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## IDENTITY (INCLUDING COLLECTIVE IDENTITY)

### THE HISTORY OF REFLECTION, RESEARCH SCOPE AND OVERVIEW OF DEFINITIONS

**ABSTRACT** Identity has remained a popular concept for many decades, being widely used in scientific research. This reflects not only the importance of the phenomena standing behind this notion, but also wide and deep changes accompanying the transition of societies from industrial to post-industrial, late modern, post-modern, network or information society. Regardless of the disputes about the nature of the new era, researchers agree that identities, including collective identities, play a key role in it, and the fight for the recognition of individual and social actors is an extremely important element of contemporary social processes and relations. The article presents a brief description of the most important points in the debate on identity, concerning its meaning, the subjects of identity, the dimensions of identity and the forms of its manifestations in social reality.

**Keywords:** collective identity, social identity, postmodernity, identity politics

## ABOUT THE UN-SAFE WORLD AND THE NEED TO STUDY COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

The year 2020 will undoubtedly go down in history, and perhaps even turn out to be a breakthrough. There is little doubt that the number of problems and threats which have emerged or intensified in its course is considerable. They include the growing awareness of the dramatic effects of the global warming and the necessity to fight it urgently, the numerous choices and changes or continuations in many key offices of the world's most important countries, the increasing socio-economic inequalities and the resulting conflicts, and many, many others. First of all, however, the year 2020 will go down in history as the moment in which the emergence of a new pathogen, SARS-CoV-2, caused unprecedented reaction at global, regional and local levels. Many countries have faced and will continue to face problems that the pandemic has either generated or revealed, shed a new light on, or accelerated. I do not refer to the issue of the global economic crisis, numerous crises of political and social leadership, decreasing trust in governments alone, but also to the emergence of new types of social disobedience and resistance against elites, regretfully, not always motivated by civic reasons, and often set in various forms of conspiracy narratives, thinking in terms of pandemic fraud, searching for excuse to deepen the existing inequalities, obtaining undue and unjustified profits, consolidating domination and subordination structures, and even attempting to achieve certain depopulation goals.

Even if the above-mentioned issues fail to greatly distinguish 2020 from other years, the coronavirus pandemic and its effects will certainly constitute an important turning point in our thinking about the social world. As many writers and politicians often claim, we see the birth of a "new normality," in which the current modes of action and reactions will need to be transformed, redefined and changed. In this sense, the coronavirus pandemic has been yet another, and certainly very crucial stage in the last several decades of our history, which most certainly strengthens the processes of undermining ontological security, as referred to by Anthony Giddens.<sup>1</sup> To be precise, it should be mentioned here that the English sociologist does not point to any improvised events or any particular socio-political developments. According to him, ontological security is disembedded by means of two mechanisms – symbolic tokens and expert systems. Giddens sees in them a certain consequence of transitioning from modern societies to the ones of liquid modernity and the related new developments, such as the separation of time and space, the disembedding of social institutions and the expansion of institutional reflexivity.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it would be difficult to claim that particular events, such as the ones mentioned above, have no effect on the condition of individuals and communities, that they fail to strengthen or weaken their sense of security.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge 1991, pp. 35-69.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-34.

The problem of the impact of changing living conditions, socio-political structures, types of communication, dominant patterns and values, etc., has been often addressed by many authors in recent decades. Certainly, the reconstruction of this debate is neither necessary nor possible here, however, one thing is worth noting, for it is returning, it seems, with particular force today, when the coronavirus pandemic forces us again to pose the questions about what the world in which we live is, where it is headed and (perhaps most importantly) who we are in this world – who we are as individuals and as human beings, individual entities, members of social groups, nations, and, more broadly, members of humanity. At this point, after all, the problem of the relationship between the individual and the world, identity and globalisation, which is at the heart of various reflections on the consequences of the transition from industrial society to a new type of society, often referred to as post-industrial,<sup>3</sup> post-material,<sup>4</sup> risk,<sup>5</sup> information,<sup>6</sup> network,<sup>7</sup> liquid modern,<sup>8</sup> postmodern,<sup>9</sup> and in many other ways, is distinctly demonstrated.

The dialectics of identity and globalization is an important element of Giddens's analysis. He claims that the separation of time and space, the disembedding of social institutions and the expansion of institutional reflexivity accelerated by globalization processes transform modernity into late modernity,<sup>10</sup> and leads to the emergence of an unprecedented situation in the form of depriving a person of support in what is known, repetitive, routine, stable. The phenomena accompanying globalization processes, such as diversified and multi-level systems of connections in various spheres of social life, disembedding, delocalization, detraditionalization, expansion of new, various forms of communication, standardization, mobility, mutual interpenetration of cultures, expansion of multidirectional social connections, and many others,<sup>11</sup> transform the social world, introduce qualitative changes into it and entirely reconstruct

<sup>3</sup> D. Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, New York 1974; R. Inglehart, "The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 65, no. 4 (1971), pp. 991-1017.

<sup>4</sup> R. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton 1977.

<sup>5</sup> U. Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London 1992.

<sup>6</sup> C. May, *The Information Society: A Sceptical View*, Cambridge 2002; F. Webster, *Theories of the Information Society. Second Edition*, New York 2002.

<sup>7</sup> M. Castells, *The Rise of The Network Society. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Oxford 2010; D. Barney, *The Network Society*, Cambridge 2004.

<sup>8</sup> A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity...*, passim.

<sup>9</sup> Z. Bauman, *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*, Cambridge 1997.

<sup>10</sup> A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge 1990, pp. 4-53; Idem, *Modernity and Self-Identity...*, pp. 18-21; Idem, *Europe in the Global Age*, Cambridge 2007, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> A. Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination", in Idem (ed.), *Globalization*, Durham-London 2001, pp. 4-5; T.H. Eriksen, *Globalization. The Key Concepts*, Oxford 2007, pp. 8-9; M. Waters, *Globalization*, London-New York 1995, p. 5; A. Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society", in U. Beck, A. Giddens, S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 56-109.

social structures, systems and awareness.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, they universalize risk by making various threats mutual, and therefore the sense of danger, loss of trust, fear of what is unknown and new, become universal. Consequently, integration clashes with disintegration, the global confronts the local, defining the limits of liquid modernity in the categories of dialectics of globalization and identity.<sup>13</sup>

Importantly, Giddens examines identity mainly through individual prism, drawing amply upon two traditions important to the studies of individual identity. From the legacy of psychoanalysts – Donald W. Winnicott, Erik H. Erikson and Harry S. Sullivan, Giddens adopted the idea that ontological security and fundamental trust are the prerequisites for the shaping of the sense of identity and the ability of living in a social world in general.<sup>14</sup> Following in the footsteps of George H. Mead, he posits that identity is being forged and functions in a constant interaction with “other,” however, shifting the Mead’s concept of ‘the *I* and the *me*’ onto linguistic level, Giddens transforms his ideas, depriving the self of the primary active structure, the “subjective self.” Instead, by means of language, an individual differentiates the world through isolating various subjects, including “I.” The ability to use “I” in the analyses of the world is necessary for the emergence of self-awareness, which, in turn, leads to the redefining of identity in narrative and biographic categories, thus approaching Sheldon Stryker’s identity theory, as well as the works of Anselm L. Strauss in this field.<sup>15</sup>

Due to its narrative, dialogic and changing nature, identity is not only a reflexive project developed throughout one’s life, comprising the past, present and future, but it is also particularly vulnerable to various threats to social order, system stability, norm transformations, etc. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that, according to Giddens, individual identity is perceived differently at present. The complex and often incomprehensible world becomes a source of anxieties to it, causing confusion, a sense of loss of purpose and faith in the future. Meaningful, or even radical and dramatic events, such as the loss of a loved one, illness, war, loneliness and others (including being worried about relatives and ourselves during the pandemic) enforce a constant redefinition of identity, change of life goals, plans and values. Moreover, the decrease in the importance of traditional bonds and the increase in the importance of expert systems bring adverse consequences, such as the disembedding from the previous life frameworks and depriving individual of support and aid present in the former systems.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, this happens neither suddenly, nor entirely. Remnants of the previous forms of I allow an individual to maintain a certain continuity, connection between the past, the present and the future goals, yet man loses

<sup>12</sup> R. Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, London 1992, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity...*, pp. 21-23, 32-34; Idem, *The Consequences...*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>14</sup> Idem, *Modernity and Self-Identity...*, pp. 36-42; Idem, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Berkeley–Los Angeles 1984, pp. 51-60.

<sup>15</sup> Idem, *Modernity and Self-Identity...*, pp. 52-53; S. Stryker, *Symbolic Interactionism. A Social Structural Version*, London 1980; S. Stryker, P.J. Burke, “The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory”, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 4 (2000), pp. 284-297.

<sup>16</sup> A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity...*, pp. 74-80.

something fundamental, that is, ontological security – facing the world alone. As a consequence, man in the age of liquid modernity is placed in an ambivalent situation. Fated to deal with dilemmas, deprived of the support of traditional – erased by globalization – social systems, living in constant stress and lack of security, individuals are simultaneously forced to struggle in order to shape their own identity, and to assume responsibility for it, much greater than before.

Certainly, Giddens is not the only author who, in the recent decades, pointed to the new threats, the growing sense of insecurity, ubiquitous risks or the necessity of constantly redefining identity in the new types of societies. Despite all differences, similar motifs are present in Zygmunt Bauman's "tourist" and "vagabond" figures, who are travelling (or, rather, drifting) among isolated places in the post-modern world, and, depending on their resources and abilities, are forced to face the story about their own life, however, without any plan or instruction how to put it together.<sup>17</sup>

We can also find them in the works of Thomas H. Eriksen,<sup>18</sup> Ulrich Beck,<sup>19</sup> and many other authors. We can see them in Manuel Castells's considerations, who, apart from closely following the processes of transformation into the network society, uses this opportunity – which is important to our considerations – to reflect upon the problems of collective identities.

It should be added in a nutshell that, according to Castells, late XX century is the time when, mainly due to the transformation of the capitalist mode of production, technological revolution and new social movement, frameworks of a new society – information society – emerged.<sup>20</sup> Its foundations consist of five elements: domination of technological paradigm, globalization, communication revolution, declining role of a national state, and revolutionary changes in the scope of the application of scientific knowledge to transform social world along with the growing awareness of the threats and challenges of the new age.<sup>21</sup>

Such a society, governed by the logics of timeless time and space of flows, is, essentially, a-historical ("orphaned," in a sense) and a-physical – deprived of its roots.<sup>22</sup> It is also deprived of a support in a strong national state,<sup>23</sup> whose position is undermined, in a way, from two sides: on the level of internal processes, the state's loss of the ability of social control and constant struggling with a crisis of trust is accompanied by the emergence of new forms of collective identities, which are not anchored in the state-centric

<sup>17</sup> Z. Bauman, *Postmodernity...*, pp. 83-94; Idem, *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, Cambridge 2004; Idem, *Mortality, Immortality, and Other Life Strategies*, Stanford 1992, pp. 166-168, 191-195; Idem, *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, New York 1998, pp. 92-94.

<sup>18</sup> T.H. Eriksen, *Tyranny of the Moment: Fast and Slow Time in the Information Age*, London 2001.

<sup>19</sup> U. Beck, *Risk Society...*, passim.

<sup>20</sup> M. Castells, "Toward a Sociology of the Network Society", *Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 29, no. 5 (2000), pp. 695-696; Idem, *The Rise of The Network Society...*, pp. 22, 77-162, 210-215.

<sup>21</sup> Idem, "Toward a Sociology...", p. 695.

<sup>22</sup> Idem, *The Rise of The Network Society...*, pp. 440-448, 494-499.

<sup>23</sup> Idem, "Global Governance and Global Politics", *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2005), p. 10.

order of the industrial society, while, on the external level, the position of the state is weakening due to the emergence of global markets and space of flows.<sup>24</sup> The erosion of states generates a space for numerous fields of conflict, out of which three seem particularly important: first, managements, creators of information and manufacturers stand against individuals performing simple, repetitive and replaceable work; second, the excluded and disembedded stand in different positions towards the beneficiaries of the new society; third, the logics of globality clashes with the local qualities and daily life.<sup>25</sup> As a result, masses of the excluded, marginalized, redundant, lost in globality and failing to find their place in the disembedded daily life, are the starting point for the emergence of powerful identity processes. In this manner (similar to the one proposed by Giddens), man is left alone against the world – this is how the dialectics of identity and globalization emerges. However, this time it is the collective, not the individual identity that matters.

Castells defines identity as [...] *the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning*.<sup>26</sup> It is important due to the fact that it differentiates between identity and role, because although the latter is constructed based on the social norms which are external to an individual, identity results from the quest of what is valuable by man alone, and is about the ascribing of meaning to objects in the world. In other words, identity is, in fact, internalized roles that are assigned important meanings and which allow to assign meaning to the world, rather than organize social functions alone. Castells also questions the concept of the universal construction of identity on a personal level (*vide* Giddens), noting that such an ability is limited only to the elite in a network society. As a result, the ability to construct identity is an extremely rare commodity – even rationed, and the people who are deprived of that chance use generally available collective identities to create their own identity.

The complex system of contemporary identities can be, in Castells's opinion, brought down to three fundamental forms. They are, first of all, *legitimizing identities*, in which category he includes the ones developed and supported by public authorities. They constitute the remnants of the industrial era, usually in the form of national identities as fundamental models of identification in civic societies. The second type of identities are *resistance identities* (e.g. Islamic and Christian fundamentalism, ethnic identities, some national identities), emerging as a result of resistance to the dominating power relations, as a reaction to various forms of exclusion, inequality, as well as incomprehensible rules of the information society's functioning. As a result, the identities of resistance provide support, sense of consistency and stability to those who cannot achieve them in the framework of legitimized identities, and, at the same time, are not able to write their identities afresh. Such new *project*

<sup>24</sup> Idem, *The Power of Identity. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Oxford 2010, pp. 303-418.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 382-383.

<sup>26</sup> Idem, *The Power of Identity...*, p. 6.



*identities* manifesting themselves mainly as new social movements – ecologic, pacifistic, gender, constitute the third type of identities mentioned by Castells. They appear in the context of striving to re-compose the social world on the basis of new, usually universalistic rules. Such groups strive to transform the world in accordance with the assumed ideologies. The projected shifts are of a global nature, not limited to any community or territory. The aim is to redefine the social structure and elevate the position of the actors assuming this type of identity. Castells claims that they result in the emergence of subjects – collective social actors, who provide meaning to human experiences.<sup>27</sup>

As a consequence, we obtain a system of three identities connected with three types of communities: [1] legitimizing identity and civic society, [2] identity of resistance and community, and [3] project identity and subjects. They differ in two key traits: activity and temporal targeting of actions. The legitimizing identities, as dominating ones, supported by state authorities and the omnipresent (particularly in the West, although not limited to it) paradigm of national sovereignty and national identity, are – to a large degree – a subject to changes and a relic of the industrial age. Along with the transformation into information society, they are challenged at two levels: on the one side, the changes lead to a sense of anxiety and threat, undermine traditional values, deprive people of support in the existing institutions, replace models of national cultures with elements of global, mass culture, promote a consumer lifestyle, standardization, repetitiveness, predictability of human behaviours, lead to atomization of social bonds, resulting in a desire to return to the communities which provide the sense of embedding, unambiguously determine places and values that are meaning-generating. What we deal with here is an escape “to the past,” in which models worth following can be found, and the recreation of which is attempted – in this manner, identities of resistance are born. On the other hand, for some individuals, the changes associated with the emergence of information society are too slow, therefore they should be accelerated by means of questioning the previous values, symbols, norms, patterns of behaviour and others, which jointly constitute universes of legitimized identities. Project identities, offensive and aimed at changing social structures, are thus created. In other words, while legitimizing identities are largely passive and focusing on the present, the identities of resistance are active (even though defensive) and focusing on the past, and the project identities are active (offensive) and focusing on the future.

It seems entirely clear that the considerations of Castells, Giddens and many other researchers present the world full of contrasts, dissonances and differences, in which the struggle for identity, the ability to voice their dissimilarities, the demanding of recognition – in short: the politics of identity<sup>28</sup> – become the supreme value for many social groups. And despite numerous disputes as to the meaning of this term, as well

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 8, 12-302.

<sup>28</sup> J. Goldstein, J. Rayner, “The Politics of Identity in Late Modern Society”, *Theory and Society*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1994), pp. 367-384; D. Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge 2000, p. 62.

as the scope of phenomena which it covers,<sup>29</sup> it would be hardly possible to contradict the fact that the roots of the politics of identity are distant, reaching back, at the level of social processes, at least to the earliest days of feminist movements and other movements whose fundamental objective is in the issues of social equality and empowering all excluded or somehow subordinate groups to struggle for their acknowledgement and recognition.<sup>30</sup> In a philosophical approach, the roots of the politics of identity can be traced back to the centuries-old disputes about *self* and its dialogic nature. Indeed, it was only the collapse of the hierarchic estate system of society that resulted in the decline of the social positions acquired at birth (and, in principle, unchanging) and practically impermeable divisions between individual estates that fostered separate and easily recognizable identity models<sup>31</sup> within a given group. In ancient times, identity was hardly an important challenge. It only became problematic in modern egalitarian societies, initiating the “age of authenticity” and establishing an ideal, in which independent, original entities, by means of a dialogue with others, search for their unique identity within certain moral horizons.<sup>32</sup> Obviously, in recent decades, this voice has been subjected to criticism as well. Although to Taylor, Giddens or many others, a subject – exposed to numerous attempts in the fast changing world, forced to make choices in the scope of the life politics, constructing a story about themselves – remains creative and assumes responsibility for his faith, which places him in the space of a quest for answers to the question about the source and limits of meaning, the post-modern concepts of self highlight the liquidity of an individual, his transitory, fleeting nature, which is his specific trait, rather than the consequence of his life circumstances.<sup>33</sup> Such an inconsistent, multiple, complex, unfinished, and jittery “postmodern self” becomes a pastiche, simulation, a state of multiphrenia, in which the excess of plausible patterns of behaviour leads to the expansion of inadequacy when the awareness of not being able to meet their requirements emerges.<sup>34</sup>

It should be added here that the politics of identity gained in importance only in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to a certain reorientation of social discourse, in which the previously central category of “interest” was replaced by “culture,” and later by “identity.” The struggle for the possibly best distribution of goods was replaced with disputes about the acceptable values, norms and behaviour patterns. As universally known, in the 1960s it was culture that became the main factor in the mobilization of

<sup>29</sup> M. Bernstein, “Identity Politics”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2005, pp. 49-58.

<sup>30</sup> L. Nicholson, *Identity Before Identity Politics*, Cambridge 2008; C. Calhoun, “Social Theory and the Politics of Identity”, in C. Calhoun (ed.), *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, Oxford 1994, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> C. Taylor, “Źródła współczesnej tożsamości”, in K. Michalski (ed.), *Tożsamość w czasach zmiany. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, Warszawa–Kraków 1995, p. 19.

<sup>32</sup> C. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 48, 66-67.

<sup>33</sup> I. Burkitt, “The Shifting Concept of Self”, *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1995), p. 7; P.M.L. Moya, “Introduction”, in P.M.L. Moya, M.R. Hames-García (eds.), *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, Berkeley–Los Angeles 2000, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> K.J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*, New York 2000, pp. 18-47, 81-110.



social groups, triggering the emergence of an entire range of new movements.<sup>35</sup> Their distinctive trait became the ideologically motivated ability to act, rather than merely react to the changing circumstances.<sup>36</sup>

The topics tackled so far, although selective and incomplete, illustrate what many authors claim, namely, that the category of identity (whether we consider it in the perspective of an individual identity or collective entity) has appeared in social sciences not without a reason, but as a response to the inability to describe social phenomena by means of classic notions.<sup>37</sup> Studies of identity were to fill in the theoretical gap which appeared in analytic abilities along with the transformations of the social world – along with the transformation from the industrial society to the post-industrial one. In other words, identity was to become a useful notion allowing the study of social processes in a situation where previous categories have failed.<sup>38</sup> Since the very beginning, the notion of identity was to integrate various approaches and allow a more comprehensive analysis of the social world.<sup>39</sup> It became a certain prism allowing to capture, perceive and study the contemporary world.<sup>40</sup> As a result, it became equally popular and ambiguous, revealing its “Janus face” in the sense that the notion of identity became both unclear and irreplaceable.<sup>41</sup>

## THE NOTION OF IDENTITY (INCLUDING THE COLLECTIVE ONE), OR WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

### Between *Personal Identity* and *Self-Identity* – a short recapitulation of the philosophical disputes about identity

Defining such notions as identity, collective one in particular, is certainly not an easy task, and perhaps even not necessary at all. A mere realization of the multitude of contexts in which these categories exist seems enough to doubt whether it is possible to

<sup>35</sup> M. Kenny, *The Politics of Identity: Liberal Political Theory and the Dilemmas of Difference*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 2-3; D.-C. Martin, “The Choices of Identity”, *Social Identities*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1995), pp. 5-16.

<sup>36</sup> K.A. Cerulo, “Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1997, p. 393.

<sup>37</sup> P.L. Berger, “Tożsamość jako problem socjologii wiedzy”, in A. Chmielecki et al. (eds.), *Problemy socjologii wiedzy*, Warszawa 1985, pp. 485, 11; Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamość, interakcja, grupa. Tożsamość jednostki w perspektywie teorii socjologicznej*, Łódź 1989, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> A. Touraine, *A New Paradigm for Understanding Today's World*, Cambridge 2007, p. 1; P. Schlesinger, “On National Identity: Some Conceptions and Misconceptions Criticized”, *Social Science Information*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1987), pp. 236-238.

<sup>39</sup> A. Melucci, *Challenging Codes. Collective Action in the Information Age*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 68-69.

<sup>40</sup> Z. Bauman, “Identity in the Globalizing World”, in E. Ben-Rafael, Y. Sternberg (eds.), *Identity, Culture and Globalization*, Boston–Leiden 2001, p. 471.

<sup>41</sup> C. Tilly, “Citizenship, Identity and Social History”, *International Review of Social History*, vol. 40 (1995), Supplement 3, p. 11.

identify them in a more precise manner, to break free from the deadlock of vagueness and conceptual ambiguity. As a reminder, the notion of identity emerged as early as in the ancient era. Initially, it was mainly associated with the idea that the world is unchanging and homogeneous,<sup>42</sup> acquiring, with time, a meaning connected with the laws of logic.<sup>43</sup> Despite the complexity of references, it is worth to remember Robert Spaemann's claim that the idea of identity was one of the least perplexing to Greeks.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, identity was not particularly baffling in later centuries, becoming problematic only in modern times, seemingly taking two paths. Some of the philosophers (mainly belonging to the circle of "analytic philosophers") search for the criteria of *personal identity*, in a reference to the dispute between John Locke and Gottfried W. Leibniz. Others, positioning themselves in the hermeneutic, anthropological or existential tradition, contemplate the notion of *self-identity*, asking questions about the essence and origins of man, his place in the contemporary world, experiencing his own exceptionality, being oneself, alienation of identity and the difference or transience and retaining identity. Obviously, the philosophy of subjectivity is much older, dating back to the ancient discoveries pertaining internality, self-control, self-reflection, as insightfully presented by Charles Taylor.<sup>45</sup> The history of these disputes is populated by the most outstanding philosophers – Plato, Augustine, Descartes and many, many others. In the latter's works, according to Paul Ricoeur, we can find the idea of *pointlike ahistorical identity*, the only normative sphere of which is reason and awareness.<sup>46</sup> The door to the studies on *personal identity* was thus opened.

The position of Descartes in the scope of pointlike ahistorical identity, in particular, became a starting point for countless philosophers.<sup>47</sup> This also refers to the authors universally considered as the forerunners of the modern discussion on personal identity, notably John Locke, Gottfried W. Leibniz, David Hume and Thomas Ried.<sup>48</sup> Without going into details, it is enough to state that their dispute mainly referred to whether – and to what extent – memory can be considered a criterion determining the identity of an entity, and although Locke advocated such a solution, the other above-mentioned philosophers pointed to the weakness of this

<sup>42</sup> C.J. Olbromski, "Tożsamość społeczna: typowość czy wspólność, bezbarwność czy przejrzystość", in J. Mizińska (ed.), "Tożsamość podmiotu zbiorowego", *Colloquia Communia*, vol. 70, no. 3 (2000), p. 12; B. Russell, *Dzieje filozofii Zachodu i jej związki z rzeczywistością polityczno-społeczną od czasów najdawniejszych do dnia dzisiejszego*, Warszawa 2000, p. 74; T.M. Robinson, "Filozofowie presokratejscy", in R.H. Popkin (ed.), *Historia filozofii zachodniej*, Poznań 2003, p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> L. Ostasz, *Droga filozoficznego myślenia*, Olsztyn 2003, pp. 65-68; G.W. Leibniz, *Nowe rozważania dotyczące rozumu ludzkiego*, vol. 2, transl. by I. Dąbska, Warszawa 1955, pp. 150-151; F. Copleston, *Historia filozofii. Tom 4: od Kartezjusza do Leibniza*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 133-134.

<sup>44</sup> R. Spaemann, "Tożsamość religijna", in K. Michalski (ed.), *Tożsamość w czasach zmiany...*, p. 56.

<sup>45</sup> C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge 2001.

<sup>46</sup> P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, Chicago–London 1994, p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> M. Frank, *Świadomość siebie i poznanie siebie*, Warszawa 2002, pp. 77-78, 128-129.

<sup>48</sup> J. Perry, "The Problem of Personal Identity", in Idem (ed.), *Personal Identity*, Berkeley 1975, p. 12.

approach.<sup>49</sup> Leibniz's concept of a monad seems particularly important here, as its invariability clashes radically with Lockean subject. Further, one could claim that Leibniz's monads live as "the same," Lockean subjects – as "same as," and if so, then these two notions not only problematize identity in a different manner, but also constitute a differentiation into "identity *ipse*" and "identity *idem*." In brief, the predication of *idem* "identity" both about one and several objects always has a form of a relation, expressed as either equivalence relation or as a similarity relation. The former is universal, the latter contextual; the former is scientific and unambiguous, the latter not entirely defined – it can have many borderline cases, while the borderline between similar cases is often arbitrary. Other meanings are ascribed to identity *ipse*. Ricoeur claims that it is contained in the notion of a kept promise, which opens the ethical dimension of existence and places its self-study in the scope of narrative theory, therefore – in fact – opening the field of reflection on *self-identity*.<sup>50</sup>

Before we move on to that issue, however, we should add here that the contemporary disputes about *personal identity* mainly refer to the question about the criteria of identity. The answers usually stress that identity should be considered on the basis of memory or body, which divides the debate into two major fractions. Roger Melin describes them as psychological criterialism and physical criterialism;<sup>51</sup> Harold W. Noonan calls them respectively, a mentalist approach and body approach.<sup>52</sup> For John Perry, these are body theories and memory theories.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, what is important, despite differences, they share the notion that the criterion of identity is located in a relatively objectively verifiable set of traits, thanks to which they can be called empiricist theories.<sup>54</sup> However, it is not a uncritically accepted judgment. Some thinkers question the possibility to identify criteria of identity,<sup>55</sup> considering, at the same time, various puzzling cases, or certain thought experiments pertaining to the criteria of identity in the case of a hypothetical brain transplantation, bisection or amnesia, or in the moment, when mental and/or physical continuity has been disrupted.<sup>56</sup> Numerous problems

<sup>49</sup> J. Locke, *Rozważania dotyczące rozumu ludzkiego*, vol. I, transl. by Bolesław J. Gawęcki, revised by Cz. Znamierowski, Warszawa 1955, pp. 466, 471-472; J. Perry, "Personal Identity, Memory and the Problem of Circularity", in Idem (ed.), *Personal Identity...*, p. 135; G.W. Leibniz, *Nowe rozważania...*, vol. I, p. 108; T. Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity", in J. Perry (ed.), *Personal Identity...*, pp. 113-118; D. Hume, *Traktat o naturze ludzkiej*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 99, 289-308, 330-340.

<sup>50</sup> P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another...*, pp. 118-125.

<sup>51</sup> R. Melin, *Persons – Their Identity and Individuation*, Umeå 1998, pp. 69-85.

<sup>52</sup> H.W. Noonan, *Objects and Identity: An Examination of the Relative Identity Thesis and Its Consequences*, Haga-Boston-London 1980, p. 129.

<sup>53</sup> J. Perry, "The Problem of...", pp. 3-30.

<sup>54</sup> R.G. Swinburne, "Identyczność osoby", in J. Górnicka-Kalinowska (ed.), *Filozofia podmiotu*, Warszawa 2001, p. 331.

<sup>55</sup> B. Garrett, *Personal Identity and Self-Consciousness*, London 1998, pp. 6-12.

<sup>56</sup> S. Shoemaker, *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity*, Ithaca 1963, pp. 23-25; D. Parfit, "Tożsamość osobowa", in J. Górnicka-Kalinowska (ed.), *Filozofia podmiotu...*, pp. 67-72.

connected with solving such puzzling cases can even lead to radical beliefs expressed, for example, by Derek Parfit, who claims that *identity is not what matter*.<sup>57</sup>

It seems that more numerous and more profound disputes are carried out by those philosophers who attempt to capture the issue of *self-identity*. It seems worth mentioning here that it is impossible to discuss self-identity without taking into account the changes that have occurred in the recent centuries, particularly without disguising transcendence, and therefore without refusing a meaning to the views which see the meaning of human life outside of them, which occurred as a result of the pre-eminence of pointlike identity.<sup>58</sup> The results of such a negation of moral horizons set in religiousness, as these are what we discuss here, turned to be profound and meaningful. In his *Ethics of Authenticity* Taylor called them “illnesses of modern society:” primacy of a degenerated version of individualism, domination of instrumental mind, and erosion of freedom in the political sphere.<sup>59</sup> According to Taylor, the Age of Enlightenment saw the spread of two fundamental guiding ideas leading to the disguising of transcendence: first, it has been proposed that man can and should take his fate in his own hands and thus break off with the pre-Enlightenment immaturity; second, he can do this, as he sees his position in brighter light, possessing previously unavailable knowledge.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, this disguising of transcendence has deprived people of their embedding meaning-providing horizons, and forced them to constantly ask questions about their identity. However, that identity can only be found in certain moral framework drawn by the issue of respecting others and obligations towards them, pondering over what “full life” is, and seeing themselves and others as human beings who command respect and deserve it. Recollecting the language of Ricœur, the aim is to discuss identity in the categories of individuals’ abilities to keep their word, and thus their abilities to moral conduct.

The ability to assume a certain orientation in the moral space is necessary to acknowledge the identity of an entity – according to Taylor, it is necessary in order for one to speak on his own behalf.<sup>61</sup> However, this identity should be investigated in dialogic categories, or in relations with others.<sup>62</sup> In other words, only in the framework of “meeting others,” only in the framework of the claim for “acknowledgement” and “recognition” of one’s own identity against the identities assigned to us by others, the proper identity of an entity is shaped.<sup>63</sup> Ricœur and other philosophers supplement these dialogic and moral aspects of self-identity with the narrative idea, and thus identities as stories about ourselves, which draws upon the experience of a community, by using

<sup>57</sup> D. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, New York 1984, pp. 263-264.

<sup>58</sup> C. Taylor, “Immanentne kontroświecenie”, in K. Michalski (ed.), *Oświecenie dzisiaj. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, Kraków–Warszawa 1999, p. 46.

<sup>59</sup> Idem, *The Ethics of Authenticity...*, pp. 1-12.

<sup>60</sup> Idem, “Immanentne kontroświecenie...”, p. 50.

<sup>61</sup> Idem, *Sources of the Self...*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-35.

<sup>63</sup> Idem, *The Ethics of Authenticity...*, p. 33.

toposes, fictions, literary structures intermediating between the extremities of the dialectic of identity. According to Ricœur, narrative identity assumes the shape of a story's character who combines being the same – *idem* and being himself – *ipse*.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the narrative means merging the elements of the dialectic of self which constitute the temporal and ethical dimension of life. Seemingly, it is possible to translate them into a series of other dichotomies, such as memory, matter and form, matter and spirit or object and subject.

Summing up, it can be said that in this multi-threaded debate on subjectivity and self-identity carried out in the scope of contemporary philosophy, identity is perceived as a processual, dialogic ultimate value in human life, saturated with moral questions, changeable in time and dependent of cultural framework. It is the condition and content of subjectivity. The recognition of identity and struggle for its acknowledgement constitutes one of the most important purposes in life, as it allows to find a place in a moral space and community, becomes one of the foundations of ontological security, whose deficit is obvious and painful today. Identity, as a story about one's actions, decisions, choices, provides a sense of embedding, support – allowing us to consider our lives as relatively coherent, meaningful and purposeful.

## THE NOTION OF IDENTITY IN SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

It is a cliché to consider the notion identity as unclear and ambiguous. We are being convinced about this by the above, brief and simplifying considerations, and numerous testimonies in the literature, as well as the popularity of the term in mass culture. Numerous guides, "tests," encouragements of "coaches," celebrities, artists and others to "discover ourselves" obviously fail to facilitate the problem, while increasing the confusion. Perhaps for this reason Richard Jenkins claims that identity is one of the most universally used words today, which appears in countless contexts.<sup>65</sup> On a similar note, Jean-Marie Benoist noticed that identity is a notion of many faces,<sup>66</sup> Peter Weinreich sees it as a *catch-all term*, which, while promising much, disappoints,<sup>67</sup> Philip Gleason, who follows the multitude of meanings and a certain semantic history of the notion of identity, draws a conclusion that it has become a *cliché*,<sup>68</sup> Thomas H. Erikson points out that, particularly due to a political fashion,

<sup>64</sup> P. Ricœur, *Oneself as Another...*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>65</sup> R. Jenkins, "The Limits of Identity: Ethnicity, Conflict, and Politics", *ShOP. Sheffield Online Papers in Social Research*, vol. 2 (2000), pp. 2-3; at <www.shef.uk/socst/shop>, 12 June 2020.

<sup>66</sup> J.-M. Benoist, "Facettes de l'identité", in J.-M. Benoist et al. (eds.), *L'identité: Séminaire interdisciplinaire dirigé par Claude Lévi-Strauss, professeur au Collège de France, 1974-1975*, Paris 1983, pp. 13-23.

<sup>67</sup> P. Weinreich, "Psychodynamics of Personal and Social Identity", in A. Jacobson-Widding (ed.), "Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural. A Symposium", *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 5, Uppsala 1983, p. 159.

<sup>68</sup> P. Gleason, "Identifying Identity: A Semantic History", *The Journal of American History*, vol. 69, no. 4 (1983), pp. 910-931.

it became *meaningless*,<sup>69</sup> and Jenkins, whom I have just mentioned, writes: *Everybody has something to say about identity: anthropologists, geographers, historians, philosophers, political scientists, psychologists, sociologists. From debates about the modernity of self-identity, through feminist deconstructions of gendered social conventions, to urgent attempts to understand the apparent resurgence of nationalism and ethnic politics, the field is crowded. Identity, it seems, is bound up with everything from political asylum to credit card fraud, shopping to sex.*<sup>70</sup>

It is perfectly obvious that the notion of identity is vague. Nevertheless one should remember that many (if not all) theoretical categories in the scope of social and human sciences are overused, politically instrumentalized, burdened, unclear and semantically unfinished. In the case of identity, such ambiguities translating into the inability to formulate a definition of identity that would be relatively acceptable to many are significant to the point that it has been posited to abandon the use of that notion in academic analyses. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper even write about “identity crisis” in social sciences, pointing out that the notion of identity, as an element of colloquial language, has been credulously transferred into scientific reflection. However, the universality of the term in colloquial language does not entitle researchers to use it as an analytical category, and even if such a transferring takes place, it is necessary to precisely define terms and carefully avoid errors, particularly such as reification and reproduction of meanings assigned to notions in everyday discourses.<sup>71</sup>

Taking the above mentioned claims into consideration, it seems neither necessary nor justified to pursue comprehensive reviews of how the notion of identity is defined, particularly in view of the fact that such reviews already exist in the literature and they (or at least a few selected ones) are worth discussing.

Jenkins points to five contexts of studies of identity, in which it is differently understood or defined. They are: [1] *Personal individuality*, where identity refers to a widely understood issues of self; [2] *Life-style*, meaning accepted values, norms, habits, which allow us to function in social reality; [3] *Social position and status*, which manifest themselves mainly in the assumed and played social roles; [4] *Politics*, where the main notion is the “policy of identity” understood as an individual or collective claim to formulate and recognize distinctiveness; [5] *Bureaucracy and citizenship*, informing about institutional individual affiliation of an individual.<sup>72</sup> Brubaker and Cooper also point to five, albeit slightly different contexts. They are, respectively: [1] identity as a foundation for social or political actions, which is a non-instrumental factor conditioning the functioning of social actors; [2] identity as collective uniformity, *sameness*, solidarity of a given community’s members; [3] identity in the sense of the most profound “core” possessed by individuals, self-ownership; [4] identity as a consequence of socio-political actions aimed at the articulation of social

<sup>69</sup> T.H. Eriksen, *Tyranny of the Moment...*, p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> R. Jenkins, *Social Identity*, London–New York 2004, p. 28.

<sup>71</sup> R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, *Theory and Society*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2000), pp. 1-36.

<sup>72</sup> R. Jenkins, “The Limits of Identity...”, pp. 2-3.



movements' separateness; [5] identity as a discursive consensus.<sup>73</sup> Charles Taylor draws the "map" of the understanding of the notion of identity. According to him, three contexts, in which the notion appears, are particularly significant: [1] the understanding of identity as self-determination emerging in the process of growing up, best expressed by Erik H. Erikson; [2] the understanding of identity as a project, construct, specific for the contemporary definition of identity; [3] the understanding of identity as a group phenomenon.<sup>74</sup>

An interesting clarification of the contexts of the notion of identity and the area of studies on it was proposed by James Côté as an eight-field matrix defined by three dichotomies. The first one refers to the level of reflection, dividing studies into those which refer to an individual (*Individual Focus*) and those which refer to social determinants and consequences of identity (*Social Focus*). The second one allows to distinguish those researchers who search for identity using hard, quantitative research methods and focus on measurable features (*objectivist epistemology*) from those which tend to prefer softer, qualitative methods, focusing on experiencing an identity (*subjectivist epistemology*). The third dichotomy allows to distinguish those who study identity from the perspective of relatively firm social structures (*status quo*) and those who approach social world armed with critical tools unveiling other, often unexplored, yet potentially possible methods of constructing identity (*critical/contextual*). Further systematizing the area of research on identity, Côté noticed that – for example – *Identity status paradigm* present in psychological studies of self can be described in terms of individual-oriented analyses employing objective epistemology in the framework of studies of the status quo. The analyses of symbolic interactionists, such as Erving Goffman, focus on social consequences with the use of subjectivist epistemology in the framework of research on status quo, although the research carried out also in the scope of interactionism (structural one, this time), employs objectivist epistemology, etc.<sup>75</sup>

As far as the Polish literature is concerned, Zbigniew Bokszański's ideas are worthy of attention. He proposed four dichotomies that are important for defining identity: [1] a normative or descriptive approach to identity; [2] the perception of identity as a state or process; [3] pointing out to the continuation or otherness as the main manners of defining identity; [4] describing the sources of identity by means of opposition to conformity or dissent.<sup>76</sup> Importantly, these dimensions are not equally important. The first one seems to combine philosophical and scientific perspective, which is not incorrect in itself, however, it considerably broadens the scope of the issue and does not seem entirely justified as a criterion of extracting meanings of the notion of identity in social sciences. On a similar note, the fourth dimension raises

<sup>73</sup> R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'...", pp. 6-8.

<sup>74</sup> C. Taylor, "Źródła współczesnej tożsamości...", pp. 9-18.

<sup>75</sup> J. Côté, "Identity Studies: How Close Are We to Developing a Social Science of Identity? – An Appraisal of the Field", *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2006), pp. 8-13.

<sup>76</sup> Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 31-43.

doubts, and the problem emerging in this case is opposite: it is an overly detailed dimension, as mentioned by Boksański himself, who calls it *strictly sociological*.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, those dimensions can be rejected as hardly useful in the discussion of the notion of identity. However, the remaining two deserve more attention. In fact, they seem of a key importance for identification of the notion of identity's semantic field. Nevertheless, they should be supplemented with another dimension concerning subjects. Every reflection on identity eventually needs to contain an answer to three questions: [1] What subjects are we talking about?; [2] Is identity a trait that is constant or changing over time?; [3] What are the criteria of identifying objects' identities? They lead to identification of three dimensions of the notion of identity, which are arranged in dialectic pairs.

The first dimension of identity – let us call it “subjective,” is classified by means of differentiating *individual identity* from *collective identity*. Neither of these terms raises more substantial doubts. In particular, the first instance is relatively obvious, as man is the subject of identity – it belongs to him, he “owns” or “constructs” it, depending on choices made and actions taken.<sup>78</sup> However, an identity of an individual, as mentioned on several occasions here, is possible due to social relations. The social context of creating identity always means a participation in a community. Such communities, forming a certain set of norms, values, beliefs, patterns of behaviour, etc., and therefore a more or less unique culture, function in spite of the actual exchange of the entities which make them up. This is just a step away from acknowledging that identity is an attribute of not only individuals, but also communities, and, in particular, of nations and ethnic groups, social movements, regional and local communities, as well as social classes.

The second dimension of the notion of identity can be called the dimension of dynamics, as it tackles on the issue of the genesis of identity and its ability of transformation. It is characterised by the *state-process* dialectic, which seems to be organized around the issue of “|how” identity is created and “if” (and if so, then “how”) it changes. Therefore, the point is whether it is a relatively unchangeable structure or a constantly changing one, depending on the social context, whether it is a constant trait of a subject or a constantly transforming set of traits temporarily assigned to it.

The third of the dimensions is about the *continuity-otherness* dialectic. These are two basic manners of constructing identity, where, in the former instance, it is interpreted in the categories of internal attributes that allow us to discuss the identity of a subject, while in the latter case identity is based on traits attributed in confrontation with another subject. The former are responsible for the fact that the subject remains the same, the latter for the fact that it is distinguishable from others. This dimension can be called an objective dimension, as the view of the basic understanding of identity as a relation between objects allows to single out – apart from subjects and a change in

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 37-43.

<sup>78</sup> C. Westin, “Self-references, Consciousness and Time”, in A. Jacobson-Widding (ed.), “Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural...”, p. 95.

time that allows defining identity (dynamics of identity) – the object of identity as well, and therefore a set of features, conditions, ownerships, which allow us to identify it, regardless of the fact whether they are treated as own traits of objects or further specified in the process of differentiation from others.

I believe that the research on identity in social sciences can be described by means of these three dimensions, bearing in mind, however, that although their differentiation is of analytical nature, individual approaches, theories, studies of identity meet the criteria of typologization merely in an approximate manner. What I mean is that the fact that individual theories may stress individual extremities of dialectic relations does not mean that they do not comprise such elements of other solutions. However, identity alone is always a semi-individual and semi-collective phenomenon. It includes elements that allow us to identify a form of persistence, although changing. It can be described through the prism of what is “my” or “our,” as well as “other,” “alien.” The difference is usually in the emphasis placed by individual researchers, who tend to focus their studies on the individual or collective level, see identity in a static or processual manner, and saturate it with content proving continuity or otherness. Nevertheless, I believe that the three above-mentioned dimensions of the notion of identity allow to build an eight-element typology of the theory and studies on identity, singling out such approaches that stress the following: [1] relatively constant individual identity, perceived in the categories of continuity; [2] constructed individual identity perceived in the categories of continuity; [3] relatively constant individual identity, perceived in the categories of otherness; [4] constructed individual identity perceived in the categories of otherness; [5] relatively constant collective identity perceived in the categories of continuity; [6] constructed collective identity perceived in the categories of continuity; [7] relatively constant collective identity perceived in the categories of otherness; [8] constructed collective identity perceived in the categories of otherness.

Importantly, one of the above criteria of identity typologization seems to be particularly important, to this volume as well – therefore, we will discuss it shortly.

## FROM SOCIAL IDENTITY TO COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

The key criterion of identity classification, mentioned several times in this paper, is its subjective duality, that is, assigning it to entities both individual and collective. Whereas the former issue raises little doubt (although some critical claims that identity cannot be predicted in the case of man as well), speaking about collective identity results in many more problems, particularly ontological ones, and, as a result, methodological ones. It would be difficult to deny the fact that differentiation of subjects of identity runs along particular and exceptional qualities of an individual, such as reflexive thinking and the ability to treat oneself as an object. As we know, collectivities are deprived of this quality and any attempt to attribute reflexive thinking to them usually leads to the error of hypostasis – recognising communities as real entities, functioning in the

same manner as individuals.<sup>79</sup> Certainly, such a unambiguous claim and ontological equalization of individual and collective entities is not frequently met in the literature, nevertheless, examples of such positions can be quoted, for example in the catholic-national approach to national identity in Poland.<sup>80</sup> However, this seems highly controversial. Antonina Kłoskowska was right to claim that collectivities do not possess any self-knowledge which would be analogous to individual self-knowledge, they are not aware of their existence, their memory is of the dispersed type, which they are not able to integrate, let alone possess,<sup>81</sup> and if so, then the ontology of collective identities can be only secondary in the sense that they exist only as what is common in the space of individual identities, and are mediated by actions, memory and identity of individuals. This does not mean, however, that they can be directly reduced to them. They rather transcend individual lives, even if being produced and maintained by individuals, existing in a manner similar to the world three of Karl R. Popper.<sup>82</sup> This position, although not always expressed in the same manner, seems to be dominating in many papers on collective identities.

It also seems consistent with two dominating theories in social psychology and sociology, that is *Social Identity Theory* and *Identity Theory*. Without going into unnecessary details, it is enough to state here that the former theory provides for the existence of a hypothetical cognitive structure, self-concept, which, being a particular type of self-schema, intermediates between the social environment and social behaviour, and contains two components: personal identity and social identity. Personal identity refers to the self-knowledge of an individual and the sense of exceptionality, possessing specific attributes differentiating them from other persons, which, along with the memory of own experiences, preferences, opinions, beliefs, physical appearance and all elements considered by an individual to be exclusively emblematic of him. On the other hand, social identity is a set of social identifications and self-images associated with them, resulting from the individual's knowledge of his belonging to a social group along with emotional meaning assigned to this affiliation.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>79</sup> G. Babiński, *Pogranicze polsko-ukraińskie. Etniczność, zróżnicowanie religijne, tożsamość*, Kraków 1997, p. 80.

<sup>80</sup> See: C.S. Bartnik, *Kiedy myślę: naród*, Radom 2003; Idem, *Teologia narodu*, Częstochowa 1999; S. Kowalczyk, *Naród, państwo, Europa. Z problematyki filozofii narodu*, Radom 2003; M.A. Krąpiec, *Rozważania o narodzie*, Lublin 2004; F. Woronowski, *Przyszłość naszej ojczyzny*, Łomża 2001.

<sup>81</sup> A. Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 91-103; Eadem, "Tożsamość i identyfikacja narodowa w perspektywie historycznej i psychologicznej", *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, vol. 36, no. 1 (1992), p. 132.

<sup>82</sup> K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*, Oxford 1979, pp. 106-152.

<sup>83</sup> J.C. Turner, "Towards a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group", in H. Tajfel (ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, Cambridge 1982, pp. 17-21; H. Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*, Cambridge 1981, p. 255; J.C. Turner, "Social Identification and Psychological Group Formation", in H. Tajfel (ed.), *The Social Dimension*, vol. 2, Cambridge 1984, p. 526; N. Ellemers, "Social Identity Theory", in J.M. Levine, M.A. Hogg (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, London 2010, p. 798.

One of the main claims of the social identity theory is the individuals' striving to sustain or reinforce a positive self-esteem obtained by means of social comparisons.<sup>84</sup> In other words, every individual who seeks a high self-esteem can obtain and sustain it by means of identification with groups faring better in comparison with other groups, and in the case of negative comparison, we can expect a lowered self-esteem and taking certain actions, such as abandoning or changing an identity, or taking actions aimed at the improvement of the group situation.<sup>85</sup> While in the theory of social identity it is accepted that behaviours of individuals can be of interpersonal or inter-group nature,<sup>86</sup> it means that all social actions belong to a continuum, the extremities of which are fully individual and fully collective action, when an individual is acting as a representative of the group. The interpersonal level of behaviour corresponds to personal identity ("I"), while the inter-group level – to social identity ("we").<sup>87</sup> Two subsystems of self-concept are separable and antagonistic, in the sense that activation of one is at the expense of the minimalization of the other's impact.<sup>88</sup> One proof of the activation of group identity can be, for example, a tendency to uniformed, homogenous behaviours, an insignificant differentiation of attitudes towards others, who are perceived as similar to us, a clear division of people against social categories.<sup>89</sup> Activation of social identity takes place as a result of situational factors, the number of which is, in principle, infinite. However, they include, for example, a conflict, a meeting with another group, a strong distinctiveness of own group in comparison with the surrounding, a large number of members of an alien group, a stress on intra-group uniformity, the presence of important group norms, and others.<sup>90</sup>

What is important, the shift from personal identity to social identity brings a highly important result – inter-group bias, or, more precisely, favouritism within one's in-group and discrimination of out-group members. To a large extent, it is an automatic behaviour, an effect of the process of categorization and occurring as a result of the emerging of any, even the most trivial and random trait that allows cognitive isolation of in-group and out-group.<sup>91</sup> As demonstrated by more recent studies, the intensity

<sup>84</sup> H. Tajfel, J.C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict", in W.G. Austin, S. Worchel (eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Monterey 1979, p. 40.

<sup>85</sup> H. Tajfel, J.C. Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior", in S. Worchel, L.W. Austin (eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Chicago 1986, p. 16; H. Tajfel, J.C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory...", pp. 43-45; M.A. Hogg, D. Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes*, London 1988, pp. 22, 48-52.

<sup>86</sup> H. Tajfel, J.C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory...", p. 34.

<sup>87</sup> R. Brown, S. Pehrson, *Group Processes: Dynamics within and Between Groups*, Hoboken 2020, pp. 4-6.

<sup>88</sup> J.C. Turner, "Towards a Cognitive Redefinition...", pp. 21, 19.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>90</sup> A. Bikont, "Tożsamość społeczna w świetle prac H. Tajfela i J.C. Turnera", *Przegląd Psychologiczny*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1986), p. 776.

<sup>91</sup> H. Tajfel, J.C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory...", pp. 38-40; H. Tajfel et al., "Social Categorization and Intergroup Behavior", *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1971), pp. 149-178.

of the bias can also depend on certain factors of a different type, such as the degree of identification with a group, the distinctness of a category in a given context, the significance of the dimension of comparisons, the degree of similarity between compared groups in this dimension and the relative status of own group in the social structure.<sup>92</sup> It should be added here that inter-group bias has extremely important effects on social behaviours, because, as a phenomenon of a various degree of intensity, it occurs between extremities, in which discrimination takes either a subtle, mainly linguistic form, expressed rather in small and insignificant gestures, or an acute form, manifesting itself in direct violence, including mass killing justified by group differences. In the latter case, depersonalization and dehumanization occur.

The latter case (identity theory) is about concepts developed in the framework of symbolic interactionism, and while the richness of the tradition of interactionist research on individual and collective identities is great in this trend (it is enough to mention the ideas of Manford Kuhn,<sup>93</sup> Erving Goffman,<sup>94</sup> Anselm L. Strauss<sup>95</sup> or George J. McCall and Jerry L. Simmons<sup>96</sup>), the discussions held over many decades seem to find their proper crowning achievement in the identity theory formulated by Sheldon Stryker and developed by Peter J. Burke, according to which the former concentrates on studying the effect of social structures on self and behaviour, while the latter is searching for mechanisms of the internal dynamics of the processes occurring at the level of self, and how they translate into social behaviours, which, incidentally, sometimes leads to the identification of a separate *Identity Control Theory*.<sup>97</sup>

As a rule, the identity theory assumes the conviction, universal to the entire approach, about the interactive origin of *self*, going even further and claiming that these interactions bring to life relatively permanent patterns of individual behaviours.<sup>98</sup> Identity itself is defined on the basis of identity theory as an internalized expectation towards a role.<sup>99</sup> In other words, self consists of various identities defined by the positions held and the roles played.<sup>100</sup> Such roles are played in different interaction networks and make up a particular structure of identity, organized as *identity salience*. Placing identities in the identity salience means that some of them play a more important, and some others a less important role. The position of identity in this hierarchy increases the

<sup>92</sup> A. Kwiatkowska, *Tożsamość a społeczne kategoryzacje*, IP PAN, Warszawa 1999, pp. 90-92.

<sup>93</sup> M.H. Kuhn, "Self", in J. Gould, W.L. Kolb (eds.), *A Dictionary of the Social Science*, Nowy Jork 1965.

<sup>94</sup> E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Edinburgh 1959; Idem, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewood Cliffs 1963.

<sup>95</sup> A.L. Strauss, *Mirrors and Masks. The Search for Identity*, San Francisco 1969; B.G. Glaser, A.L. Strauss, *Time for Dying*, Chicago 1968.

<sup>96</sup> G.J. McCall, J.L. Simmons, *Identities and Interactions. An Examination of Human Associations in Everyday Life*, New York-London 1978.

<sup>97</sup> S. Stryker, P.J. Burke, "The Past, Present, and Future...", pp. 284-285; J.H. Turner, J.E. Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions*, Cambridge 2005, pp. 115-120, 124-133.

<sup>98</sup> S. Stryker, *Symbolic Interactionism...*, pp. 53-55.

<sup>99</sup> S. Stryker, P.J. Burke, "The Past, Present, and Future...", p. 286.

<sup>100</sup> J.H. Turner, J.E. Stets, *The Sociology of Emotions...*, pp. 115-116.



probability of being invoked in a given interaction.<sup>101</sup> The social impact on the functioning of self is addressed in the identity theory in the categories of engagement,<sup>102</sup> which refers to the degree of involvement in certain roles, in accordance with their perceived importance.<sup>103</sup> As a result, the identities that are higher in the identity salience hierarchy will be invoked more often than those on lower positions. Consequently, actions of an individual will be defined to the greatest extent by these identities which are invoked most frequently.<sup>104</sup>

We can also add here that the emphasis is somewhat differently distributed in Burke's version of the identity theory. According to him, *An identity is a set of 'meanings' applied to the self in a social role or situation defining what it means to be who one is.*<sup>105</sup> In other words, identity is a dynamic system of control which allows maintaining internal consistency and functioning in a society. Various versions of the identity process model provide for the existence of four basic elements: (a) *identity standard*, which should be understood as a structure of those elements of self which have any meaning; (b) input, or the perceived stimuli, such as a new person or social situation; (c) *comparator* of perceived stimuli with the content of standard setting; and (d) output, or behaviours consistent with the comparison's result.<sup>106</sup> As a result, the proper purpose of the identity process is to obtain consistency between the perceived stimuli and the standard of identity, by means of behaviour modification. Certain actions are aimed at a change of the perceived social situation and the obtaining of a consistency between perceptions and the standard set of identity.<sup>107</sup> The activation of identity releases *self-verification*, a process, in which an entity strives to confirm the self-image; it forms a basis for undertaking and playing a role and shaping groups, as it sets the course for a behaviour which will maintain consistency of the situation and the standard of identity.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, it underlines the trust (a foundation of engagement), as well as emotional attachment and group orientation.<sup>109</sup> Certainly, the identity process can be disturbed, leading to an identity change.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>101</sup> S. Stryker, R.T. Serpe, "Identity Salience and Psychological Centrality: Equivalent, Overlapping, or Complementary Concepts?", *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 1 (1994), p. 17.

<sup>102</sup> S. Stryker, *Symbolic Interactionism...*, p. 61.

<sup>103</sup> P.J. Burke, J.E. Stets, *Identity Theory*, Oxford 2009, p. 47.

<sup>104</sup> P.L. Callero, "The Sociology of the Self", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 29 (2003), p. 125.

<sup>105</sup> P.J. Burke, "Identity Processes and Social Stress", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 56, no. 6 (1991), p. 837.

<sup>106</sup> Idem, "Relationships among Multiple Identities", in Idem et al. (eds.), *Advances in Identity Theory and Research*, New York 2003, p. 198; P.J. Burke, J.E. Stets, *Identity Theory...*, p. 50-51; P.J. Burke, "Identity Processes...", p. 838.

<sup>107</sup> S. Stryker, P.J. Burke, "The Past, Present, and Future...", s. 287.

<sup>108</sup> A. Riley, P.J. Burke, "Identities and Self-Verification in the Small Group", *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 2 (1995), p. 61.

<sup>109</sup> P.J. Burke, J.E. Stets, "Trust and Commitment through Self-Verification", *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 4 (1999), p. 353.

<sup>110</sup> P.J. Burke, "Identity Processes...", p. 841-844.

The similarity of both interests and solutions presented in social identity theory and identity theory is sometimes a departure point for attempts of their coordination, nevertheless, it seems neither easy, nor unequivocally possible.<sup>111</sup> What is important in the context of this paper is not the subtle theoretical disputes, but the fact that both theories perceive social identities as a relatively coherent vision of a “we,” shared by individuals, which belongs to broader systems of perception of the world and taking actions. In this sense, social identities function similarly to Popper’s world three, as mentioned before: they are possessed by individuals, but their content transcends them and makes them irreducible to individuals at the collective tier.

Similar positions are not rare in the literature. theoretical resolutions by one of the most outstanding experts in the field of collective identities, Alberto Melucci, are very meaningful in this respect. In one of his papers Melucci wrote: *I call collective identity this process of “constructing” an action system. Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level) and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place. By “interactive and shared” I mean a definition that must be conceived as a process because it is constructed and negotiated through a repeated activation of the relationships that link individuals (or groups).*<sup>112</sup>

According to Melucci, collective identities are creative on the basis of *cognitive definitions* referring to the *ends* of action, which need to be meaningful to the actor, the *means* assigned by abilities and limits of action, as well as the *field of action* construed as relations with the milieu, environment, in which the actions are taken. The creation of collective identities requires interactions and communication between actors, through which an exchange of information takes place, mutual impact, and the abilities of mutual recognition and acknowledgement; a role that is very important to creating collective identities is also played by emotional involvement which cannot simply be brought down to an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages, pertaining exclusively to important matters.<sup>113</sup>

The considerations in this paper would be certainly incomplete without an attempt to summarize the issues tackled many times in the previous pages, and referring to the research field of reflection on collective identities. Certainly, it is a task equally necessary and doomed to fail, or, more precisely, it seems impossible to present a comprehensive and complete reflection on these issues, particularly in a short paper. Such attempts have been, however, made in the literature, and it seems justified to mention two of them here. One of them, already discussed in the first part of this article, was made by Castells and provides for three main types of collective identities, that is legitimizing,

<sup>111</sup> M.A. Hogg, D.J. Terry, K.M. White, “A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory”, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 4 (1995); J.E. Stets, P.J. Burke, “Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory”, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 3 (2000).

<sup>112</sup> A. Melucci, “The Process of Collective Identity”, in H. Johnston, B. Klandermans (eds.), *Social Movements and Culture*, Minneapolis 1995, p. 44.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

resistance, and project identities. The first ones include national and civic identities, the second ones various cultural identities, particularly religious, fundamentalist, territorial, class, race, anti-globalist identities, while the third category covers the broadly understood identities of new social movements, notably ecological, sexual, pacifistic, global and others.<sup>114</sup> Zbigniew Bokszański was one of those who attempted a typology of collective identities in the Polish context, pointing to four types of collective identities selected upon two criteria: the types of collectivities, that is, real collectivities (e.g. nation, ethnic group), or the identities of ideal collectivities, that is, types of societies (e.g. post-modern society, European identity), and the scope of identity in the form of self-definition of a subject or cultural values.<sup>115</sup>

Further review of the typology of collective identities does not seem necessary. It is enough to note here that, in particular, numerous studies concern such fields of collective identities as:

- national identity,<sup>116</sup>
- ethnic identity,<sup>117</sup>
- cultural identities,<sup>118</sup>
- religious identities,<sup>119</sup>
- identities of social movements,<sup>120</sup>

<sup>114</sup> M. Castells, *The Power of Identity...*, pp. 12-366.

<sup>115</sup> Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe...*, pp. 63-72.

<sup>116</sup> See e.g.: P. Börner (ed.), *Concepts of National Identity. An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, Baden-Baden 1986; K. Cameron (ed.), *National Identity*, Exeter 1999; A. Dieckhoff, N. Gutiérrez (eds.), *Modern Roots: Studies of National Identity*, Aldershot 2001; T. Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, Oxford–New York 2002; J.R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemoration: The Politics of National Identity*, Princeton 1994; R.B. Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International System*, New York 1999; B. Parekh, "Discourses on National Identity", *Political Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3 (1994); P. Schlesinger, "On National Identity..."; A.D. Smith, *National Identity*, Harmondsworth 1991; Idem, *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Oxford 2003; A. Triandafyllidou, *Immigrants and National Identity in Europe*, London–New York 2001; R. Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, Edinburgh 1999.

<sup>117</sup> See e.g.: R.D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity. The Transformation of White America*, New Haven 1990. F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Boston 1969; R. Brubaker, M. Loveman, P. Stamatov, "Ethnicity as Cognition", *Theory and Society*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2004); W. Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1978); D. Handelman, "The Organization of Ethnicity", *Ethnic Groups*, vol. 1 (1977); J. Hutchinson, A.D. Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity*, Oxford–London 1996; P. Weinreich, "National and Ethnic Identities: Theoretical Concepts in Practice", *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1992).

<sup>118</sup> See e.g.: S. Hall, P. du Gay (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London 1996; S. Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity", in T. McGrew, S. Hall, D. Held (eds.), *Modernity and Its Futures*, Cambridge 1992; P. Gilbert, *Cultural Identity and Political Ethics*, Edinburgh 2010.

<sup>119</sup> See e.g.: R. Pope (ed.), *Religion and National Identity: Scotland and Wales, 1700-2000*, Cardiff 2001; P. O'Sullivan (ed.), *Religion and Identity*, London–New York 2000.

<sup>120</sup> See e.g.: J.A. Howard, "Social Psychology of Identities", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 26 (2000), p. 384.

- gender identities,<sup>121</sup>
- post-colonial, anti-colonial and abolitionist movements,<sup>122</sup>
- musical identities<sup>123</sup>

and many, many others. What unites them, particularly in the perspective of political science, is an obvious connection with relations of power, such as competition, domination, subordination – in a nutshell: a struggle for possibly the best position in the social order. In this respect we should recognize the fact that the field of research on collective identities always remains open – as it is always possible to politicize new social groups and their engagement in the struggle for recognition. Ultimately, the notion of collective identities often becomes a specific political “currency.”<sup>124</sup>

In conclusion, it's worth to add that whereas the number of types, forms or kinds of collective identities is great, it seems justified to claim that the categories describing a particular type of identity usually refer to an identification with a group and its position, and for that reason the numerous above-mentioned adjectives which further define the notion of identity (e.g. national, ethnic, religious, etc.) constitute a certain “family” of notions as proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein – semantically interconnected, sometimes interchangeable, and sometimes of various distinctive features.<sup>125</sup>

## IN PLACE OF CONCLUSIONS: WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DISCUSS IN THIS VOLUME?

Any summary of identity research (including collective identity) always encounters difficulties related to an attempt to concisely capture a complex and multi-facet phenomenon. Therefore, the authors of this volume deal only with some of the themes present in the study of collective identities. The first part is devoted to various aspects of reflection on the relationship between identity and politics. Mirosław Karawat considers the problem of the relationship between identity and manipulation, Filip Pierzchalski focuses on political leadership and its relations with identity, Piotr Łukomski presents the phenomenon of political players' identities in evolutionary games, Ewa Maria Marciniak analyzes the relationships of collective identities and discourse, Łukasz Młyńczyk reflects on how collective identities are created and how they function in the digital age, Jakub K. Górka draws a picture of populists' identity using an example of alternative

<sup>121</sup> See e.g.: L. Nicholson, *Identity Before Identity Politics...*, pp. 94-138; J. Krause, “Gendered Identities in International Relations”, in J. Krause, N. Renwick (eds.), *Identities in International Relations*, London 1996, pp. 99-117.

<sup>122</sup> See e.g.: N. Poku, “Colonialism and Sub-Saharan Identities”, in J. Krause, N. Renwick (eds.), *Identities in International Relations...*, pp. 172-192; L. Nicholson, *Identity Before Identity Politics...*, pp. 139-175.

<sup>123</sup> R.A.R. MacDonald, D.J. Hargreaves, D.E. Miell (eds.), *Musical Identities*, Oxford 2002.

<sup>124</sup> C. Antweiler, “Collective Identity”, in L. Kühnhardt, T. Mayer (eds.), *The Bonn Handbook of Globality*, Cham 2019, p. 360.

<sup>125</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford 1958, pp. 31-35.

medicine promoters, and Marcin Tobiasz deals with the problem of relations between identity and anti-politics.

The second part of this volume concentrates on the issue of national, regional and ethnic identities and opens with an article by Robert Kłosowicz showing the identity foundations of conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Staying on the African continent, Joanna Mormul presents the issue of identity of Luso-African countries, then Paweł Laidler analyzes the identity of the U.S. Supreme Court, Mirella Korzeniewska-Wiszniewska takes up the problem of ethnic politics on the example of Croatia, Stephen Davies and Małgorzata Kułakowska analyze the issues of British identity in Poland in the context of Brexit, and Tomasz Godlewski presents the face of Polish political identities and their relationship with ideology.

This volume does not pretend to treat the issue of collective identities as a whole. The works presented here refer only to a small fragment of the complex and very diverse area of research on collective identities, in hope of making a small contribution to the extremely rich discussion in social sciences, a discussion that has been going on for many decades, and without doubt will be continued.

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