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# ДИСКУССИЯ

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## DISCUSSION

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### ПЕРЕСМАТРИВАЯ ТЕОРИЮ СТРУКТУРАЦИИ Э. ГИДДЕНСА

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Рассматривается теория структуризации Э. Гидденса. Показаны основные концептуальные инструменты его теории, сильные и слабые стороны, а также то, как можно повысить перспективы этой теории. Концепция Э. Гидденса основывается на попытке преодолеть долгосрочный теоретический дуализм индивидов (индивидуализм) и общества (холизм) с помощью концепта дуальности действия и структуры. Предполагается, что фактическое преодоление этого дуализма потребует концептуализации, которая не переведет этот дуализм в дуальность (как это делает Э. Гидденс), а, скорее, попытается охватить его в дуплексной перспективе. Стимулы к этому были найдены в работах Э. Дюркгейма. Сделана попытка развить данную тему.

**Ключевые слова:** социологическая теория; теория структуризации; актор; действие; взаимодействие; структура; дуальность действия и структуры; *homo duplex*.

### RECONSIDERING GIDDENS' THEORY OF STRUCTURATION

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This article deals with the theory of structuration of Anthony Giddens. It shows the main conceptual tools of his conception, its strengths and weaknesses, and how it might be possible to surpass its perspective. Giddens' conception is based on trying to overcome the long-term theoretical dualism of individuals (individualism) and society (holism) with the help of the concept of duality of action and structure. The author of this article believes that overcoming this dualism would require a conception that does not translate it into «duality» (as Giddens' does), but rather attempts to capture it in a «duplex» perspective. The inspiration for this is found in Emile Durkheim, and the author tries here to elaborate on it.

**Key words:** sociological theory; theory of structuration; actor; action; interaction; structure; duality of action and structure; *homo duplex*.

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Among contemporary sociologists there is hard to find an author of such ambitious, comprehensive and at the same time widely-discussed work as A. Giddens (1938). Working at the University of Cambridge and at the «London School of Economics», he became known as adviser to British Prime Minister T. Blair. He is the author of more than thirty publications, from which instantly spring to mind «Capitalism and Modern Social Theory», «New Rules of Sociological Method», «A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism», «The Consequences of Modernity», «The Third Way», «Europe in the Global Age» [1–6]. We shall not look at the whole of A. Giddens' work, but only one aspect; what A. Giddens himself describes as an effort to reconstruct social theory.

#### **A. Giddens' reconstruction of social theory.**

A. Giddens, Parsons previously, sought to lay the theoretical foundations of social science. Parsons' endeavour, based on the «voluntaristic» theory of action (representing individual freedom) and structurally functional theory (representing social order), A. Giddens considered less than successful. On the contrary he saw it as marred by an unbridged gap between behaviour and structure (e. g. between the «unit act» and AGIL-schema).

This led A. Giddens to formulate a theory of structuration to provide the answer – long discussed – to the problem of how to connect action and structure. The Theory of Structuration in A. Giddens' work crystallized gradually during the 1970s and first half of the 80s, mainly articulated through the books «New Rules of Sociological Method» [2] and «Central Problems in Social Theory» [7], which A. Giddens subsequently elaborated in his work «The Constitution of Society» [8] whose construction and intent is sometimes compared to J. Habermas «Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns» [9]. In like manner both A. Giddens and J. Habermas aimed to reformulate social theory and overcome restrictive traditions. «The Constitution of Society», as one of the key works of theoretical sociology from the latter half of the XX century, still provokes much debate on the question of action and structure. A. Giddens traced out certain ways of resolving such questions which he himself left unexploited<sup>1</sup> and engaged with a broad range of ideas and inspirations. What follows is an account of the most important.

A. Giddens locates his starting point in dissent with what he described as the «orthodox consensus» – the dominant trend in American sociology from the early 1950s to the early 70s – whose central characteristics were functionalism and evolutionism. The dominant representative of this was of course Parsons. A. Giddens' theoretical thinking is founded on criticism of Parsons. A. Giddens views Parsons as obsolete, but at the same time admits that the issues raised by functionalists cannot be forgotten. A. Giddens considers that the conception of function is not applicable in

sociology, but admits that many who criticized functionalism have fallen into subjectivism; eg. in phenomenology. In its analysis of institutions and a range of social processes, functionalism, according to A. Giddens, is stronger than phenomenological sociology. Therefore, he concludes that to withdraw from functionalism we must handle the issue differently than phenomenological sociology.

A. Giddens emphatically regarded his approach as non-functionalist and non-evolutionary. His objections to functionalism led him to the theory of structuration, based on the concept of duality of action and structure or simply the duality of structure. A. Giddens believed that this approach could overcome both the traditional dualism of action and structure, and the dualism of micro and macro-theory. A. Giddens tried to think out the problem of the dualism of individual action and structure in such a way that both aspects come as near to each other as possible, i. e., so that dualism will convert into duality. This approach may contain a certain unsolved problem to which we will return.

Before getting to the principles of structuration, let us recall A. Giddens' conception of action and structure. A. Giddens criticizes functionalism for failing to appreciate the importance of human action in the constitution of the social world. Social theory, according to A. Giddens, must deal primarily with human actors, their consciousness and actions, and yet simultaneously with the structural conditions for and consequences of these actions.

A. Giddens' concept of action posits a competent, conscious actor, associated with two characteristics, *knowledgeability* and *capability* (clearly reflecting the influence of interpretive sociology). The concept of *knowledgeability* is related to practical consciousness, arising from reflection on the stock of knowledge and experiences of individual actors. Actors, according to A. Giddens, are usually aware, and can possess effective information on their own initiative. A. Giddens combines the *capability* of actors to act with the concept of power (the actor who acts has a certain power per se). Power is an integral element of social life. A. Giddens does not examine actions as discrete creative acts, but as repetitive practices involved in the continuous events of the social world, as a «continuous flow of conduct» [10].

A. Giddens sees structures as a set of rules and resources. Rules can be divided into:

1) *normative*, corresponding to legitimization processes, specific rights and obligations, and on the level of the social system, sanctions;

2) *interpretative*, corresponding to significations, interpretative schemes (as part of the available knowledge) and, on the level of the social system, the system of communication.

<sup>1</sup>In his later studies in the course of the last two decades he has moved on without returning to them.

Resources are divided into:

- 1) *allocative*, establishing dominance arising from manipulating the results of human control of nature;
- 2) *authoritative*, allowing the exercise, based on power, of non-material resources, especially through controlling the activities of other people.

It is worth noting that A. Giddens understands structure not as a priori given, but as existing only because constantly produced, reproduced and modified by the conduct of human subjects. Structure has a hidden virtual pattern that on the one hand enables this conduct and at the same time sets limits and boundaries to it.

The stated objective of A. Giddens' theory is to relate action and structure. His strategy lies in rapprochement between these two poles. Having founded his theory of structuration on the transformation of dualism into constitutive «duality», he translated the dichotomy of action and structure into the duality of action and structure (also the duality of structure).

Fundamental to the idea of structuration is the theorem of *duality of structure*, according to which «the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of social action» [11]<sup>2</sup>. The concepts structure and action signify analytically different moments of the reality of structured systems of actions. Structures exist not as independent phenomena of space and time, but only through the actions and practices of human individuals. A. Giddens develops the principle of duality of structures on three levels:

- 1) communication of meaning;
- 2) the use of power;
- 3) the use of norms and sanctions.

From this it is clear that interaction in social life consists of three components – communication, power and sanctions related at the structural level with the processes of significance, dominance and legitimation. Various aspects of interaction – communication of meaning and the use of power, moral relations and sanctions – have their correlates in structure: interpretative rules, resources, and normative rules. At the level of individual action, conforming to the rules and resources brings concepts of *capability* and *knowledgeability*.

However, while it solves many issues, A. Giddens' theory generates problems too<sup>3</sup>. As already mentioned, previous efforts to overcome the dualism of individualism and holism are based on approaches where the

authors change their standpoints during theoretical explanations and try to explain theoretical issues by alternating perspectives from individualistic and holistic positions.

In A. Giddens' case, in the first step the individualistic perspective stands for individuals whose actions create structures. In the second step the holistic perspective stands for structures affecting individual action<sup>4</sup>. Following this, we return to the individualistic perspective and say that individuals can modify or reshape the existing structures.

It is at this point that the solution offered by the theory of structuration does not appear very satisfactory, and it is necessary to consider alternatives. The solution may be inspired by É. Durkheim and his concept of «homo duplex» [12]. This strategy is not the transfer of dualism of activity and structure to duality, as in the case of A. Giddens, but an approach where all basic concepts – actor, activity and structure – are grasped via the É. Durkheimian concept of duplex. In other words, that it is not only necessary for both perspectives to approach each other maximally, but, so to speak, to «blend» in a theoretical interpretation that demonstrates that the terms with which we work in sociological theory – actor, activity and structure – are by nature dualistic, which means «duplex».

**Dualism in the perspective of «duplex».** É. Durkheim notes that the human being is divided, and what's more in an internally contradictory manner. Durkheim variously characterizes this division it is sustained. É. Durkheim refers to traditional dualism, which opposes the body to the soul. He speaks of the «constitutional duality of human nature» [12, p. 17], the decoupling of man into physical being and social being. He says that in each of us there are two consciousnesses, two aspects of mental life: personal and impersonal. Our physical body, on the one hand, is the source of our endless needs and desires, or egoism. Our socialized being is the construct of society, living and acting through us, controlling and diminishing the symptoms of our egoism through internalized moral principles.

In trying to follow up É. Durkheim and be inspired by his concept of «homo duplex», we want to consider what É. Durkheim himself set aside – the consistent projection of a dualistic view onto the concept of the actor in all key concepts of sociological theory. É. Durkheim frequently expresses terms and ideas which are to a degree anachronistic, and it's not necessary to de-

<sup>2</sup>Human language is an example of a medium, and also an outcome, of social action, according to A. Giddens. Individual speech acts can occur only within the frame of an abstract set of rules of language, while speech acts repeatedly reproduce language as an abstract set of rules. If I pronounce a sentence, it is a manifestation of my action, which at the same time as an unintended consequence reproduces the system of language.

<sup>3</sup>One of the problems is Giddens' anti-functionalism. At the theoretical level, A. Giddens rejects functionalism and emphasizes the role of active individuals. However, in his later books, which deal with problems on a macro-sociological level in a holistic perspective, he forgets his reservations and formulates arguments that are functionalist in nature and do not differ much from Parsons' approach. Another problem is that A. Giddens' theory generally emphasizes the aspect of the repetitiveness of the action and largely ignores the matter of creativity, which is raised, among others, by H. Joas [13].

<sup>4</sup>Giddens, however, weakens this holistic stand-point by stating that the structures and systems do not exist as separate autonomous entities (as e. g. in Luhmann), but in so far as they are repeatedly formed by human action.

fend all his partial claims, but we should make efforts to utilise the most powerful, still-relevant elements, which in particular means the inner ambiguity of «homo duplex». We would take and enhance this idea, but not strictly in the context and conceptual form in which the French sociologist uses it, retaining it as a loose inspiration in exploring issues which É. Durkheim did not deal with<sup>5</sup>. In accepting this idea we can consistently derive considerations on the nature of action, interaction, and structure, all of which may be looked at through the perspective of «duplex».

In individualistic conceptions, actions tend to be seen as one-way acts from the individual oriented outwards to impress something or someone in the outside world. However, from the dialectical perspective the whole thing is more complicated. A person driven by individual will monitors the actions of their personal (egoistic) interests and intentions. However, this activity is simultaneously social. Both components in human action – individual and social – interrelate, condition and support each other. In terms of work we could use two dimensions of actions, distinguished by the terms ‘voluntarism’ and ‘sociality’. Voluntarism means that activities express the individual will or the interests of the acting persons who are its driving force. The components interact in the sense that one limits the other in the extent and degree of expression in a specific activity<sup>6</sup>. In existing theoretical conceptions voluntarism is often associated with motivation and choice; sociality is viewed as a problem for the anticipated action, mainly associated with the concept of its social role. While analytically it is possible to distinguish two components, it is extremely difficult because they may be multiply-linked. As human actions relate to other individuals, there becomes a mutual influence; that is to say, interaction, which may take different forms and intensities, ranging from ephemeral encounters to fixed steady relationships. Specific interests and goals conjoin interacting individuals in certain interactional configurations, in which are found – despite their variety of specific features and differences – generally applicable principles that allow us to consider the typical forms of such interaction, such as cooperation, competition, opposition, conflict, etc.

**Structure from the duplex perspective (in place of a conclusion).** The flaw in current considerations of this topic in sociological thinking – in A. Giddens as well as other authors – appears to lie mainly in the fact that structures are seen as a single-level in relation to activities, whereas a more adequate picture of how social structures operate emerges if we imagine them as multi-level and multi-layer, where the layers fit into

each other and interact. In contrast to that established idea we shall now consider how the perspective of «duplex structures» could be applied.

Sociological thinking concerning structures usually records social reality stripped of all individual features and reduced to general and collective concepts, formulas and rules. In terms of efforts to achieve generalized scientific knowledge this strategy is perfectly understandable, but nevertheless cannot be applied in its pure form in all humanistic and social science-oriented disciplines. A typical example is in history, which cannot be satisfied with general historical trends, but must incorporate the activities of specific historical figures, with their intentions and influence. Looking at the issue of structures through the perspective of «duplex» can help solve this problem. Social structures can be understood as two levels of structural rules. On the first level there are general rules defining basic social institutions and setting basic role positions and role activities. On the second level there are specific rules in the context of specific human groups, in which expectations are derived or enforced on the basis of the individual dispositions members; these are rules somehow negotiated within these groups, or imposed by force. Taking the simple example, we should turn our attention to example of sporting event, which occurs in accordance with rules, but further structure itself by the strategies and capabilities of teams and players (some football teams rely on corners – others specialise in penalties; some habitually defend while others habitually attack; and these roles may shift with regard to the corresponding characteristics of opponents). The functioning of various types of social groups, organizations and social systems can be considered in a similar way (eg. in the policy area, democratic system systems may differ in the specific form of expression, due to different procedural rules but also how the representatives of the leading political parties effect their power). Essentially all social reality should be seen in the unity of these two aspects simultaneously [14; 15]. A theory should be constructed to reflect the idea that the individual phenomena of social life can always be viewed simultaneously from the individual and social perspectives, which are not only complementary, but internally mutually conditional- and any interpretation conducted only one way is necessarily one-sided and incomplete. Therefore, our approach to the formulation of theoretical concepts should reflect this ambiguity, showing that each surveyed problem can be approached from two sides. Accepting this presumption, individual (unique) activity does not stand in opposition to supra-individual (general) social structures and systems, but they

<sup>5</sup>For this reason, we do not engage in the specific context of religion and morality, in which the concept of «homo duplex» by Durkheim is set or with the secondary literature that deals with this subject.

<sup>6</sup>From the historical and cultural point of view it can be assumed that the proportions between voluntarism and sociality can differ in individual types of societies and social groups. As an example the choice of a life partner can help. In traditional societies the parents or relatives determine the life partner, and often they have to respect a variety of strict social rules. In modern society the individual it usually selects himself, often based on very subjective choices and feelings.

are so aligned that each has individual and its supra-individual (general, collective) components, and these are in correspondence with other categories specified in a similar way. The advantage of this approach is that it can quite satisfactorily sort out the traditional conflict between the individual and society, which A. Giddens

transposed into the form of duality of action and structure. Looked at through the prism of «duplex», the individual will is not opposed to the transpersonal structure of society, but the two exist in mutual correspondence, each with individual and its social components, even though each to a different extent and degree.

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