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ON HOPING FOR HOPE The Search for *homo esperans*¹

It is important to realize what hope is not. Roger Scruton, in the context of misunderstood hope, draws attention to a false, optimistic mentality that uses cognitive stereotypes, serving as ‘anesthesia’ for the uncertainty of the future. Kozielecki describes such attitudes in terms of passive hope: they express a belief that after a period of passive waiting one will reach the expected goal. This type of hope is built on the foundation of established cognitive schemes and trust in their reliability. It does not open up to something unknown in the future; rather, it makes one adopt the belief that ‘things will somehow work out in the end.’

In *Zaufanie: Fundament społeczeństwa* [Trust: The Foundation of Society]² Piotr Sztompka confirms the view of Jack M. Barbalet³ that the inevitability of the unknown, of areas beyond control, is inscribed in the ontological condition of the human being and of the whole of humanity. We have developed three ways of dealing with uncertainty: hope, belief, and trust. Hope is a “passive and indefinite emotion, impossible to explain rationally, that things will go our way,”⁴ belief combines the feeling of hope with that of certainty, whereas trust is a bet taken on the course of uncertain future events.⁵ While his main purpose of introducing the distinction in question is finding the *differentia specifica* of trust, Sztompka’s analysis is based on a rather clichéd understanding of hope: he takes its relation to the sphere of the emotional for granted and believes that hope embraces only the moment when the anticipatory desire is accompanied by an attitude of involvement. Thus Sztompka’s interpretation of hope prompts certain questions: What is the nature of the process that leads a human being

¹ The title of my article addresses a debate “On Hoping for Hope” held by prominent contemporary Polish philosophers Karol Tarnowski, Robert Piłat, Jacek Filek, Barbara Chyrowicz, Łukasz Tischner, and Wojciech Bonowicz. See Karol Tarnowski, Robert Piłat, Jacek Filek, Barbara Chyrowicz, Łukasz Tischner, and Wojciech Bonowicz, “Nadzieja na nadzieję,” *Znak*, no. 12 (703) (2013), <http://www.miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/7032013debata-13-dni-tischnerowskich-filozofia-i-nadziejanadzieja-na-nadzieje/>.

² See Piotr Sztompka, *Zaufanie: Fundament społeczeństwa*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2007.

³ See Jack M. Barbalet, “Social Emotions: Confidence, Trust, and Loyalty,” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 16, nos. 9–10: 75–96.

⁴ Sztompka, *Zaufanie: Fundament społeczeństwa*, 67. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

⁵ See *ibidem*, 67–70.

to believe that the certainty of the desired course of events is high enough to valorize positively the chance of its actual occurrence? When do we make a bet on uncertain future events? When do we begin to ‘trust the future’? When is hope born?

In this article I will refer to the general line of argument on uncertainty put forward by Sztompka, introducing, however, new references and a system of new meanings helpful in a better understanding of the conditions necessary for a human person to enter the realm of hope.

One might ask why the problem of hope should be considered as important from the perspective of our present-day rootedness in the world. The question is by no means rhetorical. Hannah Arendt suggests that we should reconsider our human condition “from the vantage point of our newest experiences and our most recent fears,”⁶ and adds, “This, obviously, is a matter of thought, and thoughtlessness—the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of ‘truths’ which have become trivial and empty—seems to me among the outstanding characteristic of our time. What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.”⁷ Arendt’s suggestion, and a simultaneous invitation to act on it, was made in 1958 and expressed an anxiety whether, as the human race, we were actually focused on the issue of our condition, whether we had sufficiently analyzed the effects of our actions, and, if so, whether we put our thoughts into practice. A Report to the Club of Rome entitled *Come On! Capitalism, Short-termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet*, by Ernest Ulrich von Weizsäcker and Anders Wijkman,⁸ is, however, a clear diagnosis of the humanity’s lack of commitment to the reflection on our condition. Yuval Noah Harari, in turn, in his *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, points to a paradox: “Today our knowledge is increasing at breakneck speed, and theoretically we should understand the world better and better. But the very opposite is happening. Our new-found knowledge leads to faster economic, social and political changes; in an attempt to understand what is happening, we accelerate the accumulation of knowledge, which leads only to faster and greater upheavals. Consequently we are less and less able to make sense of the present or forecast the future.”⁹ Therefore—he believes—we must try again to answer several questions the future ‘poses’ to us, namely, “What are today’s greatest challenges and choices? What should

⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 5.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ See Ernest Ulrich von Weizsäcker and Anders Wijkman, *Come On! Capitalism, Short-termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet: A Report to the Club of Rome* (New York: Springer Science+Business Media, 2018).

⁹ Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (Sydney, Toronto, Auckland, London, and New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2017), 68.

we pay attention to? What should we teach our kids?”¹⁰ In a similar vein, Steven Pinker calls for a new enlightenment accomplished “in the language and concepts of the 21st century.”¹¹ However, the current trends of thought and intellectual attitudes, in a vast majority, are hardly a response to the postulates of the cited authors. A possible explanation of this fact is suggested by Ewa Bińczyk in the title of her book *Epoka człowieka: Retoryka i marazm antropocenu* [The Age of Man: On the Rhetoric and Marasmus of Anthropocene].¹² *Marazm* (marasmus) is a lack of action and unwillingness to look for solutions, largely resulting from helplessness towards *superwicked* problems we have to face,¹³ which, according to Gregg Braden, result from a convergence of critical topics, such as those regarding the climate, population, energy, and economic extremes.¹⁴ Referring to Kari Marie Norgaard’s book *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions and Everyday Life*,¹⁵ Bińczyk diagnoses ‘gaps’ in our cultural ‘toolbox’ which make it impossible to handle the burning issues of today: “People need to feel the effectiveness of their own actions: the absence of such effectiveness and the feeling of not being in control evoke strong negative emotions.”¹⁶ Needless to say, such emotions undermine hopes for the future as such, as well as trust in it. The attitude of denial, as described by Norgaard, can be seen—holds Bińczyk—as a refusal to arouse hope in oneself, which makes it impossible to ‘bridge’ the ‘gaps’ in our cultural ‘toolbox’ and thus to address the problems our reality poses.

Regaining control of our world involves a ‘vision’ of the direction in which we want to go and such a vision provides hope for the future. In this context, it seems justified to say that “hope is fundamental for understanding human flourishing.”¹⁷ As such, hope is an indispensable ‘condition’ for looking ahead and for designing activities. Therefore a better understanding of the nature of hope is an imperative for our culture. In his foreword to *The Oxford Handbook*

¹⁰ Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018), ix–x.

¹¹ Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018), 5.

¹² See Ewa Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka: Retoryka i marazm antropocenu*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2018.

¹³ See *ibidem*, 56.

¹⁴ See Gregg Braden, *The Turning Point: Creating Resilience in a Time of Extremes* (Carlsbad, New York and London: Hay House, 2014), 1–38.

¹⁵ See Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011).

¹⁶ Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka: Retoryka i marazm antropocenu*, 56.

¹⁷ Kristina Schmid Callina, Nancy Snow, and Ellie D. Murray, “The History of Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives on Hope: Toward Defining Hope for the Science of Positive Human Development,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Hope*, ed. Matthew W. Gallagher and Shane J. Lopez (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 9.

of Hope, Todd B. Kashdan states that “hope should be receiving significantly more attention from scientists, practitioners, and policymakers.”¹⁸ A Polish philosopher Krzysztof Wieczorek is of a similar opinion and emphasizes the fact that “it is necessary to gain the courage to believe that hope is capable of overcoming the internal spiritual paralysis into which our fears drive us, the most acute of those fears being that of wasting an opportunity history has given us.”¹⁹

Since the problem of hope is of particular significance to modern culture, it needs a study which goes beyond the limits of a single discipline. Rather, it calls for an interdisciplinary—or transdisciplinary—approach and therefore the present paper extensively draws on psychological analyses, among others. The point is to provide a thorough interpretation of human experiences which are considered as hope-related. Yet the psychological insights into the realm of hope will be analyzed against the background provided by modern philosophy,²⁰ in particular by Chantal Delsol and Vilém Flusser, as well as by Polish philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists.

The present considerations are not meant as a review of the existing research on the concept of hope. The author’s goal is rather to focus on the processual characteristics of the state of ‘hope’ and the proposed theses will be based on enthymemes.

THE DENOTATION OF THE CONCEPT OF HOPE

The success of a search depends to a large extent on having determined what one is looking for, which is why, in our case, the preliminary definition of the concept of hope is considered as more than a merely methodological procedure and assumes the practical function of providing a ‘description of the wanted.’

In the introduction to his *Filozofia nadziei* [A Philosophy of Hope], Józef Kosian poses a warning: “Hope seems to be a concept that cannot be defined unless the *ignotum per ignotum* fallacy is accepted.”²¹ Having this risk in

¹⁸ Todd B. Kashdan, “Hope: Influencing the Largest Terrain of Health and Well-Being for Greatest Number of People,” in: *The Oxford Handbook of Hope*, xix.

¹⁹ Krzysztof Wieczorek, “Miedzy nadzieja a melancholią: Józefa Tischnera myślenie o przyszłości,” in *Tischner – człowiek w horyzoncie nadziei*, ed. Elżbieta Struzik (Katowice: Oficyna Wydawnicza Wacław Walasek, 2016), 30.

²⁰ See, e.g., Claudia Boeser and Titus Stahl, “Hope,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/hope/>.

²¹ Józef Kosian, *Filozofia nadziei* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1997), 5.

mind, we need to point to the important meanings of ‘hope’ which will make it possible for us to establish the denotative field of the concept. In a similar attempt, Kosian abandons the concern for precision and aims to find the crucial elements of whatever we tend to associate with hope. As a result, he identifies hope with a special type of consciousness, a “self-conscious awareness” which prompts us whether to perform certain actions or refrain from them in view of our expectations. The awareness in question is accompanied by a specific vision of the future we desire to come true.²² The vision, however, is marked by a unique quality, namely, “cherishing hope is related precisely to a sense of this newness”²³ and takes place in the horizon of the future. Józef Kozielecki in turn focuses on an important aspect of the vision of the future that accompanies hope: Whenever we hope, we can see a purposeful order of things²⁴ which is ‘outlined’ in the longest possible time perspective²⁵ and which helps us tame uncertainty, thus making our anticipation assume a particular shape. Yet Chantal Delsol notes that hope is simultaneously a decision of the will, as we do not have any knowledge of the matters that relate to the future and we need to decide ‘in the dark.’²⁶

According to Józef Tischner, it is precisely its orientation towards the future that determines “the basic dimension of hope.”²⁷ “Hope is the spiritual force that steers the human drama out of its hiding and makes it possible for the human being to overcome the obstacles of the present, and turn to the future,”²⁸ adds Tischner. In turn, Vilém Flusser emphasizes that opening up to the future assumes that we are able to predict to some extent what will happen, and that we are able to bring into existence some events, while suppressing others.²⁹

Thus, in the light of the above quoted insights, it seems important to investigate what gives the human being the strength to envision the potential of agency related to the future hope embraces.

Tae Rang Choi, Jung Hwa Choi, and Yongjun Sung write: “Hope essentially arises when individuals desire to obtain a particular goal. Hope is formed

²² See *ibidem*, 6.

²³ *Ibidem*, 16.

²⁴ See Józef K o z i e l e c k i, *Psychologia nadziei* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Źak, 2005), 16.

²⁵ See *ibidem*, 19.

²⁶ See Chantal Delsol, *Les pierres d’angle : À quoi tenons-nous?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf 2014). See also Chantal Delsol, *Kamienie węgielne: Na czym nam zależy?*, trans. Małgorzata Kowalska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2018), 214.

²⁷ Józef T i s c h n e r, “Rozważania na progu jutra,” quoted after W i e c z o r e k, “Miedzy nadzieją a melancholią: Józefa Tischnera myślenie o przyszłości,” 35.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ See Vilém F l u s s e r, “Jak spoglądamy w przyszłość,” in *Kultura pisma: Z filozofii słowa i obrazu*, trans. Przemysław Wiatr (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Aletheia, 2018), 265.

from reality-based evaluations of volition and ways of fulfilling uncertain, goal-congruent outcomes.... Specifically, hope is a future-oriented emotion because it focuses on actions and stems from outcomes that have not yet been achieved.”³⁰ The approach to understanding hope the authors express resembles that of Charles R. Snyder, who discovered that “when people discussed their goals, they mentioned two components: the routes to reach those goals and motivations to use those routes.”³¹ Snyder “labelled these components as “‘pathways’ and ‘agency’”³² and characterized hope to be a composition of “a sense of successful (a) agency and (b) pathways. Agency refers to goal-directed energy which emphasizes one’s perceived capacity to reach desired goals”³³ Snyder’s final conclusion goes as follows: “Hope is a positive motivational state that is based on interactively derived sense of successful (1) agency (goal-directed energy) and pathways (planning to meet goals).”³⁴

The strength of the experienced hope results, therefore, from a sense of influence. “Hopeful thinking consists of the belief that one can find pathways to desired goals, and that one can muster the motivation to use those pathways.”³⁵ Thus hope involves an awareness of the possibility of a positive assessment of implementing a vision that activates the action, as well as of the existence of ways to accomplish this vision. Hongfei Du and Ronnel B. King pay attention to a similar aspect of hope and define it “in terms of one’s sense that one can reach one’s goals and that one has the means to reach those goals.”³⁶ Their approach, however, does not take into account the community-based, externally located feeling of hope and in order to consider this aspect we need to refer to the concept of Allan B. I. Bernardo, who proposes “to extend hope theory by adding locus-of-hope as a dimension of trait hope. Locus-of-hope refers to

³⁰ Tae Rang Choi, Jung Hwa Choi, and Yongjun Sung, “I Hope to Protect Myself from the Threat: The Impact of Self-threat on Prevention—versus Promotion-focused Hope, *Journal of Business Research* 99 (2019): 483.

³¹ Quoted after Kevin R. Rand and Jennifer S. Cheavens, “Hope Theory.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, vol. 2, ed. Shane J. Lopez and C. R. Snyder, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, 324.

³² Ibidem.

³³ Hongfei Du and Ronnel B. King, “Placing Hope in Self and Others: Exploring the Relationships among Self-construals, Locus of Hope, and Adjustment,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 54, no. 3 (2013): 332.

³⁴ C.R. Snyder, Lori M. Irving, and John R. Anderson, “Hope and Health: Measuring the Will and the Ways,” in *Handbook of Social and Clinical Psychology: The Health Perspective*, ed. C. R. Snyder and Donelson R. Forsyth (New York: Pergamon Press, 1991), 287.

³⁵ Rand and Cheavens, “Hope Theory,” 324.

³⁶ Du and King, “Placing Hope in Self and Others: Exploring the Relationships among Self-construals, Locus of Hope, and Adjustment”: 332.

whether the components of trait hope involve internal and external agents and internally or externally generated pathways. The internal locus-of-hope refers to the individual as the agent of goal-attainment cognitions, whereas the external locus-of-hope refers to significant others and external forces as agents of goal-attainment cognitions.³⁷ In the case of internal placement of hope “the individual is seen as the focal agent of goal attainment,”³⁸ whereas the external location concerns the family, the peers or higher factors (e.g., a supernatural being).

As indicated earlier, it is also important to realize what hope is not. Roger Scruton, in the context of misunderstood hope, draws attention to a false, optimistic mentality that uses cognitive stereotypes, serving as ‘anesthesia’ for the uncertainty of the future.³⁹ Kozielecki describes such attitudes in terms of passive hope: they express a belief that after a period of passive waiting one will reach the expected goal.⁴⁰ As this type of hope is built on the foundation of established cognitive schemes and trust in their reliability, it may prove unconstructive: it does not open up to something unknown in the future; rather, it acts like the previously mentioned state of apathy which makes one adopt the belief that ‘things will somehow work out in the end.’ The opposite of such an attitude is active hope, which makes the individual actively seek solutions and mobilize energy (volition) for their implementation.⁴¹ In the face of an uncertain future, the sense of autonomy and creativity, as well as that of agency, is important. Having hope means trusting the future, i.e., actively taking a bet on it and making a choice.

In the light of the insights into the nature of hope we have described, it can be defined as an active attitude, based on a multidimensional system of beliefs which makes it possible for us to perceive an intentional order in the uncertain future and—which is crucial—embracing both the imagined (potential) modes of action and the motivation necessary to achieve them.⁴² As any other attitude, hope has cognitive and emotional components which are interdependent. Therefore, the mentioned system of beliefs also embraces a positive emotional attitude towards the anticipated order and manifests a new quality which is the source of hope. The nature and definition of hope situate it in the realm of the

³⁷ Allan B. I. Bernardo, “Extending Hope Theory: Internal and External Locus of Trait Hope,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 49, no. 8 (2010): 945.

³⁸ Du and King, “Placing Hope in Self and Others: Exploring the Relationships among Self-construals, Locus of Hope, and Adjustment”: 332.

³⁹ See Roger Scruton, *The Use of Pessimism and the Danger of False Hope* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 38–9.

⁴⁰ See Kozielecki, *Psychologia nadziei*, 39.

⁴¹ See ibidem, 40.

⁴² For a definition of ‘attitude’ see William D. Crano and Radmila Prislin, “Attitude and Attitude Change: The Fourth Peak,” in *Attitudes and Attitude Change*, ed. William D. Crano and Radmila Prislin (Taylor & Francis Group: New York and London, 2006), 3.

future,⁴³ within a certain potential emerging from what we believe is possible rather than within the realm of knowledge. The act of trust hope presupposes simultaneously signifies an active attitude and determines the scope of the possible agency of the subject.

The source of the perceived order can be either our own potential or that of significant others, including higher factors, but the very fact that the order itself exists is the foundation of strength which allows us to experience hope. Thus, the key moment for the birth of hope is 'seeing' a certain order in an uncertain future, which generates a vision of possible actions and, as such, is mobilizing by itself. When we recognize hope in God, we begin to pray, when we see it in the wisdom of family traditions or in other social factors, we begin to rely on them, and when we find this order in the potential of our own competence, it is ourselves that become the source of our own strength.

In the next part of the article the analysis will focus on the internal placement of hope and thus on a recognition of the factors which make it possible to find the desired order in oneself. From this perspective, the two key aspects are (1) the moment of the 'emergence' of the order we need and (2) the forces generated by the emergence of the order which enable us to 'face' the future.

FINDING HOMO ESPERANS

At this stage of the analysis we shall attempt to trace the sources of the internal placement of hope, that is, to find the answer to the question about what makes it possible for the human being to experience the power flowing from within him or her. The research of this problem has been continued since the 1960s and it can be conceived in terms of collecting the element for the cultural toolbox for 'superwicked times.' Therefore, the conclusions that will follow must not be regarded as 'the latest discoveries.' We must keep in mind that in the case of technical sciences, which provide the model and standards of research for other disciplines, any discovery made more than five years ago is considered no longer valid. Consequently, the approaches to the understanding of hope I shall discuss are going to address a merely fragmentary catalogue of the existing theoretical and practical proposals in this field. Nevertheless, the conceptions selected for analysis can be considered as valuable in terms of the description of the experience of the constitution of hope they provide. Indeed, the views which will be discussed below have been singled out from many others on account of their unique precision in the description of the conditions enabling one to locate hope in oneself or, in other words, to 'find the strength

⁴³ See D e l s o l, *Kamienie węgielne: Na czym nam zależy*, 215.

in oneself.' Another criterion applied in their selection is that of the empirical setting of the description in question and, in this respect, the concept of optimal experiments worked out by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi seems of particular interest. Csikszentmihalyi based his conclusions on the results of the research conducted on thousands of respondents from around the world, in which he employed the experience sampling method (ESM) he himself had developed.⁴⁴ However, before we focus on the analyses conducted by Csikszentmihalyi, we shall briefly refer to Abraham T. Maslow's concept of peak experiences, which historically precedes Csikszentmihalyi's empirical research.

Nadine Weideman emphasizes that the essence of Maslow's approach and of his humanistic psychology was the assumption that "human nature had biological, inbuilt tendencies, that these tendencies were for the good, and that they could be discovered by studying the best specimens that humanity had to offer"⁴⁵ (specifically: healthy individuals). "Being psychologically healthy—writes Weidman—did not mean being a 'genius'; an ordinary person could also be self-fulfilling in the healthy way."⁴⁶ Maslow recognized self-actualizing people as personifications of mental health: "Self-actualizing people were marked by an openness to experience and perception; trust in their own judgment, even if it meant departure from social norms; an autonomy and independence from other people approval or opinions; a capacity for love, enjoyment."⁴⁷ More frequent incidence of so-called peak experiences was a typical characteristic of self-actualizers. Maslow described them as demonstrating "feelings of limitless horizons opening up to the vision, the feeling of being simultaneously more powerful and also more helpless than one ever was before ... finally, the conviction that something extremely important and valuable had happened, so that the subject is to some extent transformed and strengthened even in his life by such experiences."⁴⁸ We must bear in mind, though, that a condition necessary for experiencing peak states was having one's deficit needs (the basic requirements of physical and emotional well-being) satisfied.

⁴⁴ See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Happiness* (London, Sydney, Auckland and Johannesburg: Random House, 2013), 5.

⁴⁵ Nadine Weideman, "Between the Counterculture and the Corporation: Abraham Maslow and Humanistic Psychology in the 1960s," in *Groovy Science: Knowledge, Innovation & American Counterculture*, ed. David Kaiser and W. Patrick McCray (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 114.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 115.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 164.

In his research of peak experiences, Maslow used both direct interviews (in the case of 80 participants), surveys (in the case of 190 participants)⁴⁹ and other sources, such as personal accounts of authors addressing issues of theology, aesthetics, religion, and philosophy.⁵⁰ Based on the collected descriptions, he abstracted the features typical of the so-called meta-motivated *cognition of Being*, which exceeds the motivational mechanisms based on meeting the needs. Maslow distinguished this type of experience from *deficiency cognition* resulting from a sense of lack.⁵¹ Incidentally, a description of the difference between the two types of cognition can be found also in Viktor E. Frankl's *The Will To Meaning*, where the categories of 'opening to the world' and 'bonding with the world' are introduced, the former referring to the tendency of human beings to experience 'sense-filling' in their contact with the world and others (*Welt*), and the latter 'finding its justification in environmental conditions'"⁵² (*Umwelt*) and resulting from adaptation processes in which human individuals satisfy their needs the way animals do.

The characteristic feature of the cognition of Being is that it renders the world as a whole and triggers total attention. Reality is then experienced in itself rather than as something that can be used. Cognition of this type has the character of a deeper understanding of the object, it becomes selfless and capable of transcending the ego. A peak experience is perceived as self-confirming and self-supporting. It has an internal value, is ideographic and emotionally valued as very positive, it accentuates the relations with the world in which the subject engages, and it is a source of the subject's inner integrity.⁵³ As Maslow summarizes, "We may define it as an episode, or a spurt in which the powers of the person come together in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way, and in which he is more integrated and less split, more open for experience, more idiosyncratic, more perfectly expressive or spontaneous, or fully functioning, more creative, more humorous, more ego-transcending, more independent of his lower needs, etc. He becomes in these episodes more truly himself, more perfectly actualizing his potentialities, closer to the core of his Being, more fully human."⁵⁴

An important question from the vantage point of the current considerations is whether a peak experience, which Maslow considers as a 'natural' form of

⁴⁹ See Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York, Cincinnati, Toronto, London and Melbourne: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1968), 71.

⁵⁰ See *ibidem*, 72–3.

⁵¹ See *ibidem*, 73.

⁵² Viktor E. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: Foundation and Applications of Logotherapy* (New York, London and Toronto: Penguin Group, 1988), 31.

⁵³ See Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 74–100.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 97.

cognition for every human being, should be regarded as a hope engendering moment. A positive answer to this question may be justified by the special nature of a peak experience, which qualitatively differs from other types of cognition in that it makes it possible to overcome 'outdated' patterns of thought, inadequate to what the future demands in respect of both thinking and acting, and generating hopelessness. The cognition of Being opens a human individual to the world and renders the search for meaning successful in the holistic, non-instrumental sense, introducing a wider perspective. Thus the cognition of Being releases positive experiences, simultaneously transferring humans to a higher level of valuation and motivation. The enlightenment (discovery, or realization)⁵⁵ resulting from the cognition of Being (the recognition that 'it is so') is potentially causative ('I can do it, there is hope'), enabling the subject to make a bold entry into the future. While Maslow acknowledges that the described kind of experience involves a whole series of risks, his doubts appear as a result of a pragmatic assessment of its consequences⁵⁶, rather than refer to the very moment an individual is opening up to the future, which is crucial from the perspective of the research on hope.

Csikszentmihalyi, in turn, begins his study with the basic question about the possibility of experiencing happiness and concludes, saying, "Happiness is not something that happens. It is not the result of good fortune or random chance. It is not something that money can buy or power command. It does not depend on outside events, but, rather, on how we interpret them. Happiness, in fact, is a condition that must be prepared for, cultivated, and defended privately by each person. People who learn to control inner experience will be able to determine the quality of their lives, which is as close as any us can come to being happy."⁵⁷ However, why does Csikszentmihalyi's discovery matter to us in the context of the issues pertaining to hope? Again, as in the case of Maslow, the objective is to recognize the moment the subject finds an inner strength helpful in restoring the sense of control of the external world. Csikszentmihalyi emphasizes: "We have all experienced times when, instead of being buffeted by anonymous forces, we do feel in control of our actions, master of our own fate. On the rare occasions that it happens, we feel a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark

⁵⁵ The category of 'enlightenment,' applicable as a description of a peak experience in the sense of Maslow's theory, is comparable with the phase of 'illumination' recognized as a stage of the creative processes, i.e., with the sudden discovery of the solution to the problem, which—in the case of hope—is a lack of a deliberate order of the reality. See Edward Nęcka, *Psychologia twórczości* (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 2012), 104–28.

⁵⁶ See Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 115–24.

⁵⁷ Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Happiness*, 2.

in memory for what life should be like.”⁵⁸ What he describes is the so-called optimal experiences, which make the realization of an existing order of things possible and which engender the ability to mindfully control the events. Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi write:

Being ‘in flow’ is the way that some interviewees described the subjective experience of engaging just-manageable challenges by tackling a series of goals, continuously processing feedback about progress, and adjusting action based on this feedback. Under these conditions, experience seamlessly unfolds from moment to moment, and one enters a subjective state with the following characteristics:

- Intense and focused concentration on what one is doing in the present moment;
- Merging of action and awareness;
- Loss of reflective self-consciousness (i.e., loss of awareness of oneself as a social actor);
- A sense that one can control one’s actions; that is, a sense that one can in principle deal with the situation because one knows how to respond to whatever happens next;
- Distortion of temporal experience (typically, a sense that time has passed faster than normal);
- Experience of the activity as intrinsically rewarding, such that often the end goal is just an excuse for the process.⁵⁹

The essence of the optimal experience as Csikszentmihalyi describes it is the state of consciousness it involves and, more specifically, the ability to control the events it engenders. In general, the function of consciousness is to process information about what is happening inside and outside the body so that the body can evaluate it and act on the basis of this assessment. Awareness functions as a purgatory for feelings, impressions, experiences and ideas, setting priorities for this information.⁶⁰ The possibilities of awareness control are limited in the case of so-called psychic entropy, i.e., the state in which the internal order is confused by an influx of contradictory or disturbing information, such as in situations of pain, anger, frustration, cognitive dissonance, or overwhelming messages. The factor which enables restoration of control over the self is the kind of attention Csikszentmihalyi defines as psychic energy. He says,

Attention ... plays a key role in entering and staying in flow. Entering flow is largely a function of how attention has been focused in the past and how it is focused in the

⁵⁸ Ibidem, 3.

⁵⁹ Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “The Concept of Flow,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, 240.

⁶⁰ See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (Sydney, Toronto, Auckland, London, and New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2008), 28–39).

present by the activity's structural conditions. Interests developed in the past will direct attention to specific challenges. Clear proximal goals, immediate feedback, and just-manageable levels of challenge orient the organism, in a unified and coordinated way, so that attention becomes completely absorbed into the stimulus field defined by the activity.⁶¹

Therefore, “optimal experiences occur when a person voluntarily focuses their attention on a limited stimulus field, while aversive experiences involve involuntary focusing of attention.”⁶² In the case of optimal experiences as Csikszentmihalyi describes them (just as before in the case of peak experiences), we are dealing with a new quality of cognition which emerges as a result of the targeted work of our consciousness obtained through the control of attention. In this way, a specific order of thoughts, emotions and values is established once an individual can see the sense of acting and develops mental energy to carry out the activities in question,⁶³ even should everything take place in unfavorable circumstances. Csikszentmihalyi not only describes optimal experiences as possible, but goes further, suggesting the way to live them through by working out the ability to control one's attention, which facilitates the emergence of a targeted order.

TOWARDS A NEW, PROCESSUAL CONCEPT OF HOPE

In the light of the above considerations a new, processual concept of hope might be delineated. The ways of dealing with uncertainty introduced by Sztompka and described in the introduction to this article placed hope in the realm of ambiguous feelings, distinguishing it from trust conceived as an active attitude supported by a specific type of learning about reality. The work carried out as part of these considerations made it possible to make some semantic shifts in this respect. In accordance with those assumptions, an attempt was made to reconsider the phenomenon of hope with special regard to the ‘process’

⁶¹ Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, “The Concept of Flow,” 243.

⁶² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology,” in *The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, New York, and London: Springer, 2014), 7.

⁶³ A very interesting example of research on the effects of positive attention and their impact on the sense of well-being is provided by the works of Sonja Lyubomirsky and Kristin Layous. See: Sonja Lyubomirsky and Kristin Layous, “How Do Simple Positive Activities Increase Well-Being?” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 22, no. 1 (2013): 57–62; Kristin Layous and Sonja Lyubomirsky, “The How, Why, What, When, and Who of Happiness: Mechanisms Underlying the Success of Positive Activity Interventions,” in *Positive Emotion: Integrating the Light Sides and the Dark Sides*, ed. by June Gruber and Judith Tedlie Moscowitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 473–96.

that allows us to experience it. It has been established that we can understand hope as an active attitude, the foundation of which is an envisioned purposeful order of the anticipated future. The fact of ‘seeing’ this order is connected with positive emotions: in the wake of the realization of the potential of the future order motivation emerges. Two aspects have been recognized as crucial to this perspective: the moment of the ‘emergence’ of the order in question and the co-instantaneous forces that stimulate the individual’s experience, thus allowing the individual to ‘face’ the future. Maslow’s ‘peak experiences’ and Csikszentmihalyi’s ‘optimal experiences’ have been recognized as fulfilling those criteria.

The important conclusion which follows from the proposed approach is that hope needs to be understood as a process which begins with the human being actively building a new ‘order of thoughts.’ The existence of such an order in the consciousness of a human subject turns out the condition of the appearance of hope, and the research material used in this article has confirmed the real possibility of such an order, as well as provided a very practical indication of the kind of mental processes which can trigger it. In *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Csikszentmihalyi even describes a ‘procedure’ helpful in building the experience in question within oneself. A strong focus of attention proves to be the precondition of an orderly view of the reality which, in turn, releases positive emotions and motivation in the subject which are necessary in order to free up the subject’s agency.

However, do the experiences which have been described here make it possible to point to the moment when hope is born in a human being? Do they give hope for hope? As in the case of any essential question, there are no unambiguous answers. The examples we have analyzed meet the theoretical conditions of the ‘occurrence’ of hope we determined while setting the denotative field of the concept, but the fact that the model we have created can be considered as coherent does not mean that it is true.

There is, though, a personal experience which can confirm the legitimacy of the train of thought presented here. In the search for the essence of the phenomenon of hope, and in the hope for finding it, the author has experienced that mobilizing sense of ‘ordering’ that filled the work on this issue with meaning.

Therefore, an experience of hope should not be regarded in terms of a realistic assessment of the existing options. Hope is not about seeing the future. Rather, it calls for a coherent vision of the reality as it should be and for an inner strength making it possible for the person to try and implement the perceived order of things.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Grażyna OSIKA, On Hoping for Hope: The Search for *homo esperans*

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The study focuses on the phenomenon of hope conceived as an orientation which makes it possible for a human being to deal with the uncertainty of the future. The author takes into consideration the new 'processual' sense of the concepts and meanings helpful in understanding the conditions necessary to achieve the state of hope. The study makes use of theoretical analysis, in particular of the concepts of 'peak experiences' and 'optimal experiences,' as worked out by, respectively, Abraham Maslow and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. The phenomenon of hope has been described with a special focus on the 'process' that allows a human being to experience it.

Keywords: hope, peak experience conception, Maslow, optimal experience conception, Csikszentmihalyi, flow

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Grażyna OSIKA, Nadzieja na nadzieję. W poszukiwaniu *homo esperans*

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Rozważania skupiają się na opisie fenomenu nadziei jako orientacji pozwalającej człowiekowi radzić sobie z niepewnością przyszłości i zmierzają do wypracowania nowych odniesień oraz nowego układu znaczeń pomocnych we wskazaniu warunków, które muszą zostać spełnione, by człowiek mógł osiągnąć stan nadziei. W badaniach wykorzystano analizę teoretyczną, w tym koncepcje doświadczeń szczytowych stworzoną przez Abrahama Maslowa oraz koncepcję doświadczeń optymalnych wypracowaną przez Mihaly'ego Csikszentmihalyiego. Fenomen nadziei opisano ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem „procesu”, którego jest ona rezultatem.

Słowa kluczowe: nadzieja, koncepcja doświadczeń szczytowych, Maslow, koncepcja doświadczeń optymalnych, Csikszentmihalyi, „przepływ”

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