

Вестник РУДН. Серия: СОЦИОЛОГИЯ

# СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ЛЕКТОРИЙ

# SOCIOLOGICAL LECTURES

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# Social reality in the perspective of temporalism: In search of methodology\*

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Abstract. The article aims at linking social reality with the category of temporality in the conceptual perspective based on some modifications of modernity as culture. The author explains and applies the epistemological means of the temporal turn and presents the agent-subject interpretation of social reality in a new way. The article focuses on the potential of the temporal discourse which is poorly articulated in contemporary works but is immanently inherent in the sociological science. The survey methodology provides variables related to the past and making demands on memory and the ability to reconstruct events, and also projective questions implying the respondent's ability to extrapolate patterns from the present to the future. The author summarizes the issues of time in her early and recent works and concludes that there is the temporal turn in the studies of social problems, social policy and social reality. The idea of integrating temporality and sociality results in the new components of the proposed analytical approach which emphasizes the agency of the scientific intelligentsia and updates the intellectual-educational and temporal content of the concept and thesaurus of social reality. The relevance and fundamental nature of the proposed approach are determined by the intersection of the temporality of the social life of individuals and groups with the sociological reflection of the fundamental categories and concepts of time in the academic discourse. Post-non-classical reality allows to conceptually explicate the temporality of inclusive-bifurcation sociality which explains institutional and microsocial problems of communities as non-linear worlds. The scientific-practical meaning of the proposed approach is that the concept of temporal social reality results in the study of modifications of value-symbolic and institutional characteristics of the discourse of the scientists' role as agents of post-non-classical reality.

Key words: social reality; temporalism; temporality; nonlinearity; polyphony of time; inclusive-bifurcation model

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### **Definitions of social reality**

The conceptual apparatus of any scientific text traditionally consists of a set of basic concepts developed within the paradigm chosen by the scientific community. Social reality is discussed and defined in sociological journals and encyclopedias, and by numerous authors; there are hundreds of publications about different types and forms of social reality, and some of them even have similar titles [14; 27; 28]. Although there are many definitions of social reality, they have some common components, emphasizing that social reality is the result of actions and interactions of individuals [41]; consists of generally accepted principles, laws and social representations [48–50]; presents a social kingdom and an idea [15; 51]; implies socially accepted tendencies and speech acts [8]; combines human actions, social facts and social structures [55]. Man creates social reality [30], and social reality creates personalities [55], groups, communities, organizations and states as if real objects [1; 40], invisible webs [2], social-cultural reality [1], social world, society, social roles and statuses [10; 13; 25]; undergoes progress and degradation [9; 32]; reproduces institutions and relations, culture and politics [29; 31; 36]. Interpretations of social reality depend on the understanding of time [42; 43] and the choice of theorical framework [23; 26]. In the ontogenesis of scientific categories, perceptual representations are distinguished from conceptual ones that are consciously accessible and support the long-term memory [8]. Whether the question is empirical or theoretical depends on the type of knowledge and the implicit representation of social world [52].

The combination of psychological and sociological approaches sets boundaries and principles for understanding social reality and temporality. On this basis, we can develop and apply a methodological tool of temporal reflection of individual events and periods of social life. In addition, the incorporation of the life-path paradigm into sociology as a part of the general conceptual trend made time, situation and process the key dimensions of the sociological theory [16; 53]. Reality is considered the biological nature of time, which added life to the picture of the universe [43; 7]. The theme of time, like the Phoenix bird, is constantly reborn from the ashes and returns us to the sociology of life [32– 34] as the most important hypostasis of social reality.

Thus, social reality is conceptually defined as the whole social life and the picture of social world. Certainly, we can fully realize the presence of temporal coloring only at the level of theory, while the transition to the academic social reality presupposes theorization of the analyzing consciousness and its products. Theory is a formal statement of the rules for the subject of research, of the ideas for explaining a fact, event or opinion [26; 49]. The central paradigm of the Newtonian scientific revolution adopted by the scientific community was a rational description of the mechanical picture of the world with a strict linear temporality, without subjectivity, personal, social and past events as memory.

Today the focus on time aims at overcoming the contradictions of macro- and micro-, objective and subjective [21; 35]. The conceptualization of temporality is evident in M. Foucault's genealogy [38] as related to social practices in time [44–46]. The social construction of time in cultural texts implies sociological, psychological, anthropological and philosophical problems, and the boundaries between them are rather conditional. However, numerous studies of social reality miss the most important methodological resource of social temporalism, which reveals integration processes between the conceptual apparatus of time and specific reality (for instance, the pandemic period as full of new meanings in the discourse of social bifurcations). In addition, the authorities do not take into account the temporal patterns of socially vulnerable groups, focusing on a higher level of justice, mitigating inequality, and achieving cohesion [44].

The scientific picture of the world plays an important role in understanding social reality by decoding many of its categories as temporal and by monitoring the academic social reality under the influence of scientific revolutions. Science is sometimes characterized as a deceptively broad name for too many different elements: special methods, knowledge, cultural values, and combinations of these components [22]. The concept of social time is rarely recognized as a special theoretical-methodological perspective, although it highlights new facets in the object and method of research in response to theoretical-methodological challenges.

# Polyphony of time as a reality rather than an allegory

The diversity and non-linearity of time have long been recognized, and by ordinary people before scientists. In the 1970s, one academician said about the article on the diversity of time that it was an allegory, not a reality. This remark inspired me to write an article with an alternative title, questioning the common phylogenetic basis of the theoretical challenges for sociologists and psychologists (attitudes, dispositions, beliefs, personality traits, representations, affects, etc.) [12]. Social sciences traditionally use categories related to temporality, cultural-historical evolution of methodology and epistemology. Social reality is multidimensional and accompanied by a concept of time, temporality, as both theory and paradigm. We no longer perceive time as an abstract philosophical category, we interpret time in the individual and typological perspectives as a multilevel phenomenon connecting the processes of social reality through institutions, organizations, trajectories of lifetime and numerous types of reality. This allows to clearly explicate the temporal logic of analysis in both the mode of chronology and separate temporal perspectives.

In general, the cultural-historical evolution of the scientific picture of the world, scientific rationality, can be represented in a special academic reality that

develops temporalism (concepts and theories of time) and reveals temporality (time of various social systems). Both related categories are determined by the cultural-historical period as the path of temporalism of different epochs starts in the Antiquity and goes through Modernity to Newton, Einstein and the Copenhageners led by N. Bohr [2; 11]. There were some doubts: the theory of relativity was accepted by admitting the fallacy of Newton's theory [39] and does not prove the multiplicity of time [3]. The temporality of the scientific picture of the world corresponds to the epoch and is formed by it, inheriting the authoritative features of the past. Thus, modernism is associated with mass production, extensive and rationalized state, and cultural homogeneity. In the industrial era, the organization of culture is linear temporality dominated by centralization. For Foucault, the modern project implies a punishment society, a panopticon [38]. Rigidly deterministic standards, including the idea of the linearity of time as chronology, methodologically support the idea of strengthening the state. Classical mechanics was considered a complete theory until another reality was discovered and limited the applicability of mechanics as neglecting relativistic and quantum effects.

When natural sciences distanced from classical mechanics, the picture of reality started to change, which led to the scientific revolution headed by the active part of the scientific community. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the classical representation of linear time no longer corresponded to new physical facts, and the theory of relativity adopted the concept of local time in the inertial reference frames. With the advent of non-classical and post-non-classical scientific pictures of the world [9], transparent global cultural flows and unambiguous class confrontations, the single time of everything disappeared, which determined a new image of reality, freedom from the absolute of the analytical approach, and synthesis of measurement and object-subject relationship. The scientific picture of the world was no longer exclusively natural-scientific, and the world appeared as a natural temporality with the inclusion of the person as merged with social reality.

### Movement towards social theory of time

In the past, there was a transparent picture of the world, clear social interactions and class relations, a simplified approach to social processes, a linear, mechanical understanding of time. Changes in such a worldview meant that the image of reality with linear and substantial time was pushed out of the academic methodology which does not adapt to the new multilayered temporality but rather revises it. However, conceptualization of social reality did not exclude a combination of macro-sociological analysis (interaction of social institutions and structures) with micro-sociological study of human behavior, values, activity and lifepath choice [50; 54]. This choice is of particular importance for those theories of temporalism which construct social reality: rationality affects [1; 5; 6] all spheres of social life; ethical modifications made the concept of social action

isolated from the classical theoretical debates and a part of the discussion [5; 6; 10] on history of culture.

Time in its various forms characterizes social reality as an object of sociology [53] in the macro- and micro-dimensions: social changes, interactions, duration and saturation of life, biography and age of individuals and social groups. The micro-level of time is based on the model of virtual micro-group and of interweaving individual chains of interactions in communities [27]. Temporality is implicit for every aspect of life and requires generalization and socialization of time in the discourse of social sciences [46]. In the evolution of science, temporality appears as temporalized; in the nonlinear picture we see discontinuity of time, the effects of uncertainty and risk; therefore, the concept of turbulent time is included in the academic discourse of international temporology and sociology. For instance, the studies of the course of social life show that the concept of structuration comes from temporality and history [37]. The life world is not organized linearly; when we cannot change the paradigm or versions of the future, the unipolar world is opposed by a multipolar one, and the linear arrow of time implies divergence and inversions. The sociological interpretation of time emphasizes the significance of transformation which affects people's lives not only as a resource but also as a social-cultural code.

Every theory has its own specific language. For instance, in quantum mechanics, according to the famous principle of complementarity, there are two realities and two scientific discourses, which emphasizes the importance of 'language' as a mediator between technology and culture [39]. The 'kaleidoscope of time' as a linguistic metaphor is associated with the vertical synthesis of hierarchies of physical and existential time, and interaction with nature acquired a mental character in sociology of nature [21]. The theory of relativity implicitly uses one universal time, but its source is the course of personal inner life [1; 3]. In the academic temporal discourse, priority is given to choice, freedom, fragmentation and uncertainty [2; 3], interconnection of heterogeneous approaches, hybridization of methods, focus on the unexpected and uncontrolled [1; 8]. Social events are more important than the astronomical ones [23; 25]; social practices receive from time the order of succession, meaning and direction [4] (for example, meeting deadlines became a value). Acceleration and deceleration of time are a part of social development as people switch to slow or fast life rhythms. Historical time is no longer considered a single chronology — it is a combination of many series, and each has a specific symbol of time.

Lenin's critique of empirio-criticism [20] for decades eliminated the existential forms of time, temporality of lifepath and possibility of its construction from Soviet social science. Only after the traditional science was enriched with discoveries, new theories and methodology, scientists returned to the study of time as an essential attribute of social reality. We are grateful

to Russian and Western temporologists for the 'rehabilitation' of subjective time — temporality as the most important feature of personal existence and the scientific community's creativity. Thus, social, historical, cultural and axiological interpretations of time were developed.

## A path to the time paradigm

Any of us, remembering childhood with an unknown past, a flashing radiant present, and a rapidly disappearing future, in adulthood sees a completely different picture of the world, to which we try to adapt. This is how the relativity of not relativistic but vital social time manifests itself. Moral principles, supra-individual universal rules and cultural matrices regulate the socialization of time as an existential channel of the cultural paradigm. In the development of the concepts of the scientific picture of the world and of the scientific paradigm as a set of research ideas and methods (recognized by the representatives of science [18]), objectivity merges with the means and operational schemes for gaining knowledge [17]. A conceptual explanatory model, proving the heuristic potential of the temporal reflection of social reality, develops in the external and internal transformations and everyday interactions.

T. Kuhn defined normal science as a paradigm accepted by the scientific community, and the incompatibility of paradigms — as the result of the diversity of academic communities, approaches, groups and schools, without criteria delimiting sciences [18]. We believe that the context of the concept of paradigm should be considered not just cognitively but in an expanded way — as determined by the cultural-historical epoch and as a feature, a social characteristic of the epoch and the scientists' consent. The scientific picture of the world is not only a system of ideas, theories and concepts but also the scientists connected by a certain methodology, by temporality of the particular time and by a system of ethical norms. Temporality of the scientific picture of social reality constantly changes due to the efforts of its main actor and creator — scientific intelligentsia. Scientific paradigm is a universal scientific intelligentsia in the cultural evolution of science.

Time is the universal context of social life [40] as society is a trans-temporal phenomenon, existing only in and through time. One of the key challenges and disadvantages is the lack of a developed concept and paradigm of temporality in theory, which makes it problematic for sociology to justify the status of the contemporary and relevant social science [53]. Although separated by centuries and countries, time researchers have become a community, and the head of the International Society for the Study of Time (ISST) J.T. Fraser is the author of the hierarchical and conflict theory of time [51; 52].

The most important concept of post-nonclassical dynamics is the theory of open systems of the macrocosm. The flow of energy can turn a stable state into instability, and the subsequent self-organization — into a stable non-homogeneous state, a dissipative structure [24]. The time of natural resources and temporality of vital forces co-exist in the self-organization of dissipative structures, in the asymmetry of the past and the future. New rationality, the idea of instability, refutes the idea of the absolutely controlled society and affects the intellectual environment [25]. The recognition that chaotic dynamics is inherent in all non-linear systems determined the latest scientific revolution. New social reality has new temporality: time is "the fundamental dimension of our being" [25] — we accept approximations in our description of nature; we are children of the arrow of time rather than creators of evolution [24]. Synergetics as an interdisciplinary scientific theory introduced mathematical statistics into real life, and theory of bifurcations replaced the deterministic description with the agency of an evolving system.

The Interdisciplinary Institute for the Study of Time Issues in the Moscow State University analyzed the natural-scientific nature of time as a unique feature of open systems [19]. This scientific school used the ideas of postnon-classical science to structure time as a property of synergetics and bifurcation theory, which allows the system to get new qualities with small external influences. In sociology, there is a concept of social collective actions differing from revolutions: coup d'etat, riot, uprising, putsch, tension, etc. define a spontaneous expression of discontent and anxiety [40]. Instability as a result of fluctuations is first localized in a small part of social system, and then leads to its new condition. In the dissipative process, fluctuations take a new direction, lead to a further evolution of reality, and it is impossible to trace a separate trajectory of temporal development, only its probability, which is true for both natural systems and social reality. The scientific picture of the world combines intelligence and bifurcation. Social reality is not only a set of strata or classes that do not have an equal access to the resources of the system; it is also a picture of the world, a product of the scientific community as an agent of the epoch in the cultural context of the specific situation [5; 6]. Time formed by the intellectual picture of culture is filled with the values of social life, which has a qualitatively heterogeneous, hierarchical structure dependent of social and individualized interactions [43].

Thus, the post-non-classical social reality allows to explicate the fundamental theory of time as temporality of the inclusive-bifurcation social reality, which explains institutional and microsocial problems of communities as nonlinear worlds. The synergetic approach shows that the transforming scientific rationality changes both the image of the world and the scientific methodology to study it. The researcher is an agent changing personal and social temporality, and the theory of time as the temporalism of the epoch. The representative of the scientific intelligentsia constructs an academic picture of the world, the ethos of science and the scientific community, which change social reality. Therefore, the concept of temporal social reality is a theoretical-methodological tool that allows to identify modifications of value-symbolic and institutional characteristics in the discourse about the role of scientific intelligence and of scientists as agents of post-non-classical reality. Their intellectual efforts contribute to the formation of the scientific picture of reality as an academic social reality within the paradigm of the era.

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# Социальная реальность в ключе темпорализма: поиск методологии\*

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Аннотация. Цель предпринимаемого в статье исследования — концептуально связать социальную реальность, выбрав некоторые модификации современности как культуры, с категорией темпоральности. В статье обосновываются и применяются гносеологические возможности темпорального поворота, по-новому раскрывается агентно-субъектное понимание социальной реальности. В фокусе внимания автора — потенциал темпорального дискурса, слабо артикулированного в современных публикациях, но имманентно присущего социологической науке. В опросной методологии широко представлены переменные, относящиеся к прошлому и предъявляющие требования к памяти, возможностям реконструирования событий, а также проективные вопросы, предполагающие способность респондента к экстраполяции закономерностей из настоящего в будущее. Автор анализировал проблему времени и в ранних, и последних своих трудах, приходя к выводу, что в исследованиях социальных проблем, социальной политики и социальной реальности назрел темпоральный поворот. Идея интеграции темпоральности и социальности имеет своим следствием новизну компонентов предлагаемого аналитического подхода. Научная новизна и достижимость решения поставленных задач обусловлены оригинальным конструированием обновленных, включающих агентную роль научной интеллигенции, интеллектуально-образовательный и темпоральный компонентов концепта и всего тезауруса социальной реальности. Актуальность и фундаментальность предложенной темы объясняется давно назревшим пересечением темпоральности социальной жизни индивидов и групп с социологической рефлексией фундаментальных категорий и концептов времени в академическом дискурсе. Постнеклассическая реальность позволяет концептуально эксплицировать темпоральность инклюзивно-бифуркационной социальности, объясняющую институциональные и микросоциальные проблемы сообществ как нелинейных миров. Научно-практическая значимость предложенной методологии состоит в том, что концепт темпоральной социальной реальности позволяет исследовать модификации ценностно-символических и институциональных характеристик в дискурсе роли ученых как агентов постнеклассической реальности.

**Ключевые слова:** социальная реальность; темпорализм; темпоральность; нелинейность; полифония времени; инклюзивно-бифуркационная модель

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