional work in the past, the place work occupied in their lives, and the factors which contributed to their happiness at work. The second part of the interview investigated how the respondents evaluate the role work today plays in their own and their relatives' lives, and whether professional work brings a sense of happiness to the family. The respondents also indicated the kind of conditions work should fulfil in order to make people feel happy. Finally, the participants were asked for personal details in order to obtain socio-demographic data.

The interviews were carried out personally by the authors. All the respondents gave their written consent for their participation in the study.

Only women took part in the study. In terms of marital status, 47.6% of participants were married, while 6.3% were divorced. The age group 66–70 represented the largest group, with 33.3% of the sample, whilst people 60–65 years old constituted the smallest proportion, 8%. The majority of respondents, 50.8%, proved to have higher education, whilst 44% ceased formal studies after secondary education. There was no person with only elementary education registered in the research sample. All participants lived in the Krakow Municipality. Their occupations were grouped into the following categories: education (teachers and form teachers), medical professions (physical therapists, physicians, nurses, laboratory diagnostician), services—nonphysical workers (accountants and salespersons, office workers), services—physical workers (furriers, hairdressers, bookbinders, and construction workers). Most common were professions from the education category, 39.7%. Least common were occupations in the category services—physical workers, 11.1%. The detailed socio-demographic data are presented in Table 17.1.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis of data from the study was performed. In order to better characterise the information obtained, the authors cite selected statements of the respondents.

Work and Happiness Perceived by Women Aged Over 60 Years: Results

The first question to the respondents was general and enquired whether professional work can give a sense of happiness. All the women (100%) responded “yes”.

Table 17.1 Demographic data

Category	N (63)	%
Sex		
Female	63	100
Marital status		
Married	30	47.6
Widowed	23	36.5
Divorced	4	6.3
Single	6	9.6
Age (in years)		
60–65	5	8
66–70	21	33.3
71–75	20	31.7
>75	17	27
Education		
Basic	0	0
Vocational	3	4.8
Secondary	28	44.4
Higher	32	50.8
Profession		
Education	25	39.7
Medical Professions	19	30.2
Services; non-physical workers	12	19
Services; physical workers	7	11.1

Respondents were next asked whether their professional work did indeed give them a sense of happiness. Only 3% felt that it did not, with 97% confirming that it did. The arguments given by the women demonstrating that work gave them a sense of happiness were divided into several identified categories, as follows: professional work as a place for development and satisfaction, professional work as meeting the need to belong, professional work as an activity which allows us to be useful to others, professional work as a way for maintaining personal activity, and professional work as a means of financial gain.

The people who specified that work gives them happiness only when it allows for self-development and satisfaction gave arguments typified by the following: “*At work I pursued my aspirations, I felt good about myself*”. “*Work gave me happiness because it was in line with my interests*”. Other respondents stressed: “*Work was my passion*”; or “*It aligned with my education*”; “*It enabled me to develop mentally*”; “*Work let me fulfil myself*”; “*[Work] was for me a source of personal fulfilment*”. One of the participants concluded: “*I was performing my work according to the talent I have—then you can be happy at work, not tired*”.

The respondents who stated that professional work used to allow them to fulfil their need to belong, and therefore feel happy, said: “*Work used to give me pleasure, but it all depends on the people you worked with*”; “*Work allowed me contact with people*”; “*Thanks to work I had contact with people*”; “*Companionship is important at work, it is good to work when people are all right*”.

Combining work and its usefulness occupied an important place for respondents. Helping others used to give them happiness and the feeling that they were doing something for the benefit of society. Examples of their statements are: “*I used to work with sick people. When I saw that their condition was improving, I felt satisfaction and that they needed me*”. “*I used to work with ill people, and watching the results of my actions gave me happiness*”. Other statements referred to the value for society. “*It was*

important that I was doing something for others”; “...that I will leave a mark”, “Work gave me the feeling of fulfilling tasks which were useful for society”.

The following responses characterise the statements of those that recognised work as a way to stay active, and hence feel happy. “Thanks to work, I was active”; “Work satisfied my need to be active. If a person has too much time, she/he thinks too much”. Some highlighted that work for them was a way to earn an income. However, it is important to note that none of the women stressed only that fact. The financial gain of work was mentioned along with other factors, such as deriving satisfaction from work: “Work gave me pleasure, but also gave me the possibility to earn”; “Thanks to work I had money, but I also had other things”.

Other sentiments were heard that fall outside the above detailed categories, albeit rarely. One of the women commented “Professional work allowed me to get away from daily activities”. Of the few people (3% of respondents) who claimed that professional work did not give them a sense of happiness, we heard statements such as “Work gave me no happiness. It was only contentment”; “Work was a necessity for me, not a choice”; “My work was unpleasant, and it became even worse when some not very intelligent woman became my supervisor”.

The women were next asked about the factors which influenced the sense of happiness that work provided. They received a list of factors and were asked to evaluate them and select those which applied to them. The factors were ranked according to the frequency of their selection by the women. Most frequently, the women associated their happiness at work with the feeling that it is worth doing, while relations with co-workers were also important. Least frequently, respondents selected work as a way to fill time and a short distance between the workplace and home as factors influencing the happiness they got from work. The full ranking of factors is presented in Table 17.2.

The respondents were next required to analyse how their level of happiness changed after leaving professional work. The assessment was made using a five-point Likert scale. According to 38.9% of respondents, their level of happiness did not change after they stopped working professionally and 34.2% claimed that their level of happiness even decreased, while 6.3% said it decreased noticeably. 12.7% of individuals said that their level of happiness increased when they stopped working, and 7.9% declared that their level of happiness definitely increased.

When asked to rate the place of professional work in their lives, as many as 49.2% of the respondents felt that work was very important to them, and 44.4% saw it as rather important. Just 6.4% of women chose “neither important nor unimportant”. There were no other replies reported.

The participants were then asked to respond to a number of statements regarding professional work, again making their assessments on a five-point Likert scale. Most agreed with the statements that relations with others were important in a workplace and that they maintained the balance between private life and work activities. The statement respondents most often disagreed with concerned satisfaction with earnings. Detailed results are presented in Table 17.3.

Table 17.2 Factors perceived to influence respondents’ sense of happiness at work

Name of factor	Rank
The feeling work is worth doing	1
Positive relations with co-workers	2
The possibility to help others	3
Self-fulfilment	4
Stable employment	6
Retirement pension	6
The feeling of providing for your family	7
The place of work being a short distance from home	8
Work as a way of filling your time	9

Table 17.3 Evaluation of statements regarding professional work

	DEFINITELY YES		RATHER YES		NEITHER YES NOR NO		RATHER NOT		DEFINITELY NOT	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
While working professionally, I kept the balance between work and private life	32	50.8	29	46	1	1.6	1	1.6	0	0
Relations with others were important to me in the workplace	36	57.1	25	39.7	2	3.2	0	0	0	0
I was happy with the atmosphere in the workplace	28	44.4	28	44.4	4	6.4	3	4.8	0	0
I was happy with the work conditions	24	38.1	24	38.1	8	12.7	7	11.1	0	0
I was happy with my earnings	8	12.7	7	11.1	6	9.5	22	34.9	20	31.8
My work was important to others	24	38.1	30	47.6	7	11.1	2	3.2	0	0
Work gave me a feeling of security (sense of stable employment)	30	47.6	28	44.4	5	8	0	0	0	0

In the second section of the interview, the respondents were asked to give general answers concerning their current perception of the job market, paying regard to the work of their children, grandchildren, or other working family members.

When asked whether people feel happy at work nowadays, 63.5% of subjects responded that people do feel happy at work, with 36.5% saying that people do not. The justifications for both positive and negative answers were categorised. Positive answers were divided into the following categories: professional work as an area of development and satisfaction, professional work as fulfilling the need to belong, and professional work as a means of financial gain.

The statements of respondents from the category of professional work bringing happiness as an area of development and satisfaction included: *“Work gives the opportunity of promotion”, “Work gives meaning to life”, “People who I observe fulfil themselves at work in terms of knowledge and emotionally”, “People close to me do what they can and enjoy doing”, “...they fulfil themselves”, “...they develop the knowledge they gained during studies”, “...they fulfil themselves professionally”.*

Within the category of work fulfilling the need to belong, the subjects explained: *“Work enables contact with others”; “Colleagues are nice and work goes well”; and “My family cannot imagine life without their work”.* The third category of statements refer to work as a source of income. The women observed: *“Work pays well. This is what gives happiness nowadays”; “...good salary”; “...the possibility to support a family”.*

The statements from those who said that people don't feel happy at work nowadays were classified into the following categories: lack of happiness as a result of imbalance between work and private life (workload), lack of satisfactory relationships, work as a source of stress, and running their own business as a limitation for experiencing personal satisfaction from work. In the course of their interviews, the women stressed that it is mainly a result of poor work-life balance: *“In (these) times of corporations, people work non-stop. The family is further down the list”; “People have too high a work rate, everything needs to be done yesterday”; “People have no time for anything”; “They work at the expense of the family”.* One person remarked *“Nowadays, people are workaholics”.*

Remarks falling in the category of lack of satisfactory relationships at work included: *“Friendly relations are missing at work nowadays”; “People are arrogant toward each other and customers”; “There is an unhealthy competition”; “There is no friendship at work, people don't talk to each other. They just sit quietly at their desks, hidden behind the computers”; “Friendly relationships almost don't exist. It's every man for himself”.*

Some respondents pointed out that work is a source of big stress. For instance: *“Work is very stressful”; “People are irritable at work nowadays”; “Now we can observe very big competition. It must be tiring”; “People have too many responsibilities, it is impossible to work calmly that way”; “Work doesn't give the sense of stability. It's very stressful”.*

The last of the categories concerned running your own business as a factor limiting the feeling of happiness at work. The respondents considered that: *“Those who are the employers, have no time for happiness at work”; “Whoever runs a company is much burdened”; and “Self-employment is too demanding”.*

The subjects were next requested to assess the place of work in the lives of their loved ones. According to 42.9% of interviewees, work takes a very important place in their relatives' lives, while 38.1% rated it rather important. The answer “Neither important nor unimportant” was given by 19% of respondents.

The following question concerned the factors which currently influence the feeling of happiness at work. The answers were categorised and ranked according to frequency. Answers unique to a single respondent were classified to the category “Others”. For example: *“It gives happiness to perform work which is not mentally taxing”; “Happiness at work is determined not by the work, but by the person that performs it. Everything depends on the person”.* The detailed data are presented in Table 17.4.

Table 17.4 Factors perceived to influence the feeling of happiness at work in the present

Factor	Rank
Balance between work and private life	1
Performing work in line with the qualifications	1
Good relations with co-workers and supervisors	2
Satisfactory salary	3
The feeling of providing for your family	4
Comfortable work conditions	5
Performing profession which is respected in society	6
Others	7

The subjects were next given a number of statements concerning professional work and asked to consider them in the context of their observations of their loved ones. The assessment made use of a five-point Likert scale.

The final question of the interview asked about the conditions which work should fulfil to make people feel happy. The most common reply was that positive interpersonal relations can lead to happiness at work. For instance: “*The atmosphere at work is important*”; “*Mutual respect is important*”; “*...people who you enjoy working with*”; “*...mutual understanding between people*”; “*...mutual affection*”. The possibility to perform work in line with one’s passion or education, and work useful for others were often cited. To illustrate: “*At work, you should do what you enjoy doing*”; “*It is important to work according to your qualifications*”; “*...to be able to use the knowledge you have*”; “*Work must be important to others*”; “*A person must know that what he does makes sense and is useful to others*”. Others noted employment stability and “*the feeling that there is a job, not the fear of losing it*” as an influence on happiness. Respondents also saw keeping a balance between work and home life as important, for instance stating: “*You need to keep the balance. Work is work and life is life*”; “*Women who raise children should not work so much. They need to have time for their children*”.

Discussion

To begin with we should briefly comment on the socio-demographic makeup of the research sample. The vast majority of the respondents are people with secondary and higher education. Similarly, most of them spent their working lives in what may be described as intellectual professions. What is more, the people taking part in the study live in the city of Kraków, historically recognised as a cradle of the Polish intelligentsia. In their responses one could notice the features which could be described as an echo of the ethos of the old-time intelligentsia. At this point it is worthwhile to explain a little further the specifics of this social class.

The intelligentsia is a phenomenon of Central and Eastern Europe, and in other countries unknown as the social category. This fact is confirmed by the absence of this concept in many publishers’ dictionaries. In cases where the publishers included that word, the term refers to unspecified groups where the determinant is only to think independently (Leszkowicz-Baczyński, 1997). The intelligentsia can be viewed as a class (or section) of society which, in Poland, was eventually formed in the second half of the 19th century.

According to the research of Jan Szczepański from the 1960s, intelligentsia status was granted to people who owned a high school diploma. Earlier, until World War II, members of the intelligentsia in Poland were people who already possessed a secondary school certificate (Mokrzycki, 2001). In a country where the possibilities of achieving financial success were very limited or non-existent, and in conditions of not having their own statehood (as in the period of partitions)² or in conditions of limited sovereignty (as in the People’s Republic of Poland

Table 17.5 Assessment of statements concerning professional work made by the respondents based on their observation of the family members/loved ones

	DEFINITELY YES		RATHER YES		NEITHER YES NOR NOT		RATHER NOT		DEFINITELY NOT	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
People maintain a good work-life balance	10	15.9	3	4.8	10	15.9	28	44.4	12	19
Interpersonal relations are important in the workplace	22	35	28	44.4	3	4.8	10	15.8	0	0
People are happy with their earnings	8	12.7	9	14.3	4	6.3	20	31.8	22	34.9
It is important for people that their work is valued by others	20	31.8	26	41.3	13	20.6	4	6.3	0	0
Work gives a feeling of security (sense of stable employment)	5	8	18	28.6	14	22.2	26	41.2	0	0

(in Polish, PRL—Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, 1945–1989)), the class of well-educated people necessarily acquired a special role. The intelligentsia created a specific ethos of educated people who served the lower classes by educating and awakening (and later maintaining) the national consciousness. It was characteristic for this group to feel reluctance and even contempt for working for profit (Palska, 2008). One could see in the intelligentsia community a specific contempt for bourgeois, capitalist attitudes, which was derived from the gentry traditions.

The intelligentsia largely took the place of a middle class. This situation was dialectically related to the underdevelopment of capitalism in Poland, meaning that it both co-created this situation and was shaped by it. There were two decisive factors for the formation of the Polish intelligentsia as a social class: the country's backwardness, and the lack of independence of the state (Mokrzycki, 2001). In Poland, the understanding of the intelligentsia was for many years largely set by the sociologist Jan Szczepański (1960), who described it as a collection of various categories of professions associated with cultural creativity, work arrangements, mass co-existence, and performing tasks which require theoretical knowledge. Szczepański created a typology of occupational groups based on various criteria. The primary typology is a three-element division into creative intelligentsia, intellectuals with higher education, and white-collar workers. The creative intelligentsia includes people professionally involved in generating artistic, scientific, ideological, and moral values. The group of intellectuals with higher education is formed by experts, meaning people with specialised knowledge: doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, technicians. The white-collar workers are people who engage in activities of a mental nature, but not requiring higher qualifications.

Szczepański distinguished characteristic social features of the intelligentsia. The most important are: independence in intellectual activity and formation of socio-political attitude, an absence of its own formal institutions and, more significantly than in case of other social groups, independence from the influence of formalised institutions (Szczepański, 1971). This division of the Polish intelligentsia is most reminiscent of the established division of a new middle class in the West, where it is divided into: intellectuals, i.e. the equivalent of the Polish creative intelligentsia; a knowledge class understood by Szczepański as an occupational intelligentsia; and white collar workers. Actually, there are only managers missing here, who usually form one category within the knowledge class, or form a separate class. The typology proposed by Szczepański has been praised as being particularly contemporary and distinguishing itself by means of the greatest consistency (Leszkowicz-Baczyński 1997).

Analysing the opinions of the respondents, one can find connections with the intelligentsia ethos there. This can translate into perceptions of professional work and how it may bring the sense of happiness. It may also be significant that only women took part in the study. In the clear view of sociology, the phenomenon of an intelligentsia and its ethos is, as already pointed out, characteristic to Central and Eastern Europe. We may, then, interpret the replies of the participants from this perspective. However, looking at the same statements from a philosophical (and specifically a philosophical anthropology) perspective, the responses can be seen to reflect not a local specificity determined historically and geographically, but general anthropological truths. These truths apply to the meaning and understanding of happiness and work in human life (and, even more precisely, happiness at work).

Further analysis of the interviewees' statements reveals three categories: first is a sense of balance. Second, a sense of meaning and third, a sense of community. Fulfilling these three areas of need (for balance, for sense, for participating in community) determine happiness derived from work. As stated at the beginning of the chapter, these three areas are discussed here with reference to Aristotle, Victor E. Frankl's logotherapy, the philosophy of dialogue (of meeting), and also to the process described by Jürgen Habermas as lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), colonisation by the system.

Judging by the responses received, all respondents could be placed in Aristotle's Lyceum (here we mean of course the practical philosophy of Aristotle, not his theoretical philosophy and logic). Firstly, for Aristotle, the prudent and skillful action, situated exactly in the middle between the two extremes, is the optimum way to find happiness. It is known as the Aristotelian "Golden Mean". In other words, it is all about keeping the balance. The Greek *Meden agan*—"Do not overdo anything"—is the slogan of common sense on which Aristotle's philosophy is based. Secondly, according to Aristotle, to achieve happiness a person has to live in a community and act in collaboration with others. Humans are defined by Aristotle not only as a being equipped with reason and language (in Greek *zoon logon echon*, in English "the rational animal"), but also as a social being living in a society (in Greek, *zoon politikon*, in English "the political animal"). The closest natural human community is family, showing from the very beginning that humans are not self-sufficient, they need other people not only to feel happy but even for survival. Only the state gives man a comprehensive security (and that is how the famous slogan of Aristotle should be understood: "The state was before the individual") (Aristotle, Politics, book I, 1253a, 12). Whoever does not live in a state is, according to Aristotelianism, is either a beast or a god.

The respondents on multiple occasions stressed how important contact with others, being part of a community, good relations with colleagues, and also the feeling of a specific "duty" for society was, in order for them to feel happy (for example, "*Work gave me a sense of doing things that are valuable to society*"). On the other hand, a lack of happiness at work is associated by the respondents with work overload (there is no "Golden Mean" between work and private life). Professional work which absorbs private life becomes a source of stress. The women also highlighted the importance of maintaining balance between the private and professional spheres of life. Whilst in private life it is important for them to have time for their families, especially for children (here, once again, we might see a relationship between the responses and the sex of the interviewees).

Aristotle presented two ways for leading a happy life. He distinguished active life (in Latin *vita activa*, in Greek *bios Prattikos*) from contemplative life (in Latin, *vita contemplativa*, in Greek, *bios theoretikos*). In contemplative life, we achieve the most absolute happiness, we are "equal with gods" (Aristotle, 1178b). However, the happiness of an active life is no worse and one might even argue that contemplative life is dependent on active life, since it is difficult to contemplate without having your material and physical needs satisfied. Remarkably, the respondents sense these two patterns of human existence and their complementarity very well. This is how we can understand commonly expressed sentiments such as "*Thanks to work I was active*" and "*Work fulfilled my need to stay active*", as well as comments like "*Thanks to work I had money, but I had also other things*". None of the participants was focused purely on economic benefit as the basis, or even as the primary factor conditioning happiness at work.

Many statements refer to the concept of meaning. Work which does not deliver a sense of meaning has not got the power to make a person feel happy. Significantly, each time respondents pointed out the sense of meaning in professional work, there was also a connotation with feeling happy. For instance: "*If a person knows that this work is useful in some way, he is satisfied*"; "*Work must have some sense. Then, doing it gives a person happiness*".

Finding meaning in life and its significance for humans is an issue that would need separate, extensive reflections and goes beyond the scope of this chapter. Here we consider only the deep and valuable thoughts of Victor E. Frankl, who presents humans as focused on and constantly in search of meaning. This need to find meaning in life is described by Frankl as "the will to meaning" and defined as the basic motivation in human life (Frankl, 2014, p. 151). According to Frankl, finding meaning in life gives it true value and allows us to transform even an extremely difficult situation into a triumph (Frankl 2014, p. 118). Logotherapy, created by Frankl, whilst being a therapeutic method, draws from deep philosophical inspirations and has a philosophical message. It deals with looking for hidden meaning which exists also in extremely difficult situations. Of the three central

concepts of logotherapy, one of them is concerned with actions and work, and another with human interactions. As Frankl writes, “Meaning in life can be found in three ways: 1) by creative work and actions, 2) through experiencing something or contact with another person, 3) by how we endure the inevitable suffering” (Frankl, 2010, p. 167). Work, community, experiencing: these are categories reflected in the respondents’ statements, as well.

Doubtless, Victor Frankl’s tragic personal experiences during World War II (losing almost his entire family, his stay in the Auschwitz concentration camp) inform his deeply moving analysis of meaning and belief that it may be found also (if not particularly) in inhumane circumstances. The research presented in this chapter concerns ordinary, everyday circumstances, perhaps not always easy, yet unmarked by tragedy. But, after all, Frankl himself stresses that suffering is not necessary to find meaning, rather, logotherapy emphasises the discovery of meaning **despite** the pain we **may** experience.

Our respondents’ appreciation of the significance of meaning for humans accords with Frankl’s message. Moreover, their statements align with Frankl’s reflections when discussing excessive pace at work and an overloading of duties, factors which reduce or entirely prevent us from experiencing happiness at work. Frankl criticizes the pursuit of success, typical for modern society, and blames the commercialisation of social life for it. (Frankl, 2014, p. 472). In an era of the commercialisation of social life, work is all about faster and faster fulfilment and yet faster, constantly revealed new needs. Here Frankl’s writing chimes with that of postmodernist philosophers such as Jean Baudrillard (2006), Paul Virilio (1999) or Zygmunt Bauman (2000). However, the race to success turns out not to be an activity which gets us closer, but which moves us away from a sense of meaning and, in turn, a sense of happiness. This is particularly visible within the professional occupations. Working under time pressure and overloaded with duties, rather than giving happiness, work generates stress. As the respondents say: “*Nowadays, people become workaholics*”; “*People have too many responsibilities, it is impossible to work in peace*”; “*In these times of (working for) corporations, people work non-stop*”.

We should remember that the interviewees make these observations from a distance of time, being retired and thinking about the work of others who are professionally active. In comparison with the times when they were professionally active, there have been some unfavourable changes. One such change, as mentioned above, is an excessive speed of life. Another concerns the perceived weakening of interpersonal relationships at work, friendship, companionship, and worsening of communication between co-workers: “*There is lack of friendly relations at work now*”; “*There is no relationships at work*”; “*People don’t talk to each other. They stay quietly at their desks, hidden behind the computers*”. This last statement brings to mind the opinion of Jean Baudrillard, a well-known critic of post-modern society, that the IT revolution led to globalisation but at the same time to a loosening of bonds and reduced the authenticity of interpersonal communication: “To each person their own circle, to each their own computer” (Baudrillard, 1996, p. 206).

However, the problem with the deformation of authentic and direct interpersonal communication that should lead to mutual agreement was analysed most thoroughly not by the post-modern philosophers, but by the advocate of modernism, Jürgen Habermas. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* (his *opus magnum*), Habermas describes society as a single entity with a double structure. On one hand, society should be understood as a self-steering system, based on purposeful and rational action, which aims to achieve the material reproduction of society. On the other hand, society should be understood as the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), created by communicative action, which, by starting the process of achieving agreement, heads toward the symbolic reproduction of society (Habermas, 1999). Without going deeper into the ontological subtleties of Habermas’ complicated theory, for the purpose of this chapter we note that, according to the theory of communicative action, society should be understood first as a lifeworld and only then as a self-controlling system. Thus, communicative action, coordinated by speech, has priority over purposeful and rational action coordinated by a so-called controlling media: political power and money.

Habermas stresses that symbolic reproduction is consistent with material reproduction; both constitute necessary elements for the development of society (Habermas, 2000, p. 362). It would be ridiculous to suggest that modern, complex societies can be communities seen only via communicative action. The market and the state (in the sense of administrative and organisational power) creating the system are indispensable (Krasnodębski, 1990, p. 57). However, the problem pointed out by Habermas is an imbalance in influence between the system and the lifeworld. An uncontrolled increase in system complexity has led the controlling media to begin to overstep their functions, with influence beyond the areas of economy and politics. No longer operating within the system, for Habermas they begin the “colonisation of the lifeworld” (Habermas, 1999, p. 659). This means that real communication, being the domain of the lifeworld, of searching for agreement and sharing meaning through discourse, becomes obscured and even crowded out by a depleted and standard “language” of supply and demand. As a result, interpersonal relationships based on interpersonal communication are increasingly being replaced by consumption and administrative contact, founded on money and power (Habermas, 1999, p. 705). And yet, Habermas warns, “money and power can neither buy nor enforce solidarity and meaning” (Habermas, 2000, p. 408).

Perhaps a question arises, as to whether interpreting the observations and responses of the interviewees according to the writings of Habermas in terms of epistemology and ontology is not some abuse. However, in doing so, the authors seek to draw attention not only to the indisputable and interesting (in their opinion) parallels between the ordinary experience of daily life and intellectually sublime theory, but also to another phenomenon.

It took Habermas a few decades to complete the elaboration of his communicative worldview. Between his work *Theory and Practice* (1963) and *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), a significant revolution occurred—the transition from a monologic to dialogic paradigm. Surely this revolution was a result of the philosopher’s intellectual growth, but it was also conditioned by the changes in Western societies which Habermas was observing and analysing. They were gradual but constant changes, connected to the successive and continuous increase in complexity and development of civilisation in Western societies taking place after World War II.

However, Poland, from 1945 till 1989, remained on the other side of “The Iron Curtain” and did not undergo the changes typical in the West. The state in Poland for all those long decades can be seen as being frozen. It was static. When, in 1989, “The Iron Curtain” suddenly, almost overnight, came down, in Polish society changes began to take place very quickly, which in the West were happening step by step. This makes Poland some sort of “laboratory”, where we can observe, on a small scale and in higher speed, the social, cultural and intellectual processes, making them more concentrated and visible. The authors contend, for instance, that colonisation of the lifeworld in Poland was faster and more intense. As a result, it was clearly visible also for the “ordinary minds” of “ordinary people” who, while not being professional philosophers, were engaged in intellectual work, as were many of the respondents of the study. This gives an approving testimony of their observational skills and the authenticity of their statements (which can be attributed to life wisdom, taking into account their age).

As previously noted, the presented research has both “local”, specific significance, i.e. they refer to the exact social and historical reality of our participants, as well as general significance, in a wider anthropological context (with reference to Habermas’ work as the example). We may further explore this interpenetration of general and specific perspectives, through consideration of the work of Martin Buber (general perspective) and Józef Tischner (specific perspective). Both offer perspectives related to Habermas’ vision of society as a communicative community. (This may seem surprising, since Buber and Tischner are situated, as philosophers of dialogue, in the group of philosophers of religion, while Habermas is, of course, a representative of the second generation of the Frankfurt School, founded on Neo-Marxist and psychoanalytical inspirations.³)

When the respondents indicated the factors influencing a feeling of happiness (not only contentment) from professional work, they named: passion, self-realisation, and the possibility to progress. A second group of conditions for being happy at work is: mutual understanding, mutual respect, mutual affection, a good atmosphere, contact with others, and positive emotional relationships with co-workers. These statements are consistent with at least some postulates of the philosophy of dialogue (alternatively, philosophy of meeting). It was developed in the twentieth century independently within three different religious traditions: Judaism (e.g. Levinas, Buber), Catholicism (e.g. Ebner, Marcel), and Protestantism (e.g. Bonhoeffer, Griesebach). The basis of the philosophy of dialogue is the “dialogue rule”, which references the relation between I and Thou. To build this kind of relationship, you need a meeting of two people who are able to open themselves up to each other. According to the philosophy of dialogue, a human becomes a person, the I, only thanks to meeting with the Thou. Not every communication is a true dialogue (and here the philosophy of dialogue differs slightly from Habermas’ theory of communicative action). True dialogue must be founded on respect, appreciation of another person’s individuality and uniqueness, and be bonded with positive emotional relations. Since philosophers of dialogue are philosophers of religion, they stress that each such meeting is a gift from God—the absolute Thou—and the relationship between I and Thou should be one grounded in love (Gadacz, 2009).

Martin Buber contends that we meet the **person**, we interact with the **person**, yet we only experience the **object**. That is why, in relations with other humans, one should have an attitude: I-Thou, never I-It (Buber, 1992). According to Buber, the ideal relationship is a community, which is the opposite of both individualism and collectivism at the same time. The community is grounded in bonds, as “to be” for a human means to “co-exist”, that is, to be in a relationship.

The professional lives of the respondents largely passed in times of real socialism, where the significance and value of collectivism were emphasised, even imposed, particularly glorifying collective work. However, there is no visible approach as such in their answers. On the contrary, the respondents particularly stress relations, and see in them the fundamental reason to feel happy at work. Thus, using the nomenclature of the philosophy of dialogue, it can be said that work gave them happiness, when it was the community I and Thou, not a collection of atomised individuals or an impersonal collective.

The research shows that the respondents managed to avoid the trap which was set by socialism for people professionally active during that period. This trap was identified by Józef Tischner, a representative of the Polish philosophy of dialogue and at the same time a priest, an ethicist and moral authority of PRL times. Tischner argued the basic problem of work in a socialist system was its meaninglessness. During the years 1945–1989, the economy in Poland was planned centrally and full employment was considered a priority. Each Pole had to have a work position; unemployed people, at least officially, did not exist. On the contrary, one could be punished for so-called “evasion of work obligation”.⁴ Behind the socialist vision of work stood noble ideas: the fight against economic exploitation, solidarity with people less resourceful in the job market or those damaged by fate, and provision for all citizens with a social minimum which guaranteed their survival. On the other hand, a socialist approach to work and the central planning of the economy often generated absurd situations in which the work performed was obviously useless and its fruits wasted. Despite that, the respondents did not get a feeling of meaninglessness from their work. Quite the opposite; when working they felt a sense of meaning, which was the main factor determining their happiness at work.

How is this possible, if they were working in the socialist structure of a planned economy? Perhaps the explanation for this puzzle is good relations at work, as stressed by the respondents. If they managed to create in this way the relationship of dialogue, by building a community, it is not surprising that work gave them happiness. For Tischner, both in capitalist and socialist systems work is seen falsely as a form of battle. It should be a dialogue; this is its true nature. Work is **co-operation**, like human existence is **co-existence**. Tischner puts it thus:

Work is a dialogue. People who work, talk (...) Work is born from conversation and is its further development (...) Conversation reaches its essence when it becomes an agreement. Work similarly. It also comes to its essence when it becomes cooperation. As quarrel is a pathology of speech, so is struggle a pathology of work.

(Tischner, 2002, p. 277)

Tischner stresses that work perceived this way—“for others, with others” (Tischner, 2005, p. 97)—helps to develop humanity and makes life meaningful. Let us look to the fact that the respondents view not only an excessive pace and overload of responsibilities as the main problem at work nowadays, but also that people do not talk to each other.

Summary

It is astonishing and at the same time heartening how much room for speculation is given by just the simple study of if empiricism faces a theoretical perspective. The conclusions give an encouraging feeling that we exist in a kind of anthropological *constans*: our human nature, our humanity, does not undergo any significant changes over time, is not subject to irreversible deformations, and does not detach us from our heritage. Quite the opposite: we can see that both great thinkers and so-called “ordinary people” are attentive to risks that could disturb the self-identity of humankind, its social nature, the need for self-realisation, and the pursuit of happiness. Intuitive detection of these fundamental truths by the laypeople corresponds with their intentional and systematic analysis in science and philosophy. Happiness and work, like few other aspects of life, decide our humanity and, as such, they need protection but are also particularly vulnerable to hazards.

Work continues to occupy an important place in human life despite significant changes which have taken place over the years in the world (regarding politics, economy, technology). Moreover, it forms an important connection with an individual’s sense of happiness, even though some of the factors conditioning this perception change, depending on the generation we talk about. However, some factors remain stable—as is the case with a need for interpersonal relationships and to have work which is valued by others.

Is it possible that in old age, looking with the wisdom attained over a lifetime, like our respondents do, we can better understand the relationships between human nature, happiness, and work? Can we recognise more precisely some processes and mechanisms? Can we more accurately describe some phenomena? The authors of the chapter are confident this is so. What we have here is some “expertise” which can be achieved only in old age. Once again, one can say that old age should not be viewed as a period of decline, marked by deficits and lacking any positive perspective, but as the opposite: a period in which a person finally has access to the appropriate material and tools that allow them to speak about the central issue of human happiness in a conclusive, “expert way” (Janus & Smrokowska-Reichmann, 2018).

Notes

- 1 Praxeology, created by Tadeusz Kotarbiński, is the study of efficient performance, that is, a rational and effective action. Praxeology deals with defining such expression as: purpose, measure, method, action, plan, performance, efficiency, economic value, saving. Praxeology includes operational research, which aims to ensure the maximum implementation of the intended goals by coordinated teamwork. (See T. Kotarbiński. (1971). *Traktat o dobrej robocie*. Wrocław: Ossolineum.)
- 2 The term “Partitions of Poland” refers to the three partitions of the Polish territory made by Prussia, Russia, and Austria at the end of the 18th century. In 1772, at the initiative of Prussia, the powers made the first partition of Poland. The second partition was made by Prussia and Russia in 1793. The third partition

took place in 1795. As a consequence of partitioning, Poland as a country ceased to exist and disappeared from the map of Europe for over 100 years.

- 3 Habermas is also considered by many as successor to Immanuel Kant's philosophy, due to the formalism of Habermas' discourse ethics – (see Norris, 2001, p. 10; Habermas, 1991, p. 11).
- 4 It resulted mainly from a law preventing the redundancy of employees in professions or specialities particularly important for the economy, put in place on 7th March 1950. Moreover, in accordance with art. 19 of the PRL Constitution, from 1952, work was a law, duty, and matter of honour for each citizen. Common work duty for men of age 18–45 was also included in the Act of 16th September 1982. On proceedings against people who are avoiding work, see: Journal of Laws No. 35, item 229; repealed by Article 45 of the Act of 29 December 1989 on employment; Journal of Laws No. 75, item 446, as amended.

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