

Annie Horáčková

*Bonheur – la quête commune*

The present thesis concentrates on the conception of happiness in three particular – but very vast and multi-faceted – domains: that of philosophy, sociology and psychology. It is understandable that the author wisely chooses only some approaches and perspectives which appear in the areas in questions, enabling her to limit the scope of her work and to present, in a clear and concise manner, her own view of happiness. Since the first version of her work (presented last year), the author has made numerous changes: she omitted the chapter on religion, restricted certain topics (especially in the „philosophical“ chapter) and made her argument much clearer. In the present state, I consider the work to be an interesting contribution on the question of happiness.

In the first chapter, the author focuses on happiness considered as independent on material needs. She draws inspiration from Plato (*Philebus*), but deals especially with Descartes (and his distinction between pleasures of the body and pleasures of the mind), epicureism and stoicism. She stresses the complicated relation between happiness and desire in epicureism and the stoic distinction between the things which depend and do not depend on the individual. The next step consists in analyzing the relation between happiness and virtue (the basic references being Kant, Mill and Bentham). The author concludes that „le bonheur philosophique semble être un état d’esprit inébranlable par les aspects extérieurs. Le bonheur ne dépend donc pas d’objets matériels (...)“ (p. 11 – 12).

The chapter on sociology presents a sharp contrast in so far as it treats the question of happiness precisely on the level of materiality. The author shows various methods of measuring happiness (especially IRB, l’indice relatif du bonheur) and stresses the material factors intervening in the sentiment of happiness (health, freedom, money and others). She concludes on what she calls „the paradox of happiness“: „Nous observons une sorte d’idéalisations du bonheur, une vision du bonheur formater (sic) par la société de consommation. Beaucoup de gens se disent heureux alors qu’il est possible d’observer une augmentation générale du stress, de la dépression ou encore de l’anxiété“ (p. 24 – 25). In this part, the author is very critical of the idealization of happiness and what she calls „homo consumans“ (p. 26 – 27): „La société dans laquelle nous vivons est une société qui s’épuise à chercher le bonheur dans des biens matérielles (sic), soit dans l’extérieur au lieu de l’intérieur“. This criticism is further stressed in the last chapter, focusing on positive psychology, as well as on the problem of drugs (considered as an illusory form of happiness) and depression. The author’s conclusion is very clear – against this illusory form of happiness, she defends the stoic thesis according to which „il faut oublier que le plaisir est dans la possession pour pouvoir être heureux. Car en cherchant seulement à avoir nous nous éloignons de l’essentiel, c’est-à-dire de soi“ (p. 40).

Since the first version of her work, the author has come a long way: the argument is much clearer, the style is more concise, even though there are some minor mistakes in French. The bibliography is a standard one (which was not the case of the first version). I therefore propose the mark *velmi dobře* (2).

Praha, 20.7.2015      Josef Fulka