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TOWARDS A HOPEFUL UNIVERSITY

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Contemporary universities vary in the quality of their research, their teaching, their legal and administrative support, the well-being of their academic community, and even in their autonomy. Their mission and vision statements usually stress the inspirational and transformative power of education, and the institution and its alumni's contributions to society. They talk about advancing new ideas, making a difference, and being a community of respectful dialogue and inclusivity. The statements describe communal and personal goods that are both highly desirable and difficult to obtain. They describe hopes and attitudes as well as the capabilities necessary to realise these hopes.

The ideals to which universities aspire are similar regardless of their geographical location, although in Eastern European universities, a certain inconsistency and clumsiness in formulating missions can be noticed. Still, the ideals are similar, even if the challenges are not equally distributed. After 1989, universities in Eastern Europe were desperately seeking their own identities, while trying to keep their local specificity and autonomy, to prevent brain drain, and at the same time, to open up to international exchanges of ideas. They are still buckling under the weight of communist-era remainders, such as excessive bureaucracy and the arbitrariness of decisions, to name but a few. They fear managerism, which could compromise the values to which universities are dedicated, but on the other hand, they recognise the need for numerous reforms that would improve work conditions, support creativity, and, last but not least, make universities better places in which to grow, teach, learn, do research, and simply be.

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In this essay, I do not offer direct solutions to the problems described above. Instead, I would like to draw attention to the skills, capabilities, values, and attitudes that could be useful in designing and shaping the future of academia. Some of these could be represented by one word: hope. In this article I argue that paying more attention to hope could make the academic community more futures literate, and also, first and foremost, more aware of its mission and the challenges of leadership.

The importance of hope for human experience is unquestionable, but difficulties arise when trying to define what hope is, what its dynamics are, what its individual and social conditions are, and finally what its functionality consists in. Studies devoted to hope have to contend with negative associations with wishful thinking, unwarranted and naive optimism, or utopian projects that have often turned out to be tragic. The usual fatigue with political rhetoric (Tischner 1994; Blöser et al. 2020: 2–4), which paradoxically must appeal to positive emotions and optimism in order to be effective (Seligman 1998: 187–198; Bennett 2015), is also not without significance. In Western civilisation, hope's reputation has always been an ambivalent one (Cairns 2016; Skarga 2017: 239–247; Sztompka 2003: 24–25). Given the positivistic framework in which contemporary universities often operate, the idea of hope, with its partly theological and metaphysical roots, seems to be a concept devoid of intellectual seriousness. Expressing cultural criticism is viewed as the mark of a sophisticated, learned attitude, in contrast to the unscientific naivety of those who would see the glass half full (Tallis 1997; Bennett 2015: 10). An uncritical attachment to the Enlightenment's ideas of unlimited progress and of science solving all human problems has resulted in deep disappointment and a questioning of the need and very possibility of development. Writing about hope could thus be professionally risky and troublesome, because there are too many peripheral problems to be solved; too many intellectual challenges emerge on the way. Moreover, hope is also often perceived as a merely personal quality, which one either has or does not have. From this perspective, even if the negative aura surrounding hope could be dispelled, it could not be stimulated, and it could not translate into social or communal action. Without getting entangled in definitional and theoretical disputes, which have been well presented in the literature (Schmid Callina et al. 2018; Mittleman 2009; Blöser et al. 2020; Webb 2013: 397–398; Lopez et al. 2003), it is worth highlighting the distinction between hope and optimism.

By hope I do not mean an optimistic vision of the future, a set of positive expectations, an "all will be fine" attitude, or a denial of the existence

of serious social or political challenges. I do not mean turning a blind eye to the scale of human suffering, and I do not mean the kind of optimism that Voltaire ridiculed in *Candide*. Instead, I understand hope as a "socially mediated human capacity with varying affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions" (Webb 2013: 398). Hope also has social, spiritual (religious or transcendental), and existential dimensions (Krafft et al. 2023: 25), and thus hope could be characterised as a virtue or an art. It is an enduring capability based on the knowledge of personal as well as communal strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. Hope is about desiring and acting to achieve future goods, often with the help of others. Obtaining these goods may be difficult or not even likely. Hope understood in this way is "the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out" (Havel 1991: 181); it enables a person or a group to act. It is the art of avoiding both presumption and despair (Thomas Aquinas n.d.; McGeer 2004; Lamb 2016). Hope properly understood allows a person to avoid the extremes of excessive optimism or pessimism. Hope is associated not only with measurable goals but also with attitudes that enable their achievement and as such is active.

It is impossible to offer a universally accepted definition of leadership. However, it is obvious that leadership happens when the acts, ideas, and attitudes of a person or a group deliberately affect the acts, ideas, and attitudes of other people more than the other people affect them (cf. Helland & Winston 2005: 43). Leaders, as Helland and Winston write, "initiate the generation of organization vision, values, change, shared power, engagement, conflict capital" (2005: 43). One of the most important features of any leader is his or her capacity to transmit and generate hope (Helland & Winston 2005; Luthans et al. 2007; cf. Bennett 2015). Thanks to this capacity – accompanied with a dose of realism, emotional intelligence, and confidence – people can be agents of change.

In the scholarship on leadership, which is deeply inspired by positive psychology, hope is defined as an activating force or a motivational force. Hope is about setting goals to attain a positive outcome; it is about agency and pathways thinking (Snyder 2002). Hope is "one of the catalysts for the concentrated effort and vigorous activity that is needed to fulfil an organization's purpose" (Helland & Winston 2005: 43). Hope is positively related to job satisfaction, work happiness, and organisational commitment, and also has an effect on performance (Youssef & Luthans 2007). Helland and Winston, citing research, have pointed out that the presence of high hopers makes a group more enjoyable as well as more productive and that high hopers focus not

only on individual but also collective goals. They are also better able to cope with ambiguity and uncertainty (2005: 45). "Hoping can be seen as a deeply creative process" (Ludema et al. 1997: 12; cf. Helland & Winston 2005: 45).

Hope may be a rare species at many contemporary universities and among academic leaders. There are many reasons for this. Universities pass on knowledge and award diplomas, but they rarely aspire to be places of moral and human formation as well. They rarely teach dialogue, cooperation, and the building of relationships. Secondly, Eastern European universities still too often suffer from poor management, bureaucracy, and unclear employment policies. These result in lack of creativity and a sense that work is meaningless, and consequently in learned helplessness. The logic of survival within such an institution limits creativity, divergent thinking, and the formation of positive relationships. Last but not least, many contemporary universities dedicate their efforts to analysing and meeting social, economic, and political challenges – which is proper and should by no means be abandoned. The problem is that too little attention is paid to positive aspects of life: to inspiring, sustaining, enhancing, developing, and sharing good practices. The sciences and humanities are not only about preventing all the evils of this world but also about flourishing. The positive aspects of life are as genuine as the negative ones. Paying attention to them is not immoral, as some might think. On the contrary, it is deeply realistic and moral. Only when people can act within trusting and supporting communities, and can make the best of their personal and communal strengths, can the many diseases of contemporary times be adequately addressed. While trying to liberate the world from its maladies, people of academia should not take the presence and persistence of a positive disposition for granted. An understanding of the phenomenon of hope seems to be one of the key strengths that contemporary universities need in order to fulfil their mission and realise their potential, because hope is the prerequisite of any action.

In order to better understand questions of leadership from the sociological view, sociology as a discipline must pay more attention to how it deals with futurity (as, to some extent, sociology already does) and with the phenomenon of hope (as sociology seldom does). Also, while not abandoning its usual interest in the challenges of the present, it should broaden its perspective and pay more frequent attention to the positive aspects of human functioning. The presence of limitations or the underdevelopment of imaginaries in sociology could translate into the condition of academia in general. The purpose of this essay is to show the direction in which

sociological reflection could develop and provoke discussion. The goal is not to analyse and evaluate all possible paths.

My argument will unfold in the following way. First, questions of hope and how imagined futures have been addressed within sociology will be discussed. Second, various insights from contemporary psychological research on hope will be discussed. These could shed light not only on human emotions but also on leadership and ways of dealing with polarisation (Bar-Tal 2001). This article will explore features of hopeful communities and offer suggestions on what could be done to make the university such a community. My paper draws mostly on the social sciences but also provides supporting arguments from philosophy (Blöser & Stahl 2020). I will end with recommendations for what could be done to transform contemporary Eastern European universities into more hopeful places.

/// Sociology and the Question of Hope

There is nothing like a "sociology of hope." The entry "hope" does not appear in dictionaries and encyclopaedias of sociology. For sociology, this phenomenon has always been a methodological and theoretical challenge. Even today, the topic of hope usually appears at the junction and, unfortunately, often on the margins of debates on agency, social and political change, migration, health, education, emancipation, and emotions, and sometimes as a question in the field of the sociology of knowledge (Karl Manheim, Henri Desroche). It is easier to write about sociological hopes, that is, about visions of the desired new society expressed directly and indirectly by adepts of sociology, than about social, communal, or individual hopes as such using an idiom elaborated within sociology. For example, the father of the discipline, Auguste Comte, foretold the advent of a new type of society, "a new Christianity" that would replace the "old" Christianity. The new Christianity would be united by the cult of humanity and altruism. Early sociology thus bore the hallmarks of a secular religion, imbued with a belief in progress and full of eschatological hope. Practicing sociology would be a means to fulfilling certain social hopes. An echo of this desire – this time without reference to religion – could be heard in the sociology of social movements and public sociology. The desire to bring about a better world thanks to sociological understanding and work seems to lie at the heart of the discipline, but do we know more about the social dynamic of hoping? Culturalist and affective turns within sociology have

not brought satisfying solutions, even though thanks to them the question of hope and hoping is more often posed.

The problem, as it is often the case, starts with the definition. Guido Gili and Emiliana Mangone (2023; and before them, e.g., Gunderson 2013; Killian 1971; Neves 2003; Seidman 1983; Tallis 1997) sketched the history of the idea of hope within sociology. Hope and hoping are defined as individual and/or communal, future- and present-oriented, static or dynamic, and as an expression of personal agency or a lack thereof. Cook and Cuervo (2019), in reviewing some contemporary empirical studies, proposed a conceptualisation of the idea of hope as representational and non-representational, and related these two modes to a sense of agency or its lack. Representational hopes are directed towards a specific future; they are hopes for various specific goods and events. Non-representational hopes are not directed towards any specific future; they could be characterised by feelings and sensations of hopefulness (Cook & Cuervo 2019: 1106). In the following paragraphs I will elaborate on this distinction.

Social scientists are today interested in socio-cultural conditions that make it more probable that people will have some kind of hope (Hage 2003; Cook & Cuervo 2019; Alacovska 2018), and they talk about "political economies of hope" to describe a situation in which hopeful people are exploited (Cook & Cuervo 2019: 1115). Hope is regarded as a psychosocial resource (Alacovska 2018; cf. Cook & Cuervo 2019: 1104). Gili and Mangone advocate for identifying, case by case, the bearers of hope, the leaders of change, as they emerge in specific contexts (2023). The good news is that the sociology of expectations and the sociology of futures take up these questions, and are growing research fields (Suckert 2022; Halford & Southerton 2023). However, they still suffer serious limitations: they lack theoretical integration, empirical consolidation, and more cumulative modes of knowledge acquisition, as Lisa Suckert put it (2022: 395). Like hope, the future is not an easy subject for sociologists. "While concern for the future was explicitly embedded in the origins of sociology […] this was progressively lost as the academic discipline was formalised throughout the 20th century" (Halford & Southerton 2023: 264; cf. Suckert 2022).

The question of hope is closely linked to how people address their potential futures. Peter Berger took up the subject of social feeling and the sense of transcendence. One of the five prototypical human gestures – "certain reiterated acts and experiences that appear to express essential aspects of man's being, of the human animal as such" (Berger 1970: 53;

cf. Berger 2004: 29) – that he saw as signals of transcendence is hope.[1] He referred to transcendence not in the philosophical sense but "literally, as the transcending of the normal, everyday world" (Berger 1970: 53). Human beings orient themselves towards the future, and "an essential dimension of this 'futurity' in man is hope," wrote Berger in *A Rumor of Angels* and continued: "It is through hope that men overcome the difficulties of any given here and now. And it is through hope that men find meaning in the face of extreme suffering. A key ingredient of most (but not all) theodicies is hope" (Berger 1970: 61; cf. Gili & Mangone 2023: 20–21).

Yet the sociology of futures, or interdisciplinary futures studies are not necessarily the same thing as the sociology of hope. Whereas the sociology of futures seems to be mostly concerned with representational modes of hope, the sociology of hope also takes into consideration non-representational modes of hoping. Anticipating, imagining, or even expecting a certain event is not the same thing as desiring this event. Non-representational modes of hope could be the precondition for an action aimed at bringing about the desired future.

How did it happen that hope and the future have somehow been neglected in the course of sociology's development as a discipline? How did it happen that hope is regarded rather as a phenomenon unconnected with agency (see the literature review in Cook & Cuervo), a phenomenon that is "contemplative, detached, distanced, noncommittal" and falling within the discourse of fate (Sztompka 2003: 24–25)? The future is unknowable, immaterial, and difficult to study, and thus sociology, which tends to focus on the empirical present, does not take it seriously (Halford & Southerton 2023: 264; Karlsen 2021). The existential tensions of sociology are often explained as structural tensions. The fathers of the discipline often defined it in contrast to the philosophical and historical approaches present in the arts and humanities (Halford & Southerton 2023: 264; cf. Levitas 2013), and also in contrast to theology. Even though there were some early sociologists who could be regarded as optimists (George Herbert Mead, Karl Marx, August Comte, Herbert Spencer), there are influential others who certainly could not be so labelled (Ferdinand Tönnies, Thorstein Veblen, Émile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, Max Weber). To summarise the whole of sociological thought is beyond the scope of this article. Yet underlining certain trends of early sociology may shed light on its potential and limitations, as well as indicating where sociology could go in order to be

[1] The others are the propensity for order, play, the idea of damnation, and humour.

more sensitive to the questions of hope and futurity, and how, from their perspective, it could tackle the phenomenon of leadership.

The writings of Durkheim, Weber, and many other early sociologists were marked by the melancholy of a rapidly changing world (Durkheim 1999; Weber 1985; cf. Neves 2003; Seidman 1983; Gunderson 2013). There was no nostalgia for the departing type of society, but there was also no optimism about the future. Durkheim wrote about the growth of social anomie and Weber wrote about the disintegrating social structures of meaning. They treated the slogan of progress with suspicion and considered it ideologically entangled (cf. Weber 1949), and even though there are good arguments for doing so, this approach did not further positive reflections on the future. They also wanted to distance themselves from the religious worldview. Weber declared sociology to be values free, whereas hoping is not a values-free process (desiring a future good or event entails perceiving it as at least positive, functional, beneficial, morally good, etc.). It is not surprising then that it was left to the humanistic sociologist Peter Berger to say that hope is "an essential dimension of futurity in man."

In criticising modern optimism, Durkheim did not want to be seen as a pessimist. He recognised that the sense of meaninglessness accompanying modernity – anomie-induced suicide and disordered expectations – do not characterise the whole society. He viewed hope as a collectively developed resource for difficult times. Hope, according to Durkheim, can be learned, and I consider it an important starting point for any sociological approach to questions of leadership.

According to Weber, the problem of meaning, which is indelibly linked to the question of hope, is the central problem of modernity. Neither religion nor science can explain the world to the modern person, nor can political ideologies fulfil this role. Meaning, like values, can only be given to a person's life by that person. Meaning is not based on socio-cultural unity, but on having a personal attachment to certain values, translating them into temporal goals and striving for them in everyday life and in institutions. Weber believed that rationalisation does not lead to making the world more "meaningful," but to understanding it even less. Humans have a metaphysical need to live in the cosmos of meaning (Weber 1946: 281; Weber 1949: 84–85). It can therefore be said that the prospect of a harmonious, communal hope is discarded by Weber, but just as individuals by themselves must give meaning to their lives, so in society there are many competing hopes.

No social hope is based on a universal sense of meaning, but this does not imply that people do not experience other hopes when they refer to

the future. The hope resulting from instrumental rationality, the ethics of responsibility, will be one thing, and a different hope will result from sharing certain values, from the ethics of beliefs. The significance of hope will also vary (taking into consideration as well its rhetorical representations in the case of legal and traditional powers) and will be different in the case of charismatic power (Weber 1968; Gili & Mangone 2023:16–17). In Weber's writings on religion, a parallel can be seen between eschatological hope, the hope for compensation and eternal reward, and the spirit of early capitalism, which assumed that effort would be rewarded (Weber 1946; Gili & Mangone 2023)

Weber's aim was to show how the rationalisation of social life and the lives of individuals leads to banality and a sense of meaninglessness, a sense of loss of meaning that, following Weber's Nietzschean interpretations, can only be overcome by Dionysian pessimism, the pessimism of power (*The Birth of Tragedy*): suffering, cruelty, and meaninglessness are overcome by self-affirmation and hardness (cf. Gunderson 2013: 147). Meaning is a matter of a decision of the will. Whether meaning is (only) a matter of such a decision of the will is a matter of dispute among social scientists. Peter Berger would say that a sense of meaningfulness or meaninglessness is more an existential question: it is more a matter of the simple human condition than a decision of the will, but still there are some important lessons that could be drawn from Weber's above-mentioned reflections. The first is that a sense of meaning is necessary for hoping. The second is that an organisation's rationality may lead to a sense of meaninglessness and thus despair. The third – not the last but the last to be mentioned in this essay – is the question of the interplay between the individual and the communal in the state of hope and process of hoping.

Evoking some of Durkheim's and Weber's ideas should teach us that the legacy of the early period of sociological reflection is twofold when it comes to the questions of hope, futurity, and the possible sociology of leadership. On the one hand, this legacy makes it difficult to ask certain questions, but on the other hand, there is still some potential hidden in the early sociology. This is why proponents of the sociology of futures advocate moving beyond sociology and adopting an interdisciplinary approach (Halford & Southerton 2023; Suckert 2022).[2] In the following sections of this essay, some insights from psychology will be discussed. Sadly, a simultaneous reading of psychological, philosophical, and sociological articles

[2] This could involve, e.g., economics and data sciences (Halford & Southerton 2023), anthropology, philosophy, or management studies.

and books on hope often produces the impression that the authors of the latter are preaching to the converted. Reviewing the whole body of psychological literature on hope is not the point of this text. Rather, I would like to point to some potentially enriching encounters.

For example, psychologists teach us that hope, being a cognitive and emotional state of mind, is a precondition of human creativity and flourishing and is a sign of mental health (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal 2006; Schmid et al. 2018: 9). What is interesting is that hope, as Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal point out, "is based on higher cognitive processing, requiring mental representations of positively valued abstract future situations and more specifically, it requires setting goals, planning how to achieve them, use of imagery, creativity, cognitive flexibility, mental exploration of novel situations, and even risk taking"; it also "requires development of new 'scripts': programs about future actions" (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal 2006: 373). Hope "is based on the ability to imagine a not yet existing reality and on anticipation of future goals, as well as on the intellectual capacity to construct a program of action" (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal 2006: 374). It is also worth stressing that hope feeds itself on a plurality of perspectives and curiosity, and thus helps to leverage polarisation (Bar-Tal 2001). Hope is considered a human strength and developing a basic sense of hope during childhood predisposes people to the ability to overcome personal crises (Biełous & Trzebiński 2014). Hope, as other emotions, may be contagious. From the psychological perspective, hope cannot be characterised as passive as such. Even hoping while experiencing little personal agency cannot be regarded as passive. Some sociologists have recognised this aspect. The "work" of maintaining hope in unfavourable circumstances may demand more from individuals than other forms of hope, as Cook and Cuervo wrote (2019: 1115).

The psycho-social aspects of hope are important for the further considerations in this article. Bar-Tal, for example, studied collective fear and hope orientations in societies in intractable conflict. In order to enhance the peace process in societies such as those in Israel/Palestine, the Balkans, or Ireland, he found it necessary to foster a hope orientation. To explain this position, Bar-Tal and Jarymowicz reached for arguments from the neurobiology of the brain. Hope, in contrast to primary emotions such as fear, is developed on the pathway that links the thalamus and amygdala with the cortex (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal 2006: 370). It is the effect of a cognitive and then affective process. Most of the processes related to reflective and moral reasoning that influence the formation of hope happen within the

prefrontal left hemisphere (2006: 382). The researchers argued that "in order to construct a strong basis for hope, human beings must develop skills and abilities of reflexive deliberation and motivational mechanisms for this type of functioning" (2006: 381), because a "hope orientation can be induced only as a function of particular dispositions and ego-involvement" (2006: 382). In other words, dealing with a stressful situation and bringing peace require intellectual capacities and moral reasoning. Developing the reflective system is conducive to taking into consideration different points of view, hearing the arguments of the other side, and evaluating the situation according to abstract personal standards related to social ideals (2006: 382–383). The reflectivity may stop or control the activity of "the automative" prime emotions such as fear, and thus limit potential aggression.

It is impossible to discuss the psychological scholarship on hope without mentioning Martin Seligman, who – in cooperation with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi – established a branch of psychology called positive psychology. It has as its goal the flourishing of individuals and societies and uses science to name, understand, and popularise the mechanism that brings about the flourishing (Seligman 2013: 26–29; see also Positive Psychology Center n.d.). According to its founder and his collaborators, positive psychology complements traditional psychology, whose goal is to study and treat various traumas, weaknesses, or psychological damages. The "disease model" of traditional psychology is thus supplemented by studies on human strengths, positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments (Seligman 2013: 241).

The approach that Seligman fostered and developed has been profoundly influential in the realms of education, academia, business, and management. It was also outstandingly generative in terms of psychological research and sparked a heated public debate about the role of optimism in the lives of individuals and societies. Seligman's approach has been met with deep criticism but has also gained adherents. In regard to science, the list of accusations is long: scientism, excessive adherence to the positivist model of doing science, elitism, self-isolation and ignoring the research of others, lack of proper theorising, lack of conceptual and methodological thinking, lack of evidence and poor replication, lack of awareness of one's own cultural situatedness, promotion of egotism, and last but not least a certain naivety and unawareness of one's own entanglement when it comes to declarations of practicing value-neutral science (Brown et al. 2018; van Zyl et al. 2023). Such criticism is not unique in the scientific world and needless to say it does not apply only to positive psychology.

Most of the critics speak of a new and better version of positive psychology rather than the abandonment of this perspective (Brown et al. 2018).

The task of this article is neither to consider the validity of such criticism nor to respond to it. Certainly, positive psychology is not – as it is sometimes misunderstood to be – about being positive all the time and suppressing negative emotions, and certainly it could benefit considerably from greater recognition of the impact of humanistic and existential psychologists, such as, for instance, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Viktor Frankl, and from a greater inclusion of – for example – phenomenological or sociological reflection. However, for the aim of this article, it is important to highlight points for consideration that may also prove important for the sociology of hope, the sociology of the future, and the sociology of leadership.

Seligman started his academic career by researching the connection between pessimism and depression. He described a phenomenon he called learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is defined as a surrender, a cessation of action, resulting from the belief that nothing one might do will matter (Seligman 1998: 15). When a person faces a negative, uncontrollable situation and stops trying to change the circumstances, even when they have the ability to do so, what results is a state of learned helplessness. The sociology of hope, the sociology of futures (and consequently the sociology of leadership) should be paying attention to situations where hope and agency diminish, that is, the situation of futurelessness (Tutton 2023).

The second point for reflection is that Seligman believes, just as Durkheim did, that optimism can be learned (but contrary to Durkheim, Seligman stresses the creation of individual rather than collective hope or optimism). The optimism he writes about could be called hope, because it does not mean that everything will be fine, that all barriers are surmountable. He does not recommend positive thinking but rather "non-negative thinking" (Seligman 1998:15, 221). He argues that what really matters is what people think when they encounter setbacks: whether they believe that the obstacles are permanent or not, whether they perceive the scope of obstacles as limited or universal, whether they believe the obstacles result from someone's immutable characteristics or whether in their opinion the obstacles are a matter of changing external circumstances. (Seligman 1998: 40–43). Seligman calls this an "explanatory style" and explains that

> The concept of the explanatory style brings hope into the laboratory […]. Whether we have hope depends on two dimensions of our explanatory style: pervasiveness and permanence. Finding tempo-

> rary and specific causes for misfortune is the art of hope […]. On the other hand, permanent causes produce helplessness far into the future, and universal causes spread helplessness through all your endeavors. (Seligman 1998: 48)

He lists hope as one of the seven human strengths related to transcendence (appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, spirituality, forgiveness, humour, zest) (Seligman 2013: 265). Seligman's work, regardless of the justified or unjustified criticism it has received, also raises important questions about the orientation of a discipline like sociology: its internal pluralism, its scope, and the ways it addresses different topics.

There is nothing like a "positive sociology," even though some thinkers have argued for the need to establish this kind of perspective, because, in their opinion, "a great deal of sociology, like psychology, has focused on a disease model of human functioning" to the abandonment of other aspects of communal life (Bennett 2015: 18; cf. Nichols 2005). In this respect they point at the exceptional sociology of Pitirim Sorokin, another emigrant from Eastern Europe in American academia and a peer of Florian Znaniecki. Sorokin wrote about altruism and love as attitudes to help overcome the social crisis caused by World War II. Nichols notices many similarities between Sorokin's work and the work of Martin Seligman: for example, rejection of negativistic sociology or psychology; response to the sociocultural crisis; recognition of transcendence; emphasis on education for altruism/virtues; and self-determination (Nichols 2005: 35). Sorokin's work differs from Seligman's in terms of methodology and attitude towards Christianity (affirmative versus indifferent), but still Nichols believes that more unites than divides them and argues that Sorokin could be called the forerunner of "positive sociology" (2005, 2012; cf. Gili & Mangone 2023: 19–20). According to Gili and Mangone (2023), Sorokin's unique sociology paved the way for contemporary studies of hope, even though Sorokin did not pay any special attention to the subject.

In summary, hope has not been an easy subject for sociologists. Even though, from Auguste Comte on, visions and dreams of a new social order have permeated the work of many sociologists, sociology as a discipline decades ago abandoned its interest in the phenomenon of human hoping, in experiencing futurity, and in expectations and anticipations. Also, it still too rarely observes and describes positive social phenomena as such. Berger's and Sorokin's ideas have not been widely followed. To where could sociology move from here? It could move in at least two

directions. First, it could move in the direction of a sociology of representational hopes. Here the growing body of sociological research and the theorising of imagined futures is especially promising. Second, it could investigate non-representational hopes, for instance, how they emerge, how they are cultivated, how they are activated, whether there are any communal practices that sustain them, and so forth. The work of humanistic sociologists such as Peter Berger or the sociologist Pitirim Sorokin could be starting points. These two directions should not be considered as "either-or" but as "and-and," since the existential dimensions of hope often precondition and to some extent might determine the practical outcome of imagined futures.

In the last paragraph of this section, it is worth considering what conclusions flow from these considerations for the sociology of leadership. I think there are at least a few. First, they reveal the need to pay more attention than previously to the problems of the social formation of a hope orientation and to the questions raised by the sociology of futures. Attention should be directed not only to different types of leadership and the circumstances shaping them, but to the very "work" of leaders and communities in regard to their hopes: how these hopes are created, how they are sustained, and to what meanings they are connected. Here, a greater consideration of humanistic sociology could help. Second, the sociology of leadership must be in dialogue with other fields of knowledge. Third, the sociology of leadership should pay more attention to situations where there are feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, or futurelessness, in order to unravel the structural and cultural factors that lead to such states.

/// Hope and the University

In fulfilling its mission, a university certainly relies on the leadership of various groups of people: the faculty, students, and administrative body. An attitude of hope clearly has an effect on people's school and academic performance (Seligman 1998: 136–154; Curry et al. 1997).

What makes the university a special place is that hope should not be understood solely as a motivational force in regard to performing a given task (e.g., obtaining a diploma, leading a research team, etc.) but also – and in fact in the first place – as a personal and communal disposition and strength that enables human beings to deal with various challenges in various situations. Hope not only has an instrumental and situational value but constitutes a value in itself.

Second, if mission statements are to be taken seriously, most of academia's efforts should be dedicated to enhancing hope and leadership skills within the group constituting the majority of it: students. These skills will be practiced *outside* the university and thus will contribute to the public good rather than to the good of the organisation, that is, the university. Third and most importantly, the leadership practiced and taught at the university should by no means be leadership for the sake of leadership, a mere technique for getting things done. Various alumni will hold positions of responsibility in the future and their leadership must be ethical and wise. Before we move on to specific recommendations for academic life, I would like to reflect briefly on the "philosophy" of academia, which could be critical in the formation of a hope orientation in the academic community.

It seems that the most important division within academia is not between the sciences and humanities but between different ideas of what a university is and how it should function. A university may promise mastery over nature, the ultimate unity of science, and the continual expansion of knowledge and skills. Or a university may practice suspicion and expose hidden oppression; it can re-evaluate values. A university may also be aware of its own limitations; it may be a place of meeting and dispute between different traditions of thought and different rationalities, each of which is aware of its own uniqueness, strengths, and weaknesses (cf. MacIntyre 1990). A university may bump into rocks of presumption and despair, but it can also try to choose a different path.

Christopher Lasch raised a similar issue more than 30 years ago. He recalled the once famous book, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, from 1959, where C.P. Snow described the conflict that was to take place between scientific and humanistic culture.[3] Representatives of these two cultures could not communicate and talk to each other with understanding. Snow's book, which was immersed in the Cold War debates,[4] was also an indictment of the English political elite, who, having been brought up in the liberal arts, were ignorant of scientific achievements and, consequently, pursued the wrong policies: selfish, imperial, racist, and anti-technological ones. According to Snow, humanists needed to return to the heritage of the Enlightenment and should not deny the value of scientific and technological developments. They must learn to speak in the democratic language

[3] At the time of its publication, the book sparked widespread debate, which Marcin Napiórkowski recently cited and discussed with reference to literature (cf. Napiórkowski 2022: 193–228, 448–449).

[4] In this respect see Snow's comparison of the American and Russian systems of school education, and competition between the Anglo-American world, Russia, and China (Snow 1961: 35–54).

of science about the human condition, ethics, or aesthetics (Snow 1961: 49–54; cf. Napiórkowski 2022: 220). The solution to the problem, according to Snow, was that humanists should overcome their ignorance and get acquainted with the achievements of the sciences (as Russia and its world did to a great extent). Lasch cited Snow's book 30 years after its publication not because he was interested in the situation of modern Western academia, where the liberal arts had already been in retreat for decades, but because he was interested in cultural criticism.

According to Lasch, the sciences and humanities of his time had a lot in common. Their representatives were guided by an ethic that Lasch called "the ethic of abundance," "the ethic of unlimited disclosure," or "the ethic of optimism." Such an ethic expressed itself in "an unquestioning faith in the capacity of human intelligence to solve the mysteries of human existence" (Lasch 1990: 4), belief in a duty "to pursue ideas wherever they may lead, without regard to their moral or political consequences" (Lasch 1990: 3), and "an unfounded confidence in the moral wisdom of experts" (Lasch 1990: 12). This ethic sustained a culture of unlimited consumption as "the prerequisite of a good life" (Lasch 1990: 10). Lasch contrasted the ethic of abundance with the ethic of limits. The latter was more often characteristic of non-academics than of academics. An ethic of limits was based on the conviction that not everything that is technically possible is morally good, and not every human desire should be gratified. It also questioned material abundance as a means to human flourishing (cf. Seligman 2013) and sometimes placed untutored common sense higher than the ideas of experts. Lasch's description fit the broader context of his critique of rebellious elites adopting the mindless mentality of the masses, as described by José Ortega y Gasset almost a century earlier. Yet for this article, another observation is more important. The ethic of abundance, a belief in constant progress, is a form of "cheerful fatalism," "an opiate," which "assumes that we are carried along on an irresistible flood of innovation" (Lasch 1990: 13). In the end, it incapacitates people for intelligent action and seeing things through (Lasch 1990: 14). Lasch called this the ethic of optimism and juxtaposed it to hope, which corresponded with the ethic of limits. The hope Lasch advocated for was about "a deep-seated trust in life that appears absurd to those who lack it"; it was about a sense of justice, a belief in an inner order of things (Lasch 1990: 14; cf. Lasch 1990: 13; cf. Havel 1998). Hope relies on memory, virtues, and humility, and recognises human frailty and the need for transcendence. These, according to Lasch, were the preconditions for adequate action

when needed. Lasch found various promises to release human beings from all forms of necessity not only morally wrong but first and foremost simply untrue. Such promises were impossible to keep and making them would lead to frustration, apathy, and the breaking of social ties. The lesson that can be drawn from Lasch's reflections today – that is, after another 30 years have passed – is that we do not need to choose between the sciences and the humanities: we need the entire heritage of human knowledge, including those ideas whose roots predate the Enlightenment.

Furthermore, Seligman, who may seem to be an advocate of optimism, does not hesitate to talk about limitations. Like Lasch, he acknowledges the role of significant strengths (or in other words, human virtues) in human flourishing. The word "optimism" does not mean the same thing in Seligman's and in Lasch's writings. They are homonyms, not homologies. The psychological reality Seligman describes lies closer to what Lasch calls "hope" than to "the ethic of abundance." Seligman reminds his readers of the need to notice good events and celebrate successes, but this does not mean living in abundance and the prospect of unlimited growth. It means that finding meaning in our lives and experiencing flow are extremely important to us as humans. Seligman wanted optimism to be "flexible" and "realistic" (Seligman 1998).

The phenomenon described by Lasch is perhaps more relevant to Western universities operating in a developed capitalist culture of consumption than to universities in Eastern Europe. However, universities in our part of Europe – perhaps as a persisting legacy of the materialistic culture promoted by communism – have in a sense lost their humanist sensitivity. They rarely think of themselves as places of comprehensive, self-conscious human development. Some universities may "sin" by presumption, some – probably those in Eastern Europe more often than others – may "sin" by despair. Falling into extremes carries dangers (Napiórkowski 2022). Meanwhile, the challenges of modernity force us to reflect on the ethics of limits and human ecology (McPherson 2021). There is an important lesson to be learned.

/// Recommendations and Conclusions

In referring to the works of sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers, it was pointed out that hope is deeper and more important than optimism. Hope also cannot be reduced to and identified with expectations, anticipations, or aspirations. The disposition of hope combines agency, creative

thinking, and a sense of meaning (transcendence). In hoping, the whole human person is involved. Hoping involves bodies and minds. The attitude of hope, which is primarily the result of cognitive processes and only then affective processes, largely depends on what and how we "feed" our mind. It also involves values and various social ideals, because they motivate us to act. Human hopes are intertwined. Even individual hopes have in some sense a social, communal dimension. The attitude of hope can be shaped and supported. It is one of the most important characteristics of any leader and a precondition for any leadership. Last but not least, if hope is to be a kind of virtue, and an enduring attitude, skill, or disposition, it must avoid two extremes: pride and discouragement, or in other words, presumption and despair. Based on the above, I would like to devote the last paragraphs to what could be done so Eastern European universities become places that practice and inspire hope and hope-based leadership.

First of all, there should be room for representational and non-representational hopes at Eastern European universities. These modes of hope should be studied and discussed. This means that sometimes an academic discipline – such as sociology, for example – has to develop new tools, concepts, and theories. It needs to revisit forgotten intuitions and enter into dialogue with other disciplines of knowledge. Sociology as a discipline could be an example of the clash of presumption and despair, and/or the forging of an intermediate attitude of hope.

Secondly, universities could be places that raise awareness and create future-oriented competencies (Miller 2018). In this way different representational hopes are formulated, expressed, and put under discussion. Futures literacy labs, as described by Riel Miller and colleagues (2018), or any other group activity that has elements of anticipation (both awareness of the future and prospective thought), appropriation (joint commitment, collective mobilisation, and sharing of values) and action (strategic resolve and planning) as proposed by Jan Erik Karlsen (2021), could be useful in this process. Elaborating on the postulates of Bar-Tal and Jarymowicz, universities should be meeting places for different points of view, research schools, and traditions of thought, which are individually aware of their uniqueness, but also of their limitations. Finding pathways and imagining the future relies to a great extent on free inquiry, understanding previous experiences, and the ability to stay in dialogue with competing points of views, since hope is more a result of thinking than of just feeling. It goes without saying that universities should play a crucial role in fostering

analytical and moral reasoning within society. They should also contribute to shaping social ideals. Universities must be places that cherish non-partisan thinking and teach respectful dialogue. To the degree that it is possible, curricula should avoid excesses of optimism and pessimism, and should foster critical thinking (Napiórkowski 2022). Only then will universities be able to respond to the challenges of the communities in which they function.

When it comes to non-representational hope, the humanities and social sciences could function as crucial exercises in hopeful thinking and self-awareness, since they can provide actions with justifications and meaning. They can help people to understand the ratios behind individual and communal hopes – their dynamic and character. They can help them to understand other than instrumental dimensions of imagining futures.

The humanities and social sciences also have a special role in addressing positive aspects of life and in enhancing the capacity for non-representational hoping. Universities are communities of people who not only have intellectual needs but also need good relationships, a sense of meaning in and from their work, a sense that their efforts are appreciated, autonomy, and so on. Students, faculty, and members of the administrative body all have these needs. The process of teaching and conducting research is more effective if basic needs are met.

Furthermore, universities should conduct sociological and psychological research to identify areas and situations that are conducive to learned helplessness or the downplaying of strengths, or conversely that build a sense of agency, creative thinking, and personal and communal strengths, and help to address weaknesses. Universities should be open to supplementing formal education with extra-curricular activities, non-partisan, apolitical programmes, and free initiatives that would enhance the communication and leadership skills of the students, contribute to the flourishing of the academic community, and inspire its members to lead lives that would make a difference.

In this essay I have tried to shed light on the relation between hope, the imagining of possible futures, and leadership. If universities are to be places for the formation of wise and ethical leadership, we should pay attention to this relation and revise the concepts and theories we use. What is at stake in the discussion is the thriving of academic communities and their fulfilment of their unique mission.

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/// Abstract

Drawing on insights from sociology and psychology, this paper points at hope as one of the key personal and communal strengths that contemporary academia needs in order to make use of its potential and fulfil its unique mission. It also shows the connection between futures studies, sociological reflection on hope, and the sociological understanding of leadership. The difference between unwarranted optimism and hope is explained, and hope is presented as a deeply creative, active process involving thinking more than feeling. The author argues that modern universities pay too little attention to the positive aspects of life, and thus universities become paradoxically less capable of executing their mission: to be leaders of positive change in every dimension of life, to conduct free research and free debate in which every bit of truth is respected, and to form ethical, wise leaders. Sadly, some fields of knowledge, such as sociology, lack a sufficiently developed theoretical apparatus to confront the problem. This paper concludes with recommendations for Eastern European academia.

Keywords:
university, hope, futures, leadership, social sciences

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