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Cognitive Prospects in Sociology as a Representation of Social Rationality

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This paper views the cognitive prospects in sociology in terms of postnonclassical (universum) sociological theory of rationality. The author characterizes the cognitive prospects as one of the representations of rationality and examines them in the unity of cognitive and pre-cognitive components. This view allowed sorting out three main prospects expressing three types of rationality: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional.

Keywords: cognitive prospects, rationality, postnonclassical (universum) theory of rationality, types of rationality.

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Research area: sociology.

Introduction. Currently in sociology the statement about insufficiency of epistemological reflection from the standpoint of the present stage of sociological knowledge development is rightful. The approach to the cognitive prospects consideration in sociology from the perspective of postnonclassical (universum) theory of rationality (Trufanov, 2012, p. 87-91) which can make a positive contribution to such a reflection implementation is applied in the paper.

The cognitive prospects are referred to the ways of social reality understanding (the models of sociological explanation and research programmes), expressed in the key interpretive schemes. Problematisation of correlation of the concepts of "prospect", "paradigm", "metaparadigm" and "research programme" is

beyond the scope of the paper and, therefore, in all cases the concept of "cognitive prospects" will be applied, as there are reasonable grounds to its application. Differences between the prospects are set on the basis of normative, logical, methodological and substantive theoretical standards used in them (Deviatko, 2003, p. 44). These characteristics, as a rule, become the basis for the cognitive prospects classification. Thus, to distinguish cognitive prospects, Russian and foreign sociologists use characteristics of their basic theoretical assumptions, the method of interpretation of the object under observation, the language of the object description, used explanatory schemes, scientific standards, methods of verification, etc. Classifications built upon these grounds largely solve the problems of

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understanding and structuring of the accumulated experience of social cognition. Along with that, from the point of view of the modern postnonclassical sociology, such classifications have a common feature, which makes them controversial: the setting of the “absolute observer” that characterizes cognitive prospects as systems of theoretical coordinates, excluded from the structures of the life world, free from the social group preconditions, i.e. as an autonomous section of reality are traced in them. In addition to that, the given autonomy of prospects as a special intellectual reality is entirely speculative, and the setting of the absolute observer was repeatedly criticized from the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge. Along with this, various social researches have repeatedly shown the entity of intellectual, social and affective processes. Thus, R. Collins, in his “Four Sociological Traditions” starts from the thesis that social science comes from a social basis that reveals science as socially motivated, determined by the society in which a scientist lives (Collins, 2009, p. 16). The results of L.S. Vygotsky’s studies indicate the continuity of intellectual and affective processes, which division turns thinking into “autonomous flow of thoughts thinking about themselves” (Vygotsky, 2011, p. 25). In fact, “every idea, in the processed form, contains affective relation of a person to reality presented in this idea” (Vygotsky, 2011, p. 26). The facts of subjective interpretation of reality are summarized by E.V. Zinchenko in the thesis that there are no natural facts in social life, any fact is included in the horizon of interpretation (Zinchenko, 2003). Entity of affective and social processes is shown in E. Durkheim’s conclusions about the nature of crime that confirm rootedness of criminal law norms in emotions and feelings of the society members. Crime is creates by a contrast between different acts and collective feelings, and comes from this opposition (Durkheim, 1990, p. 78-86). Awareness of the

latter is in the basis of collective assessments that create verbally formalized norms expressing collective feelings.

A. Gouldner’s thesis that social theories include two well-defined classes of elements: “postulates” that express the cognitive component of theories and “implicit fundamental assumptions” that reveal their precognitive foundations could become generalization of the abovementioned researchers’ conclusions (Gouldner, 2003, p. 54-62). Continuing this idea, it should be considered that such a structure is also peculiar to the cognitive prospects, which are expressed in the corresponding sociological theories. At that, postulates (verbally expressed representations of cognitive prospects) are represented as derivatives built upon precognitive grounds related to the peculiarities of researchers’ experiences of their relationships with reality. Such experiences are marked with different terms in the social sciences (penetrating orientations (Dodonov, 1978, p. 20) and overvalued experiences (Nemirovsky, 2002, p. 18), as social behavior determinants determine the researchers’ commitment to a particular cognitive prospect.

Thus, the abovementioned grounds for the cognitive prospects classifications allow us to classify not the prospects as such, but their theoretical principles – the cognitive component of prospects. This circumstance leads to the fact that within the frames of such classifications cognitive prospects in sociology are deprived of their basic grounds moved above the boundaries of reality. Thus, the problem is in the need for the use of such a ground to classify the cognitive perspectives, which would allow considering the latter as an integral part of social reality, returning them basic rootedness. Postnonclassical (universum) theory of rationality could become the tool for such a search, in the context of which the cognitive prospects are seen as one of the representations of social rationality. Classification,

built within the framework of such an approach will allow complementing the existing methods for the prospects classification in sociology and offer a variant to the aforementioned problem solution. In this paper, we do not claim for a complete overview of sociological theories (it is the task of a separate fundamental research), but set the task to discuss their amount, sufficient to explain our point of view.

The current state of the subject of research. There are different classifications of the cognitive prospects in modern sociology, among which there are both dichotomous and polytomous. A common dichotomy is the classification where scientist and humanistic prospects are separated. Scientism is a “direct” prospect, based upon quantitative methodology and sees society as an objective reality; humanistic prospect is “reverse”, based upon qualitative methodology and anthropocentric in the principle of social reality understanding. Sociological positivism, structural functionalism and Marxism are referred to the first one; symbolic interactionism, phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology to the second. The grounds for this classification are the object of observation and the method of its interpretation: in the first case, the object is supra-individual social reality studied by quantitative methods, in the second – personal reality studied by qualitative methods. Within the frames of another dichotomy, on the one hand, the prospect explaining diversity of cultural and social phenomena by the logic of external regulatory principles, “external inflicting beginning” and on the other – the prospect asserting the autonomy of cultural content, the field of meaning, recognizing that “the scope of symbolic classifications has inflicting power”: “iron cage vs. culture-autonomy” are discussed (Kurakin, 2005, p. 64). Classification of the cognitive prospects on the basis of the underlying basic assumptions is thoroughly developed.

This basis brings to life the dichotomies of “methodological” individualism, anthropocentric in its basic assumptions, “methodological” holism asserting the superiority of society over an individual, as well as subjectivism – objectivism (Deviatko, 2003, p. 47).

Among political classifications the following ones call for attention. R. Collins identified four prospects that he called sociological traditions (Collins, 2009, p. 12-14): the conflict tradition, which the author sees in the sociologies of K. Marx, F. Engels, M. Weber, K. Mannheim, C.W. Mills, L. Coser, R. Dahrendorf, etc.; rational (utilitarian) tradition to which social exchange theory and rational choice theory (action) are referred; Durkheim’s tradition presented at the macro and micro levels of sociological analysis, where the author considers the sociology of A. Comte and H. Spencer, functionalism of T. Parsons and R. Merton, structuralism of C. Levi-Strauss, social anthropology, cultural capital theory by P. Bourdieu, the theory of interaction ritual chains by R. Collins, et al. as its the starting points; micro interactionist tradition “that moves from Charles *Horton* Cooley, W.I. Thomas and George Herbert Mead to Harold Garfinkel and ethnomethodologists.” The feature of the key characteristics of social reality that acts as a kind of optics, through the prism of which the researchers observe this reality is used as the basis in the classification. In the conflict tradition it is, accordingly, a conflict, in Durkheim’s tradition – solidarity, in the utilitarian tradition – exchange, and identity in micro interactionist tradition (Collins, 2009, p. 10). G. Ritzer uses four criteria on the basis of which he identifies the paradigms of social facts, social definition and social behaviour: theoretical sample, the subject area determination, methods and theories (Ritzer, 2002, p. 580). A.A. Davydov distinguishes humanitarian, natural scientific and mathematical paradigms, which specific character is established according

to the criteria of the applied explanatory schemes, methods of verification, scientific standards and description languages (Davydov, 1992, p. 85). S.A. Kravchenko identifies five metaparadigms, the differences between which are determined by the factors of pluralistic society and the nature of its self-development, deterministic increase in dynamic complexity and reduction the time scale of existence (Kravchenko, 2007, p. 9). They include positivist metaparadigm, based on the postulate of linear development; interpretative metaparadigm claiming numerous development opportunities and subjectively constructed worlds; integrated metaparadigm explaining socio-cultural dynamics of society through the prism of uncertain fluctuation, unintentional consequences and ambivalence of functionality/dysfunctionality; reflexive metaparadigm of modernity, discussing society in the terms of fragmentation, dispersion, social reality gaps where reflexive actors act in the elusive world; nonlinear metaparadigm of postmodernity where society is represented as global local diversity permeated with bifurcations.

From the brief overview it is clear that the grounds used for the cognitive prospects classification allow classifying their theoretical positions mainly. The latter are characterized by various methodological and methodical aspects that determine the existence of a number of classifications, where these aspects become the grounds for theories separation. This circumstance leads to the appearance of different systems for theoretical positions classification that are not always correlated with each other. We intend to consider cognitive prospects as a representation of social rationality, which will allow approaching the task of their classification in terms of the types of rationality, revealing various levels of social reality. Such an approach gives possibility to classify not only theoretical positions, but

prospects as such, in the unity of the cognitive and precognitive components.

Theoretical approach. Universum theory of rationality developed within the framework of postnonclassical (universum) sociological approach acts as a theoretical tool in our research (Nemirovsky, 2008; 2002; 2003). The main provisions of this theory, justification of its necessity and theoretical results were discussed in previous works (Trufanov, 2013), therefore, we will confine ourselves to pointing out its main thesis on which we will be based in this study.

From the point of view of the common definition rationality is totality of the verbalized reflective contents of social reality, constituted by reflective practices of individual and group social subjects. In this sense, rationality appears as cognitive self-appeal of social practice. Such self-appeal generates its layer of social reality that reflects existence and development of the latter by the cognitive means. Rationality in this sense is an attribute that separates the world of culture from the world of nature, human society from other associations.

Structural and dynamic properties of rationality are explicit from the standpoint of postnonclassical (universum) sociological approach. Diatropic principle of minimum universum, acting as the core of this approach, allowed to identify a minimum amount of characteristics necessary to describe rationality of any social system. We well briefly outlined two key characteristics fundamental in our study. 1. Social rationality is dialectical unity of reflective and non-reflective contents of social reality that form functional unity. 2. Social rationally forms three types that express hierarchy of the levels of social systems evolutionary development. Pre-conventional type of rationality expresses material and energy level of social development, where social practices, conventions and structures that serve basic organic level of axiological-

requirements system of social subjects are represented. Individuals here strive to achieve personal gains through competition (*Homo Economicus*). Conventional type of rationality reflects functional and organizational level of society development. Here social practices and conventions that serve the class of social needs determining commitment of social subjects to group norms and values are represented (*Homo Sociologicus*). Post-conventional type of rationality expresses information level of the society development at which social practices, manifesting spiritual level of the motivational system of social subjects connected with their aspiration for creativity and self-actualization are represented. Here, the individual has a relatively high degree of autonomy from the group conventions and acts as the source of his/her own senses and orientations of behaviour. Correlation of these types of rationality expresses the current situation of any social system existence and development.

The characteristics given are a part of the ideal typical model of social rationality with all the opportunities and limitations typical to such models.

Major results. 1. Cognitive prospects in sociology are one of the representations of social rationality. This means that cognitive prospects should be considered as the process and the result of verbalized reflection of social actors (in this regard, A. Giddens absolutely rightfully identifies social sciences as the formalized version of reflection (Giddens, 2011, p. 158). Thus, prospects appear not just as a system of theoretical propositions, discussing the reality from the certain point of view, but as the facts of the reality awareness through the prism of their own ontological characteristics of cognizing subjects. Such characteristics are connected with the initial determinants of subjects' activity and provide the basis for theories formalization. There

are examples in the history of sociology when the connection between particular qualities of theories and circumstances of their authors' lives were clearly visible. Thus, A. Comte's transition from "objective" to "subjective" sociology was accompanied by the changes in his world perception and personal life; K. Marx with his hot temper and striving to struggle (what is reflected, in particular, in his poetic work), connects one of the key contents in his social theory with conflicts and contradictions; ideological crisis, failures in political career and personal life influenced V. Pareto's sociological views.

According to A. Gouldner, "implicit fundamental assumptions" form the basis on which postulates are build, give basis for their selection, act as invisible cement connecting postulates with each other and are unconsciously included in the theory postulates (Gouldner, 2003, p. 55). Similarity of precognitive characteristics acts as the basis of researchers' commitment to the general system of theoretical propositions. Thus, "to the certain extend, theories are accepted or rejected because of the implicit fundamental assumptions they contain. In particular, it is more likely that specific social theory will be accepted by those who share the implicit fundamental assumptions of the theory and agree to them (Gouldner, 2003, p. 55)".

Thus, cognitive prospects in sociology should be understood as models of sociological explanation, based on the proximity of the world perception of the researchers supporting it, who experience the reality similarly, and have a similar attitude to the world and (or) its parts. On the contrary, attitudes dissonance leads to the appearance of different explanatory models that use their own interpretive schemes. This idea is not new: Plato in his dialogue "The Republic" pointed out precognitive foundations of solidarity. He identified "unity of pleasure or grief, when almost all the citizens equally rejoice or grieve

if anything arises or perishes” as a factor that unites the state. On the contrary, “isolation of such experiences breaks the connection between citizens, when some are very depressed, and other delighted by the condition of state and its people.”

2. In terms of our approach, the cognitive prospects, as a representation of social rationality express pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional types of rationality, revealing corresponding level of the evolutionary development of society. Within the frames of these types cognitive prospects have distinctive features manifested both in their precognitive prerequisite and theoretical principles. Identification and formalization of these attributes in their relatedness with these types of rationality will allow to make cognitive prospects classification in the unity of the components constituting it. Since the implicit fundamental assumptions can be studied only through their verbal expression, we will make an attempt to reconstruct precognitive assumptions that form the basis for the modern sociological theories.

Here we will make the *hypothesis* that, if society is hierarchical correlation of material and energy, functional and organizational and informational levels of development (according to the universum sociological theory), cognitive prospects represent these levels as a form of social rationality. Next, a number of theoretical models applied in the light of the used approach will be considered.

Cognitive self-appeal of society at the material and energy level is disclosed in pre-conventional type of rationality. In the social sciences, as a formalized version of reflection, this type is expressed in theories interpreting social reality as a unity of interactions determined by “personal” motivations of social actors. Such motivations are connected with the individual (opposed to group) orientations of social subjects.

At that, the subject here is not free in the choice of orientations: they are defined by the necessity to satisfy the basic shortages of the organism determining their desire to acquire *individual resources* both at biological and social levels. Precognitive foundations of theories here are experiences of reality as a space of the atomized actors’ competition pursuing individual goals. The general model of explanation, which is used in such theories for social behavior interpretation, as well as the more extended social processes, can be expressed in the formula “personal goal – action.” The theories of social conflict, social exchange, rational choice and functionalism of B. Malinowski can serve as examples of theoretical samples, which should be generally referred to the representations of post-conventional type of social rationality.

Social conflict theories express a “vision of the social order, which supposes existence of groups and individuals trying to advance their own interests at the expense of others; open confrontations can take place in the process of struggle for benefits” (Collins, 2009, p. 61). Incompatibility of social actors’ goals connected with their physical survival, material, economic, power and other interests is discussed in various theories of social conflict. Steps towards achieving these goals will inevitably lead actors to confrontation. Social exchange theory by G. Homans studies behavior of individuals driven by a desire to meet their own needs by obtaining remuneration in the process of exchange activity with others. At this, at the level of group interaction such individuals also manifest egoism: they follow group norms insofar as they are aware that this following will bring them net benefit (Ritzer, 2002, p. 327). The similar view on social reality is represented in the theory of social conflict by P. Blau, who uses it for consideration of social interactions at micro and macro levels. At the level of macrosocial structures indirect exchange

connected with the exchange of remunerations between an individual and a collective, as well as between groups takes place. Such methodological individualism can be also traced in the framework of the rational choice theories. Social actors act in the direction of their own benefit maximization, make decisions about behaviour by correlation individual goals, means and conditions of activity. B. Malinowski's functionalism can be an example of the discussion of wider social processes from the point of view of the discussed prospects. He discovers determining factors of culture in the sphere of biological impulses of the human body. Culture is understood as an aggregate of cultural responses to the basic physiological needs of social subjects (Malinowski, 2005, p. 81).

Cognitive self-appeal of society at the functional and organizational level discloses in the conventional type of rationality. This type is expressed in sociological theories which interpret social reality as collective unity that has certain autonomy and determined by the activity of social subjects, motivated by group values. This interpretation gives priority to social and group identification of actors, which is a cognitive response to the importance of social needs, connected with group (opposed to individual) orientations. Precognitive grounds of theories in this case are experiences of social reality as cooperation of interacting actors committed to collective goals. The general model of explanation used in such theories to interpret social behaviour, as well as the wider social processes, can be expressed in the formula "social norm – following." E. Durkheim's sociology, T. Parsons' structural functionalism, and theory of social systems by N. Luhmann are the examples of theoretical models.

Thus, Durkheim emphasizes social solidarity as a key characteristic of the social state. Society, as independently existing reality, makes involuntary impact on individuals,

determining regulatory predetermination of their social behaviour. In structural functionalism with its basic idea of social order, the focus is made on systematicity and balance as the key characteristics of society. Social system as a complex of regulatory rules, values and beliefs, consists of subsystems that provide satisfaction of the four basic needs of social actors – goal achieving, integration, adaptation and maintaining samples. In N. Luhmann's social systems theory, society as an autopoietic system, produces its own basic elements, creates its own boundaries and structures, it is self-referential and closed. Society exists as communication, and separate individuals refer to it to the same extent to which they are the parties of communication. In other aspects (biological and psychical) an individual is driven outside the society and regarded as a part of its external environment.

Cognitive self-appeal of society at the information level is disclosed in the post-conventional type of rationality. This type is expressed in sociological theories that reveal social reality as a sphere of activity and interaction regarding autonomous actors, implementing subjectively significant meanings in this activity. Unlike theories expressing pre-conventional rationality of society, social actors in this case acquire relative freedom from biological and social determinations, and become the source of their own orientations. Their social behaviour appears as the process of such orientations implementation (self-realization concerning the autonomous subject). Precognitive foundations of theories here are experiences of social reality as inter-subjective in its nature, as the space where self-actualizing social subjects act. The general model of explanation, which is used in such theories for social behaviour interpretation, as well as the wider social processes, can be expressed in the formula "subjective meaning – expression" (it is indicative that T. Parsons uses the similar

formula to denote idealistic theory of action, in the framework of which action is represented as a process of the subjective meaning emanation (Parsons, 2002, pp. 145-146). The examples of theoretical models are: the Subjective (ethical and sociological) School of Russian sociology, phenomenological sociological approach and existential sociology.

Thus, in P.L. Lavrov and N.K. Mikhailovsky's sociology the driving force for the society development are individuals with their subjective interpretation of reality. According to P.L. Lavrov's "anthropological" point of view, at the highest stage of development personality develops an ideal of human dignity and brings it into life, what expresses the motives of social activity of the personality. N.K. Mikhailovsky as well, pointing at the necessity of considering the subjective factor in social processes study, puts personality, with its feelings, thoughts and desires in the center of his theorizing. In phenomenological approach the modern society is discussed as a multiple of life-worlds, based upon the subjective perception of social context. Phenomenologists make life experience of social actors' consciousness that construct social reality the subject of study. In the study of social processes the focus is set on the principles of organization of the subjective experience of the social world. Within the frames of existential sociology the conception of existential I appeals to the unique experience of a person in the context of the contemporary social conditions – experience that is most clearly reflected in the continuous feeling of formation and active participation in social change (Postmodern..., 2002, p. 7). Existential sociology refers to the spiritual level of social – study of verbalization of the meaning of being and the subject authenticity: "The first question that we always face, referring to the problem of existence is the question of "meaning" – "Why do we exist?" (Mel'nikov,

2008, p. 92). The subject field of existential sociology is expressed in such categories as the meaning of existence, authenticity, death, absurd, freedom, responsibility, choice, etc.

Resume. In sociological theories as representations of social rationality, there are three basic cognitive prospects that express cognitive self-appeal of society and correspond to pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional types of rationality. The above mentioned characteristics allow classifying prospects according to the type of rationality to individualistic, holistic and subjectivistic respectively. We emphasize that individualism in this case is to be understood as a prospect, revealing not the aggregate of self-realization of the free subjects constructing reality, but as a collection of individuals' interactions, determined by basic deficiencies of the body and acting towards personal gain achievement. If we consider the proposed classification in the light of the opposition "objectivism-subjectivism", than individualistic and holistic prospects express the essential features of objectivism, when the determinants of social behaviour are beyond social actors' will and act as compulsive beginnings. In the first of the mentioned prospects the source of coercion is individuals own deficits, largely related to the biological foundations of behaviour, in the second one – the aggregate of social and cultural preliminary instructions. The subjectivist perspective has signs of constructivism and places the source of social behaviour to the personal reality of the social subject.

Major characteristics of the aforementioned prospects are summarized in the table (Table 1).

In the proposed classification the dichotomy of "methodological individualism – methodological holism" gets detailing and becomes a trichotomy due to its complementation by the subjective prospect (we will emphasize ideal type character of the above categories). In addition to the

Table 1. Cognitive prospects in sociology from the point of view of postnonclassical (universum) theory of rationality

Type of rationality	Cognitive prospect	Explanatory model	Theoretic examples
Post-conventional	subjectivistic	“subjective meaning – expression”; the source of social behaviour is in personal reality of self-actualization individuals; interaction regarding autonomous social subjects	Subjective School in Russian sociology; phenomenological sociology; existential sociology
Conventional	holistic	“social norm – following”; the source of social behaviour is in group solidarity of the interacting actors; cooperative interaction	E. Durkheim’s sociologism; T. Parsons’ structural functionalism; social systems theory by N. Luhmann
Pre-conventional	individualistic	“personal goal – action”; the source of social behaviour is in personal motivation of the atomized individuals; competitive interaction	rational choice theory; B. Malinowski’s functionalism; social conflict theory; social exchange theory

theories constructed within the framework of one or another of the above prospects, there are theories, in which several prospects are applied simultaneously. This are, as a rule, synthetic theories, striving to cover the whole range of the research subject manifestations in their analysis. One of the samples of such theories is postnonclassical (universum) approach, which methodological principles (Nemirovsky, 2007, pp. 65-77) made the view proposed in this paper possible.

Our point of view is, of course, very simplified, requires thoroughness and detailing. At the same time, it allows, on the one hand, to deepen the reflection of contemporary

researchers regarding their commitment to a particular paradigm, and on the other – to point out the necessity to apply each of the identified prospects to the analysis of its respective class of phenomena. Thus, individualistic prospect can be an adequate theoretical tool for studying material and energy level of social systems and hardly suites for the study of the phenomena of functional and organizational and informational levels. Application of this prospect outside its subject area brings theoretical difficulties to life. An example thereof can be so-called “paradox of cooperation”, which, when studied from the positions of other prospects, doesn’t show signs of paradox.

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Познавательные перспективы в социологии как репрезентация социальной рациональности

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В статье предложен взгляд на познавательные перспективы в социологии с точки зрения постнеклассической (универсумной) социологической теории рациональности. Автор характеризует познавательные перспективы как одну из репрезентаций рациональности и рассматривает их в единстве когнитивных и докогнитивных компонентов. Такая точка зрения позволила выделить три основные перспективы, выражющие преконвенциональный, конвенциональный и постконвенциональный типы рациональности.

Ключевые слова: познавательные перспективы, рациональность, постнеклассическая (универсумная) теория рациональности, типы рациональности.

Научная специальность: 22.00.00 – социологические науки.