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REFLEXIVITY OF THE SUBJECT IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORIES

A b s t r a c t. The subject of this article is the question of human reflexivity, where the individual is understood as the subject of social relations. We are interested in individual and collective subjectivity. The paper begins with an attempt to depict the theoretical field, on the grounds of which the problem of reflexivity appears in sociology. Next, we present the main concepts in the subjectivity theory found in sociological and philosophical literature. This allowed us to prepare an interpretational basis that is helpful in analysing specific subject reflexivity concepts. The presented theories arise from the views of M.S. Archer, P. Bourdieu, A. Giddens and C. Taylor. These views serve as the basis of our discussion concerning reflexivity, its meaning and interpretational challenges encountered in contemporary social theories of the subjectivity orientation. As a conclusion, the authors consider the main problems placed before the field of humanities concerning the further development of subjectivity theories.

Key words: civilizational crisis, modernity, reflexivity, sociology.

For contemporary sociology the issue of relations between individuals and structures, as well as the significance of interactions for structures and struc-

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tures for interactions is – as it seems – of primary importance. Therefore the “protagonists” of sociology’s traditional scene, namely institutions and structures, are becoming minor characters. This engages sociology in psychological issues and in the reflection in the area of philosophical anthropology.

Science, like all people and their communities, makes use of certain images and reductions. They help in maintaining the ability to reason and to live a reflexive life, in spite of considerable areas of ignorance on one side, an excessive amount of often extremely detailed knowledge on the other, and pluralism, explicit contradictions, tremendous chaos of human views, information and convictions, on the third side. A fundamental idea of traditional sociology was the conviction that institutions and structures, somewhat like a stamp, imprint their models on individuals’ personalities. How this was to happen, this was not of sociological concern, as it was intended to be the subject of interest of psychology. Accordingly, the subjects of sociology were structures and institutions, and the objects people and their psyche. The later turn in sociology placed this discipline in a difficult situation. The interactionist idea that people, in the course of interactions, create structures and institutions led to a change in defining the object and subject of sociology. People and their personalities became the subjects and the above-mentioned social forms became the objects of social processes. However, this change engendered a serious problem: how to understand this new subject of sociological research. When the subject of scientific research changes and the research methods are modified, this leads to a paradigmatic change. This indeed occurred in sociology. However, how can one continue to be a sociologist when the subject of the examined processes has become the person, his psyche, personality and identity? This question remains unanswered.

Psychologically oriented sociologists imagined the social world as an extension of the world of human psyche. Sociologically oriented sociologists understood the person and his personality as an extension of culture, structures and social institutions. Émile Durkheim’s concepts of the homo duplex and anomic suicide can serve as the best illustration of sociologism. Though, one must admit that a detailed reading of his work would lead us to conclude that this extremely remarkable mind did not fit in the straitjacket of sociological premises which he accepted, and following his example were accepted by almost the entire discipline of sociology. Interactionists developed their concepts with great sensitivity and at times with impressive talent on “no man’s land”, or rather on “disputed territory” between sociology and psychology. This resulted in the creation of a kind of social psychology of social micro-structures, or maybe even more so of social micro-relations. Ethnomet-

hodologists made a valuable contribution to this work. Phenomenologists who were “sent behind enemy lines”, if one can refer to sociological phenomenologists in this humorous manner, have made a great contribution to sociological reflection, especially to understanding the meaning of social communication in the process of negotiating meanings. However, for sociology of somewhat larger structures it would be better if phenomenologists, following Husserl’s advice, would return from phenomena “back to the things themselves”.

One cannot overemphasize the significance of these various sociological orientations. Our scepticism solely regards their capacity to understand and explain the sphere of institutions and structures that after all exist and invariably remain in the area of interest of sociology. In terms of the subject of this article, one can say that these orientations leave the essence of relations between people and the social world (principally large institutions and structures) outside of their scope of interest. Especially today, in a time of advanced globalization, this is a sphere of tremendous challenges facing the humanities, similarly to identity issues and mental health problems touching the inhabitants of the globalized world.

Therefore separate attention should be given to those theories that attempt to build bridges between different dimensions of social processes and at the same time sociological interests: individual, micro, mezzo and macro, including the global level. They include, among others, Margaret Archer's morphogenetic theory, Pierre Bourdieu's habitus concept, Jürgen Habermas's communicative society and Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration. The importance of these concepts and theories consists in the attempt to distance oneself from the excessive certainty and illusions concerning cognitivity of the individual, culture and society of one tradition (objectivist) and the crippling scruples of the second orientation (subjectivist). It is also an aim to build a positive social theory of the world during the great civilizational changes of our time¹.

We believe the connection between mass culture (as a product of the civilizational crisis in the world undergoing globalization) and today's intellectual trends (which have a dramatic impact on the present-day humanities, including the orientations and paradigms of sociology) to be of great importance. We don't want to make here an attempt at defining the civilizational crisis

¹ K. WIELECKI, *European Social Order Transformation, Mass Culture and Social Marginalisation Processes*, “Yearbook of Polish European Studies Warsaw University Centre for Europe” 9, 2005, pp. 115-133; IDEM, *Kryzys i socjologia [Crisis and Sociology]*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 2012.

of our times, at characterizing its “fluid” culture, at understanding its effects on people’s identities and mental health today and at showing the civilizational and cultural context of discourse in sociology. It is not by accident though, that in the 1970s, when the next turning point, this time a post-industrial one, came about that a significant paradigmatic break-up occurred in sociology.

An extraordinary revival of thought is often the result of a civilizational crisis where the straitjacket of traditional paradigmatic principles seems too tight, and usually rightly so. A plethora of concepts, theories, and proposals arises then, including paradigmatic ones. Many feel the need of radical changes and breaking all ties, many take an orthodox stance and there is also no shortage of all kinds of experimentalists, or else, ideologists of the impossibility of science. All of these attitudes seem rational in some way and useful in general. They add tension to the intellectual discourse and create a relatively broad cognitive perspective for research.

We arrange this discourse according to the three paradigms of sociology: objectivist, subjectivist and of *great dialectical synthesis*². The objectivist paradigm dates back to the beginnings of sociology with such authors as Auguste Comte, John Stuart Mill or Émile Durkheim. For them, sociology was to be a mono-paradigmatic science. It was assumed that its subject should be society, its culture, structures and institutions. Supporting this understanding of sociology was a certain vision of the world, which seemed homogeneous, cognizable, functional and systemic. It was also believed that the world was a process and that great historical processes affected social structures, which in turn conditioned people. Sociologists of this orientation have invoked philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hegel or Marx.

The objectivism of sociological theory is manifested in the philosophical belief that existence and the world are part of a reality outside the human mind and, as such, are cognizable. The objectivism of a sociologist means an impartial, open and subjectivism-less orientation towards getting to know the objective social world. Objectivist sociological theories are naturalistic as a rule. This means that according to them the social world is part of the natural world and sociology should follow the example of natural sciences and persist in striving to achieve their accuracy, precision, certainty and

² K. WIELECKI, *Paradygmat wielkiej dialektycznej syntezy i jego obecność w polskiej socjologii* [The Paradigm of Great Dialectical Synthesis], „Rocznik Lubuski” 37 (1), 2011, pp. 107-117.

freedom from subjectivism. In the practice of research, these paradigmatic assumptions should be applied using such methods as experiment, observation, questionnaire and statistical analysis.

The second of the above-mentioned paradigmatic orientations is the subjectivist paradigm. Its beginnings should be looked for in the first decades of the twentieth century, around the time of World War I and World War II, i.e. another deep crisis of industrialism and capitalism. This orientation started developing dynamically beginning in the 1920s, initially as something of a curiosity, then an aberration and finally a schism in sociology. Since the late 1960s, it has been one of its parallel currents. In this paradigm, one needs to include first of all symbolic interactionism, phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology. In the 1970s, a radical version of this paradigm arose, namely post-modernism.

This orientation is certainly a very creative and promising manifestation of an extremely distinct current of protest against the order of the world at that time, which not infrequently assumes the form of a methodological revolt – just as if its authors believed they would be able to find another language and mode to talk about society and thus to defy the tragic history. Some sociologists were probably escaping from the problems of their very difficult time into the marginalia of sociology and society. At that time, sociology plunged into exploring the nature of man entangled in social life, its interest being limited to the narrow circle of interactions. This is how sociology reached the brink of schism. Around the middle of the 1970s, multiple paradigms in sociology became a fact.

The subjectivist paradigm has its source in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and in the views of such thinkers as Peter Winch, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Richard Rorty and Jean-François Lyotard. The vision of the world that the subjectivist orientation seems to emerge from shows a doubtful, unordered reality, chaos. This is an unobvious, indeterminist, uncognizable world. It is also full of threats and risks. It is always a world for somebody (subjectivism), often reduced to language or text, established in the consciousness (individual or collective), sometimes only existing in the imagination. Subjectivist sociology is multi-paradigmatic by definition, and therefore there is no single subject of research. Sometimes it is the acts of communication or use of language, or language itself, or else the creation and interpretation of symbols, or a discourse entangled in the claim to power, or the practices of constructing the symbolic world. Among the most outstanding representatives of this orientation are Alfred Schütz, Erving Goffman, Herbert Blumer, Jean Baudrillard

and Zygmunt Bauman. The methods typical of the subjectivist paradigm are interpretation, the phenomenological method, deconstruction and heuristic methods.

We termed the third of the great paradigms *sociology of the great dialectical synthesis*. It draws on both paradigms and goes beyond them, omitting the traps of eclecticism with more or less success. The examples of sociology practised in this way are found in the works of such authors as Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, Alain Touraine, Manuel Castells or Anthony Giddens. They are characterized by great eruditeness, axiological and often ideological and political commitment, terminological innovation, the fact that they are deeply set in the achievements of philosophy, a narration employing tentative rather than categorical statements. In Charles Taylor's words, they speak *a subtler language*.

The authors of this paradigm are fully aware of the weaknesses of the objectivist orientation. They realize that cognition in the spirit of the Enlightenment is impossible and that a sociologist cannot study man, society and culture in a way other than subjective. They are also aware of the fallibility of the senses and the mind, of the entanglement of the cognitive processes in (the systems of) values, prejudices, interests and social imaginaries. The theoreticians of the *great dialectical synthesis* share many reservations, especially the post-modernist ones. However, they want to go beyond the scruples, the feeling of impossibility resulting from post-modernist criticism. They make use of diverse sources of knowledge gathered employing traditional, so called "hard" methods as well as the "soft" ones, typical of subjectivist sociology.

All of these authors have a solid philosophical background. It seems that this orientation cannot exist without philosophical technique and knowledge. They also combine many other competences. They feel at ease using economical, anthropological and psychological knowledge. They re-interpret the findings of these sciences in the language of sociology, making it a useful tool for interpreting and understanding. Their theories are complex; just as is the world they describe and explain.

These theories attempt to face up to the present post-industrial crisis where information biochemical technologies keep changing the whole of the human world for better and for worse. The changes result in such processes as globalization, a demographic disaster, a global, uncontrolled *free market*, a cancerous growth of mass culture, a fluidity of the forms of social life. These phenomena, in turn bring about a crisis in individual and collective identities, radical changes in the systems of values and morals, family models etc.

Although this paradigmatic variety testifies to a serious crisis, not only in sociology, but also in contemporary culture in general, it does not, in itself, have to be anything wrong. It may turn out to be helpful in grappling with the ambiguous reality of the world undergoing a civilizational crisis.

The subject of this article is reflexivity, namely – let us briefly explain – the capacity to make use of reflection in practical life. The fundamental question, which must be asked here, concerns the manner, in which people participate in society. Are they reactive atoms, like imagined behaviourists? Or maybe reflexive subjects, who are active actors in building relations, structures and social institutions? We are evidently standing on the grounds of the human reflexivity concept and its associations.

Out of necessity, this paper must have a limited thematic scope. We attempted to present a sketch that we hope will allow for more systematic studies. This is why we will limit ourselves to discussing the most important views of only three authors, whose works are part of the paradigm, that we have termed here the *great dialectical synthesis*. After making a brief reference to George Herbert Mead, we will refer to the positions on reflexivity taken by the following sociologists: Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck and Margaret S. Archer. We believe that in the intellectual field, designated by these three concepts we will be able to outline the main problems that contemporary sociology faces regarding the issue of reflexivity. Lastly, we will present the standpoint of the Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor. We suspect that his subjectivity concept may shed light on sociological disputes and research, and provide valuable interpretational instruments in this area.

We must begin with George Herbert Mead, who identified the difference between the mind and the self. The mind is formed to be an instrument capable of understanding the effects of actions: one's own and others. But for this consciousness to develop one must have self-consciousness. For Mead, the self allows an objective view of oneself. According to this thinker, society is the product of the principles characterizing the division of labour and the rules that order the coexistence of acting individuals. This occurs in the process of assuming social roles, when the behaviour of group members is agreed upon in accordance with the universe of discourse, namely the fundamental rules contained in symbols that are meaningful to group members. Mead identifies two structures of the self: *I* and *Me*, in other words the active aspect and the socialized aspect of the person. This occurs in a dual dialogue loop: with others and with oneself – internal discourse. This is the foundation of the

person's reflexivity and the rationality of his actions. The development of one's personality is the result of continuous interactions between *I* and *Me*³.

Mead's concept undoubtedly opened the perspective for sociology that treats the individual as a reflexive subject of social relations. Sociologists representing the orientation of the *great dialectical synthesis*, who we invoke in this article, referred to Mead on several occasions. Especially Anthony Giddens, who opens sociology to issues concerning personality in the greatest degree, consequently refers to the category of subject reflexivity.

The key notion in Giddens' concept of contemporary reflexivity appears to be the internal referentiality of modern social systems. This British sociologist obviously associates reflexivity with the changes of *late modernity*. Although these changes take place at the institutional level, their consequences have an immediate impact on human life and individual identity. In the introduction to *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, we read: "The overriding stress of the book is upon the emergence of new mechanisms of self-identity which are shaped by – yet also shape – the institutions of modernity. The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications"⁴.

This is how Giddens introduces us to two new realities that were once separated and governed by two distinct sciences: psychology and sociology. Today, in the transforming world of contemporary modernity, they are becoming one, yet dual subject of research. Sociology, understood in these terms, must take into account the reflexivity of individuals and communities, since "sociology, and the social sciences more widely conceived are inherent elements of the institutional reflexivity of modernity – a phenomenon fundamental to the discussion in this book. Not just academic studies, but all manner of manuals, guides, therapeutic works and self-help surveys contribute to modernity's reflexivity"⁵.

It seems that we have two main characters of contemporary social processes: the changes of modernity and the reflexive self. Giddens explains his intentions, when he writes: "I try to identify some structuring features at the

³ G.H. MEAD, *Mind Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, Chicago: University of Chicago 1934.

⁴ A. GIDDENS, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press 1991, p. 2.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

core of modernity which interact with the reflexivity of the self (...)”⁶. This modernity can probably be understood as a wave of contemporary civilizational changes, the tumultuous creation of post-traditional social order, including its global dimension.

The global dimension of present-day changes is visible in processes that are of primary importance to the individual and the world. As Giddens writes: “Besides its institutional reflexivity, modern social life is characterised by profound processes of the reorganization of time and space, coupled to the expansion of disembedding mechanisms – mechanisms, which prise social relation free from the hold of specific locales, recombining them across wide time-space distances. The reorganisation of time and space, plus the disembedding mechanisms, radicalise and globalise pre-established institutional traits of modernity”⁷.

In a world full of deep, dynamic and fundamental changes, the individual finds himself in serious trouble. One is forced to rely on one's own reflexivity and the institutional reflexivity of modernity. The key notion to understanding this modern tension is risk: “Modernity is a risk culture (...) under conditions of modernity the future is continually drawn into the present by means of the reflexive organisation of knowledge environments. I do not mean by this that social life is inherently more risky than it used to be; for most people in the developed societies that is not the case. Rather, the concept of risk becomes fundamental to the way both lay actors and technical specialists organize the social world”⁸. Although late modernity provides measures that minimize risk on one hand, they intensify this risk on the other, and may even lead to apocalyptic dangers: “Modernity reduces the overall riskiness of certain areas and modes of life, yet at the same time introduces new risk parameters largely or completely unknown to previous eras. These parameters include high-consequence risk: risk deriving from the globalised character of the social system of modernity. The late modern world – the world of what I term high modernity – is apocalyptic, not because it is inevitably heading towards calamity, but because it introduces risk which previous generations have not had to face”⁹.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 3.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 4.

As we have already mentioned, Giddens understands reflexivity as a structuration factor of a person's identity which connects individuals with the contemporary world. The notion of reflexivity signifies a dual structuration process. In today's world, a person's identity has a reflexive nature. "Me" reflexive is constantly forced to create a biographical narrative in the conditions of current capitalism undergoing many changes that constitute the institutions of modernity and open the possibilities of selecting various lifestyles. This creates a situation, in which the role of the subject in constructing his own identity is increasing significantly. According to Giddens, one may even say that nowadays, the subject's reflexive planning of life – which takes into consideration the risk evaluation mediated by expert systems – is one of the most important factors structuring identity¹⁰.

The notion of reflexivity, being of crucial importance to understanding the civilizational changes of our time, became the subject of the book, entitled *Reflexive Modernization*¹¹, whose co-author is Giddens. The remaining authors are Ulrich Beck and Scott Lash. In the preface, of common authorship, we read: "Reflexivity – although understood in rather different ways by each of the three authors – is one of the most significant terms. For all of us, the protracted debate about modernity versus postmodernity has become wearisome and like so many such debates in the end has produced rather little. The idea of reflexive modernization, regardless of whether or not one uses that term as such, breaks the stranglehold, which these debates have tended to place upon conceptual innovation"¹².

Although Ulrich Beck does not define these notions in the same manner as does Giddens, he also acknowledges that the issues of reflexivity and risk are fundamental to understanding modernity. Beck points out that paradoxically, the success of western modernization may lead to its downfall. As we read: "'Reflexive modernization' means the possibility of a creative (self-) destruction for an entire epoch: that of industrial society. The 'subject' of this creative destruction is not the revolution, not the crisis, but the victory of western modernization"¹³. It is worth noticing, however, that contemporary modernity, precisely reflexive modernity, varies in principle from modernity in general. "If simple (or orthodox) modernization means, at bottom, first the

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 5.

¹¹ U. BECK, A. GIDDENS, S. LASH, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press 1994.

¹² Ibidem, p. vi.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 2.

re-embedding of traditional social forms by industrial social forms, then reflexive modernization means first the disembedding and second the re-embedding of industrial social forms by another modernity”¹⁴.

Beck begins with the remarkable dynamics of changes of fundamental social forms of our time. A certain linearity of social change – if one can understand it in this way – has been perturbed. The factor responsible for disturbing the existing logic of these dynamics is to be reflexivity. We are living in some kind of a significant time of progress in history, or actually in the chaos of this progress: “Thus, by virtue of its inherent dynamism, modern society is undercutting its formations of class, stratum, occupation, sex roles, nuclear family, plant business sectors and of course also the prerequisites and continuing forms of natural techno-economic progress. This new stage, in which one kind of modernization undercuts and changes another, is what I call the stage of reflexive modernization”¹⁵.

Thus Beck develops the idea of a new modernity that rises on the rubble of the former one, and is so radicalized that it buries itself: “Reflexive modernization, then, is supposed to mean that a change of industrial society, which occurs surreptitiously and unplanned in the wake of normal, autonomized modernization and with an unchanged, intact political and economic order implies the following: a *radicalization* of modernity, which breaks up the premises and contours of industrial society and opens paths to another modernity”¹⁶. This is a significant modification of Marxism, the dialectics of which – according to Beck – require essential revision.

Here we should take notice of a very important difference in terminology that is of key significance to Beck's theory: reflexivity and reflection. It seems that this is an important point, which contributes to the understanding of the risk society, contemporary modernization and today's civilizational changes in general. The author himself explains this conflict between modernity and its radicalized version, this inner conflict of our time, in the following way: “This type of confrontation of the bases of modernization with the consequences of modernization should be clearly distinguished from the increase of knowledge and scientization in the sense of self-reflection on modernization. Let us call the autonomous, undesired transition from industrial to risk society *reflexivity* (to differentiate it from and contrast it with *reflection*). Then ‘reflexive mo-

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 3.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

dernization' means self-confrontation with the effects of risk society that cannot be dealt with and assimilated in the system of industrial society – as measured by the latter's institutionalized standards. The fact that this object of (public, political and scientific) reflection must not obscure the unreflected, quasi-autonomous mechanism of the transition: it is precisely abstraction which produces and gives reality to risk society"¹⁷.

It seems that the standpoint of British scholar, Margaret S. Archer, opens new perspectives for the reflexivity theory. This notion appears to be of central importance to this scholar. She joins two extremities of humanistic interests: the person, his psyche and his agency, as well as the society and its culture. This means a permanent human activity of understanding oneself in a reflexive relation with the social environment (Archer 2007: 4). The author analytically distinguishes three dimensions of human *concerns*: nature, practice and society.

According to Archer, the reality of structures and culture forms an objective situation, in which people configure and define their *concerns*, regarding the three above-mentioned dimensions, in a subjective manner. A person's actions are the result of his reflection that expresses the objective reality and one's personal, practical projects in a subjective way. The effects of people's actions, at the collective level, lead to social and cultural changes (morphogenesis) or the maintenance of the cultural system (morphostasis). Reflexivity is to develop through *internal conversation*, which we referred to when discussing Mead's views. However, Archer goes beyond the concept presented by Mead, as well as those presented by William James and Charles Sanders Peirce, when she defines internal conversation as an internal dialogue regarding problems, concerns and projects in relation to the reality of the outside world, which remains in a certain relationship with the language of this conversation (but is not completely determined by this language, as would have wanted it, for example, postmodernists).

Archer identified four types of reflexivity: communicative, autonomous, metareflexivity and fractured reflexivity. In terms of the first type, the acceptance granted by *significant others* plays a key role in the fulfillment of life projects. Autonomous reflexivity is rather oriented towards self-fulfillment *in the practical order*. Metareflexivity is connected with the *social order*. These types also differ from one another in the area of the person's concerns. In the third case, these concerns are related to the desire of realizing the cultural ideal and

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 6.

critical self-reflection. The fourth type is fractured reflexivity that is characterized by disorientation and the disturbance of relations between reflexivity and the subject's actions. According to Archer, the fluctuation and fluidity proper to modernity cause a decrease in meaning of communicative reflexivity and an increase in meaning of autonomous, fractured and metareflexivity¹⁸.

The above-presented views outline the sphere of discourse that we want to confront with Charles Taylor's standpoint. His reflexivity concept is of great importance to our considerations, because he refers to practically the entire philosophical creation. Reflexivity is an attribute proper to the person and his subjectivity. According to Taylor, the history of worldview disputes has displaced the rich spiritual content of the individual. We are therefore in need of anamnesis. We live in a world of invented dualities that impede this anamnesis. This results from the separation of human beings, which is the consequence of the development of individualism, among others. It is also caused by the solitude of the individual in a *disenchanted* – to use Max Weber's phrase – world, in which we have lost the meaning of life that is of fundamental importance to the person. Taylor also invokes the negative consequences of the objectified triumph of the *instrumental mind*¹⁹.

Reflexivity is meant to be a person's attribute that allows his identity to withstand disastrous trends. Reflexivity gives hope for reconciling the disintegrating horizons, sudden and permanent changes, as well as lost meaning²⁰. This is only possible if a reflexive return to one's subjectivity occurs. However, it is not the type of subjectivity that sends the person outward, beyond his inner self which according to Taylor was typical of antique thinkers. Rather, this should be a person who – like in Augustine's doctrine – reflexively focuses on his interior. “Augustine is always calling us within. What we need lies ‘intus’, he tells us again and again”²¹. This is what Taylor writes about Augustine's outlook: “Augustine was the first to make the first-person standpoint fundamental to our search for the truth”²².

However, he did not aim to penetrate the dark sphere of the *id* and what is being *repressed* – like in Sigmund Freud's concept and the entire humanities

¹⁸ M. ARCHER, *The reflexive Imperative in Late Modernity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012, pp. 125-290.

¹⁹ C. TAYLOR, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979, p. 8.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 129.

²² Ibidem, p. 133.

of suspicion. Neither did he attempt to find the suffering and egocentric *me* – like in post-Nietzscheism concepts. The purpose of Augustine's reflexive focus on the interior is to discover *Good* and *Love* that are present in every human being. For St. Augustine, only the *inner person* can communicate with God. Hence, this is a subjectivity concept which results from a reflexive inquiry into what is inside, and at the same time is a sort of vehicle communicating us with the cosmos²³. As Taylor explains, the fact that “(...) I can get beyond “my” inner world is much more a product of the revolution which Augustine started, but which only bore this fruit many centuries later”²⁴. This is where the Canadian philosopher moves on to the question of anamnesis.

Drawing on Plato's doctrine and its relation with St. Augustine's theory, Taylor writes: “So we can search to know ourselves; and yet we wouldn't know where to begin looking or be aware that we had found ourselves unless we already had some understanding of ourselves. Augustine faces the problem of how we can both know and not know, as Plato did in the *Meno*, and he solves it with a similar (and obviously derived) recourse to ‘memory’”²⁵.

Taylor understands reflexivity as a reasoning way to refer to good, in the form of values. These values send the person beyond his own egoism, towards other people and the community. This is how Taylor's subjectivity concept creates an important perspective for psychology. In our opinion, this perspective opens a specific and promising sphere for purely sociological reflection.

The four reflexivity concepts – three sociological and one philosophical – presented above do not cover not only all, but even those concepts, which must necessarily be taken into account when considering this problem. Nonetheless, in our opinion, this drastic reduction which we have committed here reveals the significance of doubts that arise with regard to this question. Furthermore, it unveils the most important line of conflict in contemporary sociology, in its paradigm of the *great dialectical synthesis*. The relational concept of dependence between people, with their psyche and autonomy, as well as culture and social structures is – as it seems – the basis of this theoretical orientation. This is why it is often called the subjectivity theory, or even more frequently, the agency theory. However, the discussion, in which the above-mentioned authors actively participate, concerns subtler matters that

²³ C. TAYLOR, *Philosophical Papers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985, v. II.

²⁴ C. TAYLOR, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992, p. 134.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

are of greatest importance. At the roots of the dispute that is taking place in the theoretical sphere outlined in our article, lie explicit or unarticulated premises in the field of philosophical anthropology.

Above all else, it is a question of the ontological status of the person, culture and society, and the interactions between these dimensions of social processes that appear to be of key interest to sociology of the *great dialectical synthesis*. This *new* dimension in sociology – as we have tried to show here – is a source of preoccupation, contradictory views, sometimes emotionally articulated ones. Here we touch the most essential issue for the person: his autonomy and subjectivity, and his ability to develop a reflexive subjectivity in very difficult times, which we termed the post-industrial crisis, times of tremendous challenges for individuals and humanity, including eschatological ones – as claim pessimists. In this reality, the person's ability to understand his own nature, possibilities and weaknesses, his reflection on the nature and direction of civilizational changes, as well as all kinds of related micro, mezzo and macro consequences – are of utmost importance.

As a conclusion we decided to present the view of a philosopher who explicitly refers to philosophical anthropology, which sociologists must – perforce – invoke indirectly. Namely this is Charles Taylor's reflexivity concept. It was not meant to be a summary or a settlement of sociological disputes. Rather, it was our intention to consider the benefits of incorporating the explicit reflection from the field of philosophical anthropology into the sociological discourse. We did not aim to close the discussion, but rather to add a new and in our opinion – significant – dimension. In a brief article we can merely outline the problem, signal a theoretical perspective which we think is of great importance. We, ourselves, were curious whether this perspective is worth separate and serious studies. We concluded in the affirmative, yet the reader is granted the right to a voice of dissent.

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REFLEKSYJNOŚĆ PODMIOTU W WYBRANYCH WSPÓŁCZESNYCH TEORIACH SPOŁECZNYCH

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Przedmiotem artykułu jest problem refleksyjności człowieka, jako podmiotu relacji społecznych. Interesuje nas podmiotowość jednostek i zbiorowości. Punktem wyjścia jest próba zarysowania pola teoretycznego problemu refleksyjności w socjologii, a następnie prezentacja głównych konceptów w teorii podmiotowości w literaturze socjologicznej i filozoficznej. Pozwoliło to naszkicować podstawę interpretacyjną pomocną w analizie konkretnych koncepcji refleksyjności podmiotu, jakie rozważamy w dalszej części artykułu. Omawiane teorie, to głównie poglądy M.S. Archer, P. Bourdieu, A. Giddensa i C. Taylora. Stały się one podstawą naszej dyskusji dotyczącej pojęcia refleksyjności, jego znaczenia i wyzwań interpretacyjnych we współczesnych teoriach społecznych orientacji podmiotowej. Artykuł kończą wnioski dotyczące głównych problemów i zadań stojących na drodze dalszego rozwoju teorii podmiotowych w humanistyce.

Słowa kluczowe: kryzys cywilizacyjny; nowoczesność; refleksyjność; socjologia.