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PREFACE

Anna Karnat-Napieracz

Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland

On the Multi-dimensionalism of the Individual

It does not appear to be too much of an exaggeration to state that at present the individual finds itself at the centre of attention within the social sciences, including sociology. Individual existence is situated in a variety of contexts and is attempted to be explained from a host of research perspectives. However, regardless of whether individualism or holism is applied in the methodology, the individual remains an important concept within the social sciences. Here it follows to state that the starting point for research into the status of the individual in sociology is a premise as to the varied and multi-dimensional character of the category. There have developed many controversies and discussions around the conception of the individual in sociology, with all of them appearing to be far from unambiguous. In part this is because the models used in the explanation of the condition of the individual are connected with the actual processes and changes occurring within society. In our day it follows to mention at least: the intensifying process of the individualisation of life, the progressive subjectivisation of the individuals, the requirement to construct an individual identity, increased interests in the emotional side of man's life, an explanation as to the individual's social forms of behaviour as a result of its genetic conditioning, the potential modelling of the shape of individual biographies (the concept of quality of life and the increasingly popular concept of *coaching*), the question as to the functioning of the individual in societies of an advanced technologically developed profile. All these (and others that are here not mentioned) constitute the rich panorama of modern times, in which there are realised attempts to conceptualise individual existence.

The present volume of *Studia Sociologica*, entitled *The Individual: Contexts, Relations, Research* undertakes an examination of nature of the individual and its complex relations in society. The main aim of the volume is to present certain concepts of the individual from the broad spectrum of current (and historical) conceptualisations of this category, not only from the field of sociology. The problem areas selected are connected with various aspects of life of the individual

and the involvement of the individual in relations with others – these constitute the leading motifs for the texts that comprise the publication. The volume in hand does not, which is fairly obvious, give a complete picture of the increased interest in the category of life of an individual, which was mentioned above. It equally is not designed to convince the reader that besides the questions herein presented there is nothing within contemporary sociology of any greater interest or importance. However, it does allow itself a look on the objective category of the individual from various cultural points of view and differentiated research perspectives.

The individual appears therefore as multidimensional and here the matter does not lie either in the direct reference to the conception of “a one-dimensional man” (Herbert Marcuse), or to its conversion in any way whatsoever. After all, one could add to the earlier mentioned phenomena of modernity, ones which constitute a context for a description of individuals (and their actual activities), others, ones remaining in clear opposition with them. Then the individual would register itself into its own continuum between designated poles, for example, through: self-sufficiency and dependence on others, total autonomy and various forms of determinism, individualism and commonality, self-responsiveness (a system of reference in the individual itself) and the necessity of relations with others, the almost unlimited possibility to forge contacts (new communication technology) and the intensification of an individual (isolated) life style, the utilisation of all rights and the conscious resignation from them, the necessity for reflectivity and recourse to the all-embracing sphere of feelings. The reader will find some of these characteristics of the individual in the texts that compose the present volume.

The individual texts are ordered into three parts. The first of these is entitled *Contexts* and contains articles which may be categorised as presenting either the theoretical (or meta-theoretical) context of the individual (subject, I, actor, individual personality), or the condition of the individual itself within varied historical, cultural and civilisational contexts. And so the article, by Petr Smirnov (Russia) on the subject of the dilemmas of contemporary sociology in defining the social nature of man clearly illustrates sociological problems in their new circumstances. Tomasz Warczok (Poland) deals in his article with selected concepts of French sociology and depicts the illusiveness of “I”, which leads, one could say, to the dependence of the individual in the establishment of itself (the individual subject’s relationality). The next article by Marzenna Jakubczak (Poland), takes the reader beyond the circle of European thought and in a comparative way illustrates the different understanding of “I” within selected concepts of western philosophy and that of Sankhya-Yoga. The last text of the first part by Katarzyna Haremska (Poland), presents not only the interesting figure of Henry David Thoreau, but also takes up the question of his activities connected with the ideology of individualism and the idea of civil disobedience in nineteenth-century American society. Only on the surface does this article present a historical element, for the questions therein raised shed a lot of

light on current problems of respecting (and broadening) civil rights in multicultural societies, and in particular in the developed societies of liberal democracies.

In the second part, entitled *Relations and Research*, texts which place the individual within concrete social realities and in specified interpersonal relations are to be found. This part is opened by Ihsan Cetin's text (Turkey), on contemporary aspects of citizenship in a nation state against the backcloth of the individual rights and privileges in former (pre-republican) Turkey, which were to be guaranteed by the Millet System. The next text (Ingrid Grosse, Sweden) transports the reader to the reality of the highly developed society of modern-day Sweden, in which the advanced degree of individual subjectivity is to a large degree correlated with the high level of participation in non-government organisations (NGOs), which are based on nothing more than a clearly defined and specified willingness on the part of the individual to jointly act in the field designated by the organisation. This article presents empirical data derived from research in Sweden and Poland, while their comparison consequently gives clarification to the varied links between civil and social activity and the individualism of our times. The subsequent text presents the individual within interpersonal relations, on the micro scale, and precisely in the situation of a preferential model of dating. On the example of research conducted amongst young people (students), Ewelina Warumzer (Poland) presents the confrontation between the reflective attitude of the individual to the question of building a relationship and its notions and references to the model of the ideal date. Peter M. Jansson's text (Sweden) also concerns the behaviour of the individual in relations with another, however, in this case this is the relationship of the therapist and the client. The author chiefly presents the role of emotion in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) on the basis of empirical research (a case study). The last of the texts in the second part of the volume, written by Cahit Aslan (Turkey), attempts to discern the relationship between an individual designation (ethnic, religious identity) and participation in the creation of social movements amongst various groups living in Turkey. The results of the research presented by the author were obtained due to applying qualitative methods (focus interviews with representatives of two minorities: the Kurdish ethnic minority and the religious minority that are the Nusayrians).

The third part comprises: *Reviews, Reports, Commentaries*. Natalia Monakhova (Ukraine) deals in her review with two books: Oksana Zabuzhko's, *Field Research in Ukrainian Sex* (Polish edition: 1996, 2003) as well as Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (no Polish translation), writing in the theoretical orientation of gender about certain aspects in women's search for identity. Again the question as to the defining of "I" arises, conditioned by cultural sex and as the author claims created chiefly thanks to autofiction. Michał Warchala in turn (Poland) has included a review of the recently published book by Jürgen Habermas, *Pomiędzy naturalizmem a postreligijnością* (2013), in which the subsequent essays concern many motifs present in Habermas's earlier work, such as: communicative reason or the public sphere. The Habermasian differentiation into the public and the individual (private)

sphere is after all merely a pretext to display a series of other important aspects from the viewpoint of man's functioning in the world, and namely: the process of determining the law and the obligation of subjection to it, participation of subjects in the order jointly created by them, the state of remaining between the doctrines of secularisation and religiosity, or finally, the postulate of "post-metaphysical" thought. Dorota Czakon (Poland) in her report from the conference in Drohobych shared her views and impressions from the session on youth policy. Iryna Bochar (Ukraine) sketches in a general way in her commentary those questions connected with the individual aspect of security in United States' policy. Marta Juza (Poland) comments on the terminological problems linked to the application of the concept of virtual society. The text conjectures that the new technology of communication in fact strengthens an individual being-in-the-world, and only the fact of applying concepts (with an old meaning) enrooted in sociology to describe these new phenomena may suggest that the individual participants of the virtual world create real societies. In fact, they become at most contextual participants of diverse networks.