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TIME: PROSPECTS OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

SUMMARY. In this article the author considers time as an insightful category for sociological research.

KEY WORDS. Time, culture, social time, personal time, present time, past time, future time.

Time remains one of the most mysterious categories of contemporary science. Science tries to study the «memory of time» again and again, «synchronistic time events», «transitions in time», etc.

From the point of view of the majority of ancient cultures, we live in time whose co-ordinates are felt physically, and simultaneously we live in the world outside time bonds which does not depend on the physical Universe, which is not limited by terrestrial horizons.

In terrestrial cultures time is perceived differently. For example, Egyptian culture viewed time as an eternity where there was no past, present or future. Egyptian time is embodied in the historical documents cut by a cutter, in the strongest granite and basalt as the basic materials for household and art creations, a carefully thought-over control system, the mummy as a negation of the caducity of the present. As a symbol of the will to last, bodies of the Egyptian Pharaohs lie in modern museums. On the brilliant polished stone of a pyramid it is still possible to read words: «Amenemhet sees the beauty of the sun» [1; 328].

Such an understanding of time is alien to the culture of antiquity. Antique time is a moment, a flash, a narrow edge between the past and the future. Antique society, unlike the Egyptians, denied time. At the time of antiquity until the fifth century B.C., historical events were not written down. The basic materials for Greek art were short-lived clay and bronze; Greeks wrote on clay tablets. Samples of antique architecture are short-lived. In ancient Greece the bodies of the dead were burnt, and the age of living people was not counted. Helen the Beautiful because of whom the Trojan War began, actually was not a young girl. For ten years Helen chose grooms, ten years she was married to Menelaus, ten years the Trojan War lasted... However, in the opinion of Greeks, Helen remained Beautiful. The age of the philosopher was defined by the time of his achievement of scientific maturity. When a philosopher reached the period of «acme», it was considered that he became a mature person.

Modern cultures continue to address time differently. Western time is different from time in the East. Western people invented a mechanical clock, a symbol of

escaping time. In the West linear time, similar to a straight line or road on which the person goes forward, is accepted. Life is perceived as a journey which goes from a beginning to an end.

With civilization developing, the Western person starts to appreciate or understand time value more and more. Time accounting was made a cult by the Americans. Their time is the most expensive in the world. For Americans time is money, precious and rare goods. Time flows swiftly and if a person wants to receive income, they should move quickly to keep up with time. The past for Americans does not exist, and the present can be seized and forced to work in the near future. The other side of the American understanding of time is connected with the concept «downtime». If the planned affairs are not made in time, the American considers that he/she has wasted time and also money. Many Europeans think in the same way as Americans, considering that time not used for decision-making or performance of any actions passes without advantage.

Eastern cultures show a different relation to time. «I should run, — the American says, — my time has expired». In the East a similar expression means inevitable death. «When God created time, he created enough», — say Eastern cultures. Eastern time is reminiscent of a lake from which it can be scooped constantly like water [2].

A special attitude to time is found on Madagascar. Its inhabitants perceive the future as flowing into a nape or making up from behind. The past is before the eyes of the person, it is seen clearly, it is possible to observe it and learn from it.

In the majority of Eastern cultures, time is perceived not linearly as in the West, but cyclically. Time for Eastern people rotates in a spiral or a circle, and, with the same possibilities, risks and dangers, as before. However, a person in relations already becomes wiser in due course for days, months or years. From the point of view of the East, time cannot be operated, the person needs only to aspire to come to harmony with its laws, i.e. Space and Nature laws.

China is the culture which does not accept European linear time. Hour glasses for China are negative symbols of the absolute end (life, light). Time in China is reminiscent of a sine wave. The Chinese mark lifting time, median time and chaos time (crisis or disintegration). Combinations of Ying and Yang in which the infinite circulation of life is reflected, creation and destruction, account for a total of 64 changes. Having passed a cycle of changes (changes), time comes back to the beginning.

In the Russian language the word «time» derives from the word «veremya» or to «twirl», i.e. is connected with rotation, returning or with turnover [3].

With the development of a society, time is accelerated. In the ancient times it was enough to measure time by 4-years, from one Olympic Games to the next. Today time is connected with trillionth fractions of a second, for lives of micro-particles. All perfection of a civilization is connected to acceleration and time specification.

The central idea of the compression of time and space became the central idea of scientific postmodernist David Harvey. He considers that modernism promoted such compression, and that this process has amplified today during an era of a postmodernism. It has led to an intensive phase of existential compression which has a disorienting and destructive influence on social, political-economical and also cultural life.

Harvey marks changes and cracks in the post-present, specifying that our life in paradigms of old time is coming to an end, and we are probably already on the way to a new era and new time.

The sociological approach to time originates in E. Durkheim's works. Durkheim considered that people's representation of time arises in the course of their natural and social life. He also spoke about collective character of time as about a rhythm.

The fundamental dependence of social time on social structures was formulated by P. Sorokin and M. Merton. They considered that time system changes together with social structure, and reference points of social time are defined by the social importance of the events. Social time has public sources and is filled by cultural content. Besides, P. Sorokin is the author of the cyclical concept of social time which he connected with cycles of history and social changes. Sorokin has allocated and investigated such structural lines of time as synchronism, an order, a rhythm, phases, periodicity and rate.

K. Marx many times addressed the problem of social time. For Marx, social time exists objectively, really and is characteristic of the social being.

For the statement and development of the problem of time in sociology G. Gurvich's works had a special value. Based on the idea of the plurality of time, Gurvich wrote about eight kinds of social time. He distinguishes the following kinds of time: 1. Slowed-down time or time of the big duration (rural life, patriarchal social forms); 2. Deceptive or unexpected time (unexpected crises, life in a big city); 3. Unpredictable time or unstable time (transition periods); 4. Cyclical or closed time (sects, churches, archaic communities); 5. Late time (closed corporations, feudal communities); 6. Lifting time (capitalism beginning); 7. Time advancing itself (revolution, modernizations, public updates); 8. Explosive time (creatively active persons ready for risk).

Each kind of time, for Gurvich, has a quantitative and qualitative component. The components of quantitative time — continuity, uniformity and stability; qualitative — disruption, mismatch, instability.

At present, the sociologist P. Shtompka is engaged in studying social time. In his opinion, time and space are universal contexts of social life. Time is, according to Shtompka, the constituting factor of any social change. Two times are distinguished: physical, calendar and social, regulated by a society. Social time has the form of a resource which can be consumed, distributed and saved.

Social time cannot exist outside individual, personal time. However, personal time in interacting with social time in sociology was considered little till now.

Time is not only the objective category of social life, but also the subjective form of human perception. «The word «time» appeals always to something extremely personal, to what was characterized by us as our own ...», — O. Spengler remarked [1; 277].

N. Berdyaev wrote about an essence of personal time in connection with social time. He considered that features of time of a society at each stage of its social history are defined by the person. One foundation of the ideas of Berdyaev is the representation of time as about «the internal period», «an internal epoch of eternity» when «the essence of life» is represented as a process [4].

S.A. Askoldov spoke about time as a «change», understanding it firstly as a «state of mind» when «there is individuality and subjectivity» [See in book: 5].

The attitude of the person to time is also important, and also to the way various socially and individually significant events go. G. Zimmel recognized a reflective view of time where not only natural, historical or human time has a special value, but also a subject-human time as a process of creative formation of the person, comprehended only in internal experience.

It is possible to address heterogeneity, multidimensionality, socially-psychological fullness and convertibility to the past as features of subjective personal time.

Time is connected directly with human activity, work, leisure, free time. Time can be perceived as «filled» or «devastated». For Marx, the possession of capitalists of working hours, production and products of those who work on them, turns into alienation, perversion of the human essence of the worker, rupture of natural interrelation between people. Instead of time spent for oneself, in a capitalist society a person wastes time on the manufacture of products for a group of capitalists, which is unnatural. For Marx, only the free time of the person is wealth which gives open space for the development of free activity and abilities of the person.

T. Veblen, the well-known economist of the twentieth century, in the book «Theory of an Idle Class» created the social theory, important for understanding time. Veblen showed prodigal consumption of time by an idle class. To make an impression upon other parts of a society, the idle class runs into «demonstrative leisure» or unproductive expenditure of time. It influences representatives of other social classes and groups, as they try to imitate the idle class. As a result the society of spending time for nothing is formed.

At all times there was a requirement for the person «to seize time», «to win time» or «to prolong time». A Russian sociologist and publicist V.N. Muravyev, studying possibilities of mastering time, considered that for this purpose there is only one way: the establishment of a system with the consent of its members, and for this purpose knowledge of the system and the ability to change it.

The problem of mastering time is connected with the use of time or a «time budget». The given problem was investigated by sociologists V.D. Artemov and O.V. Novohatskaya at different stages of the history of our country [6].

The individual time of the person depends on: the spiritual-moral condition of the person, social-psychological atmosphere, satisfaction of physical requirements, labour load, free time, living conditions, care of children and old people, high-grade restoration of the exhausted powers, medical aid, presence and availability of necessary medicines, quality of life, etc.

Individual time of the person can be operated on from within and from outside as well. There is a possibility of management of time of the person in the resolution of administrative problems, acceptance of administrative decisions. A sociologist M.M. Akulich writes about this [7].

The time problem sees a special development in the study of the past, the present and the future.

The past is the time kept and saved up by mankind. The past appeared together with life. It is the form of time most close to eternity. Everything is connected with the past in the origin of the person — soil, traditions, a heritage, originality. These are generations, tombs, ideas and views. For the ancient person there was nothing

more esteemed than the past. It was, first of all, the cult of ancestors which was the beginning and the meaning of life for the person.

Socialization is a most vivid example of accumulation and preservation of the past in individual human life. It is the most important factor of life of the past in the present.

The major form of the past is memory.

The present for the person always exists together with the past, in other words, it is past today. The present is created by the past, instead of replacing it. The present above all is exposed to social and personal illusions. Not to get under their influence, the person should have a protective mechanism, a strong basis. This basis is the past. Without the past the present loses the reference points, becomes utopian and then «it is doomed to the past».

What does future time represent? «The future does not exist ...», — the known western sociologist Zigmund Bauman writes. «... the greatest secret is a birth of tendencies designated to change our life. We always notice them too late. Therefore, when I am asked what will occur in some years, I am always surprised: how can I know it? Neither you, nor I know the future because the future does not exist. The future during the moment when it starts to exist, is not the future any more, it becomes the present. ...» [8].

The future which is already available in the past outlines prospects for development. The magnetic force of the future named an attractor in synergetics, consists of the values of the past. Studying the past and knowing how its stages have come to an end, it is possible to discover what the attractors were, causing a choice of one of several possible variants of further development. The problem is to act, keeping the spiritual gains of the past and looking to them as a basis for cultural development, forecasting ways of reorganizing of spiritual systems for their transfer into a new steady condition.

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