Joanna Różycka-Tran, *Antagonizm społeczny w umysłach ludzi i kulturach świata*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2018

The work by Joanna Różycka-Tran titled *Antagonizm społeczny w umysłach ludzi i kulturach świata* [Social antagonism in people's minds and world's cultures] was published by Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar in 2018. The author elaborates on the issues that she took up in her earlier book *Życie społeczne jako gra. Kontekst międzykulturowy* [Social life as a game: The intercultural context], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2012. Searching for references in various theoretical approaches and empirical research, the author links social antagonism—both at the individual and cultural level, with the visions of the social reality as based on a zero-sum game, i.e., that one's success is necessarily conditioned by the failure of others. Such convictions significantly affect relations between individuals and social groups.

The book consists of an introduction, five chapters, references, an annex with the Belief in a Zero-Sum Game Scale, a list of figures and tables, and an index of names. The chapters are as follows: 1. Isomorphism in social sciences, 2. Theoretical concept and measurement of perceived antagonism in social relations, 3. Antagonistic thinking of individuals, 4. Social antagonism in world's cultures, and 5. Research summary.

Różycka-Tran operationalizes antagonism, both at the level of individuals and social groups, as an aggregate variable (Różycka-Tran, 2018, p. 36). She compares social antagonism to cynicism, understood as a belief in the system's hostility towards citizens, with system's hostility defined as a pressure that is exerted on citizens by egoistic individuals, interest groups and institutions which hold the power (Bond et al., 2004, p. 566, as cited in: Różycka-Tran, 2018, p. 39). Similarly to cynicism, antagonism reflects a negativistic vision of human nature and social reality. Both of them negatively correlate with interpersonal trust and self-esteem. In particular, antagonism in social relations is negatively linked to perceived satisfaction with social exchange and work commitment,

while cynicism negatively correlates with a sense of fair exchange and satisfaction on the job. The author subscribes to the view that both social antagonism and cynicism serve as specific adaptation strategies in the times of hardship, be it war or corruption, which in her opinion pervade post-communist countries. In the capitalist system, antagonism may induce learning processes and development of strategies aimed at obtaining profits. When it comes to the differences between the two, Różycka-Tran proposes that they boil down to the beliefs which contribute to their formation.

While social antagonism is understood as a consequence of economic conditions which entail the need to compete for scarce material resources, cynicism is primarily shaped by political influences. In addition, due to a lack of correlation between them, as evidenced by the findings obtained in a research project on students' income variance control (Różycka-Tran et al., 2015) and in the World Value Survey (WVS 6), they should be treated as separate (Różycka-Tran, 2018, p. 39–40). In order to study social antagonism, Różycka-Tran uses the Scale of Belief in a Zero-Sum Game (BZSG), designed to examine a negativistic vision of the social world in which a success or win of an individual or group is conceived as being necessarily conditioned by a failure or loss experienced by another individual or group. She presents the results of two research projects, one carried out with Bogdan Wojciszke in 37 countries (N = 6,132) and the other with Magdalena Zemojtel-Piotrowska in 40 countries (N = 8,358), thanks to which data on 14,490 subjects were collected in 60 countries, with replication in 17 of them. In addition, Różycka-Tran carried out correlation studies using the following scales: Social Cynicism, Belief in a Dangerous World, Belief in a Competitive Jungle and Social Dominance Orientation. In the book, she puts forth a multilevel analysis based on the above-mentioned studies conducted in 37 countries, group equivalence analysis of data from 36 countries and an isomorphism test carried out between the levels on data from 43 countries.

Różycka-Tran argues that the scale used for measuring social antagonism is culturally universal. She claims that social antagonism functions in the sphere of culture in a form of unquestioned premises shaped under the influence of collective memory of the nation, including (geo)political and economic conditions. Collective memory is reproduced from generation to generation and remains relatively stable over time.

When it comes to antagonistic thinking of individuals, the author discusses its objective and subjective situational factors, personality conditioning, emotional background, statistical relationship of perceived social antagonism with other variables, its manifestations in social relations, as well as a phenomenon

referred to as "causative antagonism." Although antagonistic beliefs of individuals are rather stable and characterize less educated individuals, with humble incomes and relatively low occupational prestige, living in small towns or villages (Wojciszke et al., 2009), there is a likelihood of their situational activation (Wojciszke, 2010; Różycka, 2012). She decided to verify whether antagonism—rather than just being a cognitive variable—is related to the basic personality structure and its cognitive or motivational components, and not solely dependent on its situational and social factors.

The author contends that there are positive correlations between antagonism in social relations and all properties that define neuroticism: anxiety, propensity to experience anger or related states such as frustration, bitterness, guilt, sadness, loneliness and shyness, as well as aggressive hostility, fueled by fear and a lack of trust. On the other hand, social antagonism is negatively correlated with openness to experience, intellectual curiosity, willingness to alter one's values, agreeableness, extraversion, trust in others and a faith in their kindness. The author also concludes that a high level of social antagonism is conducive to externally induced aspirations and a concentration on self-interest. She asserts that it is linked to negative motivational states at the expense of interpersonal relationships and personal development. What is more, it is associated with defensive and aggressive behavior patterns, distrust and suspicion about others' intentions.

Różycka-Tran posits that social antagonism may also be analyzed at a macrolevel, as evidenced by isomorphism tests. Having compared the results of correlation tests between antagonism and: (a) macroeconomic indicators such as GDP or inflation, (b) macro-social indicators, including pluralism and civic freedom, as well as having obtained the *Pearson correlation* between social antagonism and selected cultural dimensions, the author presents statistical relationships between social antagonism and its strongest correlates, including GDP, democracy index, social development index and discusses its connection with individualism *v* collectivism.

Subsequently, she makes a Polish-Vietnamese comparison, as the levels of social antagonism that characterize these societies are quite divergent, that is, relatively low in Poland and high in Vietnam. In addition, they are characterized by contrasting results obtained in the cultural (individualism-collectivism), economic (GDP), social (social development indicator HDI) and political (democracy, corruption and civil liberties) dimensions. The differences regarding their religious traditions and economic development are also of major importance. Studies have shown that while in Poland the level of life satisfaction is much higher and correlates negatively with antagonism, there is no such statistical

relationship in the Vietnamese society. In addition, Vietnam has a higher level of social well-being that correlates positively with antagonism, which is not the case in Poland.

The author also analyzes a relationship between perceived social antagonism and psychological well-being resorting to a research project which was conducted in 35 countries. Studies have confirmed that there is a negative correlation between social antagonism and life satisfaction, and this relationship depends on the level of emotions, esp. negative ones, that are experienced by the individual.

While this empirical material is interesting, one may be struck by its weak connection with the theoretical issues that were discussed in the first chapter. For instance, the author devotes a separate section to a distinction between reductionist and emergent approaches with no evident declaration concerning the choice of a theoretical stance or any follow-up in the empirical part. It is highly problematic that Różycka-Tran refers to both social antagonism and cynicism as axioms and does so throughout the book. In a discussion on what she refers to as the culture of antagonism, she inaccurately reduces a capitalist system to the sphere of culture, with American corporate capitalism treated as an example. It does not just seem to be an oversight on the part of the author, but a question of a convention which is erroneously adopted at the intersection of social or intercultural psychology and management science, esp. in comparisons between national or organizational cultures (e.g., Hofstede, 2007; Fryzeł, 2005; Penc, 2011; Rozkwitalska, 2011, pp. 59–60; Kostera & Śliwa, 2012). When it comes to the research summary, it is not always made clear which data are cited as opposed to the empirical results obtained by the author herself. Despite these defects, this publication is worth reading. It is not solely due to the presentation of isomorphism tests conducted in two-level data analysis: individual and aggregated at the level of societies which the author herself considers its main asset. The book offers a novel perspective on the importance of zero-sum game in human behavior which may serve as a prism in the analysis of several social, cultural and political phenomena. The methodological findings and research results which it presents may be of interest not only to psychologists, but also to sociologists and scholars in management science.

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