# “Hours like bright sweets in a jar”:
# Time and Temporality in Literature and Culture

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Edited by

Alicja Bemben and Sonia Front

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Time and Temporality in Literature and Culture,
Edited by Alicja Bemben and Sonia Front
Reviewed by Jadwiga Uchman, University of Łódź, Poland

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# THE EDITORS' PREFACE

In his *Time and the Novel* Adam A. Mendilow has noted that the previous century underlines the significance of the study of time and temporality to the point of "time-obsession of the twentieth century which reveals itself in every art."[1] It is perhaps because writers and artists feel that "Only by getting to grips with the time-problem can they understand the meaning of living and acquire a true perspective of reality; only through their solution of the time-problem can they solve the problem of their art."[2] While certainly modernity has been fixated on time, in fact people have always attempted to solve its mystery. The aspect of time as an existential problem is highlighted, but not limited to, in the present volume. The collected papers undertake to investigate time and temporality from a number of interdisciplinary perspectives: literary or film studies, postcolonial theory, physics, philosophy, psychology, urban studies, history and gender studies. The wide spectrum of scholarly approaches encompasses chapters dealing with the convergences of time and human psyche, time and the body, time and memory, time and trauma, time and change, time and cultural reproduction, time and language, time and the city, and time and identity.

The volume is divided into two sections: "Frameworks" and "Readings." "Frameworks" offer some broader contexts and theoretical positions from which to approach the notions of time and temporality. "Readings," on the other hand, concentrate on close readings of individual literary texts or films from a variety of critical standpoints.

The book is opened by **Tomasz Burzyński** (University of Silesia, Poland) who proposes some methodological reflections on temporal anatomies in cultural studies and social sciences. He juxtaposes theories promoting the conceptualization of time as the linear progressive notion of socio-cultural development with non-linear notions of "multiple modernities" and "reflexive modernization," in which the pattern of history arises from the contingent and multidirectional "intermeshed plurality of events." He investigates the consequences of employing such temporally-oriented analyses.

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[1] Adam Abraham Mendilow, *Time and the Novel* (New York: P. Neville, 1952), 12.
[2] Mendilow, *Time and the Novel*, 16.

**Sonia Front** (University of Silesia, Poland) traces the shifts in the notions and conceptualizations of time in western culture and their literary counterparts, representations and parallels. Examining the influences on modernist and postmodernist cultural and literary concepts of time, she emphasizes the scientific revolution performed by the new physics, and explores the representations of its concepts connected with temporality in British physics fiction/quantum fiction.

**Katarzyna Ancuta** (Assumption University, Bangkok) in her urban study of the city of Bangkok discusses the multiple temporalities of the city. In contrast to the dominant descriptions of Bangkok's time as frozen, halted by the eternal traffic jam, Ancuta sheds some light on what she calls "the second city," spectral and ephemeral in its being, which is realized through the ritualistic performance of its inhabitants.

The following two articles, opening the section of "Readings," are concerned with postcolonial temporalities, trauma and memory. **Katarzyna Nowak-McNeice**'s (University of Wrocław, Poland) point of departure in her essay is the assumption that Americans locate their sense of unique identity in the temporal amputation, chopping off their past and turning to the future. On the basis of Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona* (1884) Nowak-McNeice shows that the denied past demands the process of mourning, otherwise it is going to return hauntingly. The exorcism of the past is also performed by the characters in the postcolonial speculative short story "Griots of the Galaxy" (2004) by Andrea Hairston, analyzed by **Agnieszka Podruczna** (University of Silesia, Poland). The story rewrites the past from the point of view of the marginalized subject, offering disruptive narratives and polyphonic disjointed memories as the site of the construction of identity, which defies the colonizing linear master narrative.

**Sławomir Konkol**'s (University of Silesia, Poland) paper does not stray from the subject of trauma and the spectral past, which is the focus of Graham Swift's *Waterland* (1983). Applying Lacan's theories, Konkol investigates the temporal collapse at the moment of the traumatic event and the protagonist's ceaseless attempts to assimilate and process the event through storytelling that would enable liberation from the entrapment of trauma.

**Alicja Bemben** (University of Silesia, Poland) scrutinizes temporal ruptures in three novels: time-travelling in *Seven Days in New Crete* (1949) by Robert Graves, the reversed worldline of *The Man Who Lived Backward* (1950) by Malcolm Ross and the forward and backward movement in time during the journey to prelapsarian wholeness in Alejo Carpentier's *The Lost Steps* (1953). All the strategies serve, in Bemben's

understanding, as an active confrontation with mechanical time which strips the characters' lives of meaning.

In the following chapter, **Jacek Mydla** (University of Silesia, Poland) draws our attention to the irregular temporalities that precede modernity. He offers an exploration of human time in William Shakespeare's plays, concentrating on the intersection of time and language in *Richard II* (1595). Human concerns with time are not only voiced in language but also related to it, therefore, Mydla argues, if language is negotiable, then time is as well.

The concluding chapter by **Karen Heald** (School of Art, Design, Technology, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK) provides a short overview of complex female temporalities in film, emphasizing ephemeral and liminal psychological states, such as dreaming, imagination, states between wakefulness and sleep, reverie and the unconscious, and referring them to Julia Kristeva's notions of the semiotic *chora* and "women's time." In her trans-disciplinary project, Heald, a scholar and an artist herself, collaborated with creative practitioners, sociologists and scientists of different professions to finally encapsulate the results of the research in her poetic, painterly, antilinear "dream films."

What comes to the foreground in all the articles is the fundamental antilinearity and irregularity of the imaginary reconfigurations of time. If linearity resides in mechanical (clock) time, mathematical time, Christian time, some notions of progress, colonial master narrative as well as the human psychological arrow of time in its irreversible being-towards-death, then fictive temporalities manifest themselves as the continuous resistance against these linearities. Sense-making strategies always encompass disobedience against the inhuman rigidity of the mechanical time of institutions, work, government, power and the Hegelian realm of devouring Chronos, endeavouring to colonize the human psyche. Trying to resist this hegemony of linear time, literary, cinematographic and cultural practice enacts exploding temporalities to reflect the multifacetedness of psychological time, female time, trauma, temporal layers of the city, digital time, the time of the new physics, and the colonial experience from the point of view of the colonized. These types of experience always clash with linear time as though exposing its dehumanizing effect. In their multi-directionality of the sense of time, they can be visualized as "bright sweets in a jar."[3] The metaphor, borrowed for our title from Penelope Lively's novel *Moon Tiger* (1987), points to the simultaneity of the experienced moments of time. In our collection, various other metaphors and

[3] Penelope Lively, *Moon Tiger* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 108.

figurations have arisen, which can be interpreted as the counterparts of Lively's "bright sweets in a jar": "multiple modernities" or "reflexive modernization," "polyhistory," "polyphony of memories," "time broke[n] in a disordered string," "polychronic time orientation" in the city and prelapsarian wholeness. Likewise, the articles in the two sections of our book can be treated like "bright sweets in a jar" themselves, by which we suggest that they be read without the imposed order (although, of course, the linearity of the form of a book forces an order).

From the problematizing of chronological time presented in this collection various notions and conceptualizations of rhizomatic temporalities emerge: "liquid time," "unbounded time," frozen time, "perpetual present"/"extended present," empty time (as opposed to quality time), chronotope, "schismatic temporality," "instantaneous time," deep time, fugal time, kaleidoscopic time, forking paths, a backward worldline, and others. All of them serve to underline the plurality, heterogeneity and instability of the experience of time as well as its constant reluctance to be subjugated in simple and unequivocal definitions. They also corroborate the constant interest of many thinkers in describing various dimensions of time experience and its philosophical implications.

As demonstrated, the papers in the present collection constitute a truly inter/trans-disciplinary approach to time and temporality, sometimes revealing unexpected intersections and results. In so doing, the volume fills a gap in criticism and research on temporality, as the previously published studies can usually be located within the boundaries of one discipline. We hope, therefore, that the volume will become the focus of critical attention of scholars, critics and students of the subject who look for a multiplicity of perspectives.

# FRAMEWORKS

# CHAPTER ONE

# TIME AND CULTURAL PRACTICE: SOME METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS ON TEMPORALLY-ORIENTED ANALYSES IN CULTURAL STUDIES

TOMASZ BURZYŃSKI

> "Now, it is very remarkable that this is so extensively overlooked," continued the Time Traveler, with a slight accession of cheerfulness. "Really this is what is meant by the Fourth Dimension, though some people who talk about the Fourth Dimension do not know they mean it. It is only another way of looking at Time. *There is no difference between time and any of the three dimensions of space except that our consciousness moves along it.* But some foolish people have got hold of the wrong side of that idea."[1]

## Introduction

It seems relatively easy to forget that time is an essential element of cultural practice and, by the same token, an indispensable component of culturally-oriented methodologies. The significance of temporal variables in cultural studies is very often lost in the maze of counterfactual theoretical options and academic disputes over the ontology of socio-cultural realities. Likewise, the methodological importance of time-centered analyses is very frequently forced to give way to more conventional investigations aiming to uncover the essence of cultural practice by means of referring to the binary opposition between language system and interpretation, as is the case with a plethora of structural-

[1] Herbert George Welles, *The Time Machine* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1898), 8.

functional and historico-interpretative approaches. It also means, to put it slightly otherwise, that the traditional methodologies of cultural studies are mostly absorbed with the idea and ontological status of human subjectivity (agency). The concept of time, therefore, is regarded as a secondary variable with reference to the notion of the Subject, *l'enfant terrible* of contemporary, post-structural cultural theories. Hence, the very idea of time is downplayed and veiled by frantic attempts to deal with the unnerving presence of the Subject, the notion which is despised as an illusory construction produced by systemic or structural constraints implicit in linguistic and social structures, or demonized as the Cartesian construct of a skillful interpreter and active appropriator of the exterior.

Concomitantly, the awareness of restrictions implicit in the aforementioned paradigms has motivated numerous scholars to construct theories aiming to overcome the conceptual tensions and contradictions implicit in the binary opposition between agency and structure. From this perspective, the displacement of temporal variables from cultural studies is seen as a result of being indifferent to a possibility of synthetizing the discourses of agency and structure in a coherent form of sequential and time-related order of cultural morphogenesis. Anthony Giddens' "theory of structuration" constitutes a forefront voice in the *heteroglossia* of contemporary synthetic discourses:

> The theory of structuration was worked out as an attempt to transcend, without discarding altogether, three prominent traditions of thought in social theory and philosophy: hermeneutics or 'interpretative sociologies', functionalism and structuralism. Each of these traditions, in my view, incorporates distinctive and valuable contributions to social analysis – while each has tended to suffer from a number of defined limitations.[2]

This article aims to discuss the role of temporally-oriented analyses in the context of methodologies typical of social sciences and cultural studies. The text traces methodological consequences of deploying temporally-oriented analyses in cultural studies and theories of culture and, more specifically, observes the theoretical ramifications of referring to time-related considerations and variables, as they are evident as the extensive proliferation of discourses based upon the notions of agency, cultural reproduction and morphogenesis.

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[2] Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (London: McMillan, 1981), 26.

## Time and Change

Being a meaningful component of social actions, time is also an indispensable element of cultural practice. This is not only to say that culture belongs to the order of reconstruction and remembering, and all cultural practices are processes *in statu nascendi* which utilize pre-existent symbolic, normative and axiological resources to re-deploy them in order to deal with a parade of counterfactual scenarios of the future. The temporality of culture is also anchored in the activist, agency-centred perspective on culture in which signs, symbols, norms and values are discussed as consequences and coefficients to individual and collective actions. In this particular view, culture, to put it otherwise, becomes automatically associated with the de Saussurean notion of the *parole* conceived as the on-going, action-related deployment of linguistic regulations. Yet, unlike Ferdinand de Saussure's theory, this overly activist perspective gives a methodological primacy to the agential sphere of language use and cultural practice which are both regarded as observable manifestations of societal *praxis*:

> In its different ways, it conceptualizes culture as interwoven with all social practices; and those practices, in turn, as a common form of human activity: sensuous human praxis, the activity thorough which men and women make history. … The experiential pull in this paradigm, and the emphasis on the *creative and on historical agency*, constitutes the two elements in the humanism of the position outlined.[3]

The conventional schools of social theory and cultural studies have tended to dismiss this ontological, action-related nature of temporality by conceptualizing time as an objective variable, a form of "environment" in which all social actions and signifying practices take place.[4] This form of a derogative conceptualization has been promoted by the sociological paradigm of modernization and the legacy of evolutionist methodologies which teach us that social and cultural realities could be conceptualised in terms of a series of supposedly timeless snapshots which constitute the

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[3] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: two paradigms," in *Media, Culture and Society. A Critical Reader*, eds. Richard E. Collins, James Curran, Nicholas Garnham, Paddy Scannell, Philip Schlesinger, Colin Sparks (London: Sage Publications, 1986), 39, emphasis added.

[4] Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory. Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 202.

diachronic configuration of social development.[5] In this particular view, time is automatically associated with the notion of systemic change that transforms whole social and cultural organizations according to the pattern of linear, evolutionary progress conceived as a differentiation of social and cultural forms. As a consequence, the inherently changeable nature of society and culture becomes somehow forgotten and downplayed as something taken-for-granted. One, consequently, tends to forget that "ontologically, society is nothing else but change, movement and transformation, action and interaction, construction and reconstruction, constant becoming rather than stable being."[6]

Modernization theories seem to convey a relatively simplified view on temporality in which the concept of time becomes subsumed within the idea of linear, developmental social and cultural changes. In this sense, time – as the classical modernization framework postulates – is associated with the gradual transformations affecting subsequent states of socio-cultural systems, the alterations which have been quite effectively conceptualized as a sequential logic of change implying the existence of the traditional (pre-modern), early modern (industrial), late modern (post-industrial), and networked (information-reliant) forms of societal cohabitation and cultural integration.[7]

In this specific sense, time is endowed with an overly and overtly ideological significance as a variable which follows a predictable, developmental path heading towards the Hegelian end of history. Yet, this kind of reasoning may be seen as a gross simplification since the very idea of linear, progressive development is liable to be debunked:

> … history does not possess any metaphysical, substantive reality. Thus, in this image, the pattern of history is not superimposed or pre-established, but rather emerges out of [an] intermeshed plurality of events. Such a pattern is not treated as unique or singular, but rather emerges as the combined product of multiple sequences, overlapping and parallel, convergent and divergent, contradicting and complementing each other. It is not seen as a uniform and unidirectional process, but may change

[5] Giddens, *Central Problems*, 198.

[6] Piotr Sztompka, "The Trauma of Social Change. A Case of Postcommunist Societies," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, Piotr Sztompka (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 155.

[7] Kazimierz Krzysztofek and Marek Stanisław Szczepański, *Zrozumieć rozwój. Od społeczeństw tradycyjnych do informacyjnych* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 2002), 36.

> direction, course and speed. It is not viewed as approaching any fixed, final goal, but is open-ended and contingent, allowing alternative scenarios.[8]

The notion of non-linear development seems to problematize the very concept of temporality. Non-linearity paves the way for a critical understanding that changes are not progressive in the sense of "moving ahead" according to the pre-established sets of social, economic or political coordinates. In this way, the very paradigm of modernisation is liable to be discredited since the developmental pattern assuming a fairly logical sequence of differentiation becomes dispersed into a parade of counterfactual modernization scenarios. This is, for instance, the case with the aforementioned idea of societal development conceived as a perfection of socio-cultural forms implying the gradual transformation of traditional agrarian communities into industrialised societies which, in turn, are doomed to be converted into post-modern (late modern) forms of networked society. This pattern has been problematized with the introduction of methodologies utilizing the theoretical constructs of "multiple modernities" or "reflexive modernization" in order to fulfil key explanatory functions. To listen to Ulrich Beck:

> This type of confrontation of the *bases of modernization* with the *consequences of modernization* should be clearly distinguished from the increase of knowledge and scientization in the sense of self-reflection and modernization. … Then "reflexive modernization" means the self-confrontation with the effects of *risk society* that cannot be dealt with and assimilated in the system of industrial society – as measured by the latter's institutionalised standards.[9]

The viewpoint, to put it even more methodologically, is tantamount to analyses of changes occurring *within* a given cultural system, not transformations *of* the whole system in question. Therefore, the former perspective is concerned, first and foremost, with the inherent dynamism of social and cultural institutions, with their innate potential for self-transformation. Consequently, cultural systems are perceived as entities in the state of fluidity, which allows for the gradual demystification of hidden developmental possibilities implicit in them.

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[8] Piotr Sztompka, *Society in Action. The Theory of Social Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 71.

[9] Ulrich Beck, "The Reinvention of Politics: Toward a Theory of Reflexive Modernization," in *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, eds. Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 6, emphasis added.

## Culture in the Process of Reproduction

When approached from the perspective of investigating changes occurring *within* socio-cultural systems, any form of temporally-oriented methodology is liable to face the problem of cultural reproduction indicating that culture is, at the end of the day, an amalgam of transient individual and collective actions as well as structural and institutional underpinnings of systemic perseverance.[10] Therefore, the notion of cultural reproduction is central to the very concept of culture because it implies its processual, active-reactive character which is embodied in mutually oriented signification processes and other types of reciprocal social actions:

> Culture is the production, reproduction, and transmission of relatively stable informational processes and their public representations, which are variously distributed in groups or social networks. The information is declarative and procedural, pertaining to ideas, beliefs, values, skills, and routinized practices as well as information about transmission process. The transmission occurs both between and within generations; moreover, the processes are shred unevenly, may be spread across non-localized groups, and may not be integrated.[11]

This inherent dynamism of cultural reality is experienced as the dialectic of continuity and change occurring within the systemic character of norms, values and signs of culture. Likewise, it is also discernible as a historical process manifesting itself as the *longue dureé* of institutional time as well as generalized changes of the whole system of culture. In this sense, as Chris Jenks declares, the very notion of culture "emerges from the noun "process," in the sense of nurture, growth and bringing into being."[12] Needless to say, this processual, inherently dynamic understanding of culture is etymologically intelligible and refers to the Latin expression *cultura animi* which evokes an idealistic, one may even say an Arnoldian,

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[10] Orlando Patterson, "The Mechanisms of Cultural Reproduction," in *Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, eds. John R. Hall, Laura Grindstaff and Ming-Cheng Lo (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 139-140.

[11] Patterson, "The Mechanisms of Cultural Reproduction," 139.

[12] Chris Jenks, "Introduction: The Analytic Bases of Cultural Reproduction Theory," in *Cultural Reproduction*, ed. Chris Jenks (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 3.

conceptualization of culture as an activity of mental self-perfection, a process in which intellectual capacities are cultivated and tended.[13]

Moreover, the theory of cultural reproduction postulates that culture does not belong solely to the realm of recollection in which the heritage of past experiences establishes its own conceptual hegemony over the actuality of the present day. Important as it may be, cultural tradition constitutes a wavering construct, a mere simulacrum which is constantly reproduced and altered by acts of interpretation and processes of symbolic communication. In this way, the very process of cultural reproduction seems to be based upon the faculty of memory conceived as an agential alternation of the past. Let us quote the following passage *in extenso*:

> In addition to this reinterpretation *in toto* there must be particular reinterpretations of past events and persons with past significance. The alternating individual would, of course, be best off if he could completely forget some of these. But to forget completely is notoriously difficult. What is necessary, then, is a radical reinterpretation of the meaning of these past events or persons in one's biography. Since it is relatively easier to invent things that never happened than to forget those that actually did, the individual may fabricate and insert events wherever they are needed to harmonize the remembered with the reinterpreted past. Since it is the new reality rather than the old that now appears dominatingly plausible to him, he may be perfectly 'sincere' in such a procedure – subjectively, he is not telling lies about the past but bringing it in line with the truth that, necessarily, embraces both present and past.[14]

The alternation of the past supplies a sense of temporal continuity which is indispensable for the process of cultural reproduction. This critical interplay between continuity and change is, for instance, a central element of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus* which indicates that all actions aiming to produce elements of symbolic culture are, at the same time, aimed to re-produce it in a sense of being anchored in the historically established modes of taste, and normative evaluation or moral judgement.[15] In this particular sense, the *habitus* functions as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to

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[13] Interestingly enough, a verb form "to culture" is very often forgotten and replaced by its contemporary counterparts.

[14] Peter Ludwig Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 180.

[15] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 53.

function as structuring structures"[16]; that is, the *habitus* operates as a systemic underpinning which supplies symbolic actions with their discursive, normative and axiological orientations.

The process-oriented understanding of culture paves the way for an overtly activist methodology in which cultural reproduction is perceived in terms of societal processes of conflict and negotiation taking place with regard to diverse components of symbolic culture. Being oriented at the persistency of such cultural constituents as norms, values or symbols, the process of cultural reproduction resembles, as a matter of fact, a discursive struggle taking place over the dominant or, as Stuart Hall puts it, preferred meanings.[17] Socio-cultural systems or institutions, consequently, resemble constantly changing matrixes or networks of inter-subjectively granted phenomena which are being constituted as a result of myriads of intelligible processes of communication as well as interaction undertaken by knowledgeable agents.

## The Temporality of Cultural Reproduction Processes

When converted into the conceptual reality of cultural studies, the ontological aspect of temporality suggests that the reproduction of culture involves three closely intertwined orders of temporality.[18] The first aspect of temporality is the reversible *durée* of daily routines. This is a temporal order which is constituted by the compulsion of constant repetition. Repetitiveness is, in this case, conceived as a temporal foundation of cultural order and, in the long run, an anchorage of relatively stable trust expectations vested in the reliability of social, economic or political systems. This is, to put it otherwise, the cornerstone of "ontological security"[19] indicating that trust vested in the continuity of things may function in terms of an "emotional inoculation against existential anxieties."[20] This, consequently, gives rise to a natural expectation that uncertainties and contingencies may be, to use a phenomenological nomenclature, bracketed off.

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[16] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 53.
[17] Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 98.
[18] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 34-36.
[19] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern* Age (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 36-42.
[20] Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity,* 39.

The reversible time of daily routines constitutes a form of temporality which is deprived of its own *telos*. "Daily life has a duration, a flow but it does not lead anywhere … time is constituted only in repetition."[21] The reversible *durée* of daily routines is reflected *mutatis mutandis* by external cultural realties. One quite naturally relies on the continuous flow of social order gesturing to the critical expectance that cultural resources are also endowed with an inherently repetitive character.

A strikingly dissimilar order of temporality is discussed when the problem of human ontogenesis becomes evoked. The overall course of human life institutes the irreversible time of human ontogenetic existence. As opposed to the reversible time of daily routines, which corresponds to the ontological security attained at the cost of compulsive repetition, the irreversible time of being-towards-death constitutes the symbolic foundation of individual identity. Psychologically speaking, this particular order of temporality is reflected by the typically human need for being meaningful; namely, for creating a personal self-narrative that would explain the supposedly meaningless and repetitive flow of daily experience by evoking a vision, no matter how fragile it may be, of personal self-fulfilment. Likewise, this form of temporality evokes an entirely different type of trust expectations. In this context, agents are obliged to vest their trust expectations in the life-long continuity of social and cultural institutions. In other words, this aspect of ontological security is related to a belief that one's existence will be safeguarded by the temporal coherence of successive states of society and culture.

The mutually exclusive expectations of repetitiveness and purposefulness are yoked together in a form of the reversible institutional time. This specific axis of temporality connotes as an essential element of trans-personal institutions of culture, a set of persistent structural rules and resources rendering possible the repetitiveness of daily routines and the purposefulness of human existence. The institutional time gestures to the historical rhythm of social and cultural institutions which indicates the supra-individual patterns of persistency and change evident, for instance, in the case of modernization processes.

This triadic typology is, in fact, useful only for purely analytic purposes. The very concept of cultural reproduction is based upon the critical premise that the process assumes the unity of the aforementioned orders of temporality:

> The reversible time of institutions is both the condition and the outcome of the practices organised in the continuity of daily life, the main substantive

[21] Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 35.

> form of the duality of structure. It would not be true, however, as I have already mentioned, to say that the routines of daily life are [the] 'foundation' upon which the institutional forms of societal organisation are built in time-space. Rather, each enters into the constitution of the other, as they both do into the constitution of the acting self. All social systems, no matter how grand or far-flung, both express and are expressed in the routines of daily life, mediating the physical and sensory properties of the human body.[22]

Agents rely upon the existence of the repeatable *milieu* constituting the day-to-day practice, as well as their "grand performance" representing the irreversible flow of activities heading towards the end of earthly matters. The temporal reality of the daily routine as well as the irreversible time of being-towards-death relate to each other and, consequently, create – to use Fernand Braudel's terminology[23] – the historically defined *longue durée* of social and cultural institutions. This reversible time of trans-personal phenomena constitutes the sphere of constraints as well as facilitations fostering and enabling the course of daily routine by supplying it with the rules and resources of systemic reproduction. By the same token, institutional time renders possible the sense of ontological security experienced with reference to the irreversible time of being-towards-death.

The triadic model of temporality is a useful analytic tool for observing socio-cultural processes and phenomena that are bound by time-related practices, as is the case of tradition. The cultural significance of tradition – to put it in the most general context – alludes towards a distinct strategy of organising and controlling time.[24] This concept ought to be understood in terms of a trans-individual phenomenon and, since individual traditions are not conceivable, it is tantamount to the *longue durée* of social and cultural institutions. Hence, traditions may be subsumed within the idea of collective memory or collective consciousness. The supra-individual aspect of the phenomenon gestures towards an idea that all traditions involve some degree of multilateral organisation of interpersonal relations as well as reciprocity. In this specific way, the term reflects the existence of social consent with reference to the accepted hierarchies of norms and values.

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[22] Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 36.

[23] Fernand Braudel, *On History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[24] Anthony Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," in *Reflexive Modernisation. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, eds. Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 62.

> Tradition, it might be said, is an orientation to the past, such that the past has a heavy influence or, more accurately put, is made to have a heavy influence over the present. Yet, clearly, in a certain sense at any rate, tradition is also about the future, since established practices are used as a way of organising future time.[25]

In the context of the aforementioned triadic order of temporality, the reign of tradition becomes a collective medium of memory rendering possible the organisation of reversible time associated with day-to-day activates. As far as pre-modern cultures are concerned, the authority of the past goes hand in hand with the organisation of activities concerning the totality of day-to-day pursuits, especially when those tend to involve coping with uncertainties and risks.[26] Moreover, the media of collective memory, such as myths, folktales, or legends, supply actors with solutions to problems of eschatology: they help re-organise human life so that it contains more sense and order in its process of oscillating for eternity. Running parallel to these statements is the appreciation of tradition as a living phenomenon; that is, a cultural institution that has no other conceivable mode of existence, than through the actions undertaken both in the scope of daily routines and human life in its totality.

## Agency and Structure

The temporal qualities of cultural reproduction processes pave the way for a methodological dilemma which is very frequently presented as a duality of agency and structure. The concepts, to cut a long story short, are subsumed within a discourse that aims to understand social and cultural realities from the perspective of an interplay between persistent and societally superintended rules of systemic reproduction (the aspect of "structure") and, on the other hand, creative drives which constitute momentary aberrations to the superintended rules of persistence and introduce changes to the otherwise systematic flow of socio-cultural phenomena (the aspect of "agency").[27]

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[25] Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," 62.

[26] Magic and myths seem to constitute a pre-modern response to, to use contemporary discourses, problems of occupational safety and risk management. See Bronisław Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology," in *The Myth and Ritual Theory. An Anthology*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 173-179.

[27] Tomasz Burzyński, "The Surplus of Structure. Towards the Morphogenetic Approach to Cultural Studies," in *The Surplus of Culture. Sense, Common-sense,*

When translated into the methodology of cultural studies, the duality of agency and structure gives rise to an inherently dialectic view on cultural realities which are conceptualized as compound totalities fusing forces of structural determinism with the typically agential propensity to introduce innovations to the already existing schemata of cultural resources:

> On the one hand culture provides a pool of resources of action that draws form it the values to set its goals, the norms to specify the means, the symbols to furnish it with meaning, the codes to express its cognitive content, the frames to order its components, the rituals to provide it with continuity and sequence and so forth. In brief, culture supplies action with axiological, normative and cognitive orientation. In this way it becomes a strong determining force, releasing, facilitating, enabling, or, as the case might be, arresting, constraining, or preventing action. On the other hand, action is at the same time creatively shaping and reshaping culture, which is not God-given, constant, but rather must be seen as an accumulated product, or preserved sediment of earlier individual and collective action.[28]

The duality of culture represents the innate potentiality of self-change or self-elaboration by means of actions undertaken by knowledgeable agents. In this specific context, the term "morphogenesis" is very often deployed to refer "to those processes which tend to elaborate or change a system's given form, state or structure."[29] From a purely morphogenetic perspective, culture is regarded as a changeable entity whose dynamism is rooted in actors' agency, the typically human *élan vital* that aims to reconstruct surrounding social and cultural environments. Being embedded in the theory of action, the theory of morphogenesis is not deprived of attempts to investigate into the external, structural and systemic conditionings of human agency. In this case, the reproduction of culture is perceived as both enabled and conditioned by individuals' interpretative actions, as well as by the forces of structural determination constituting the axiological, normative, symbolic, or discursive bases for the activities in question.

Despite its considerable and multifaceted methodological impact, the very idea of the structural-agential duality is a relatively new one in the humanities and social sciences. By contrast, the classical, deeply rooted in

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*Non-sense*, eds. Ewa Borkowska and Tomasz Burzyński (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 223-234.

[28] Piotr Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3-4.

[29] Margaret S. Archer, *Realist Social Theory: the Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 166.

the legacy of the nineteenth century philosophies, methodologies rest upon the formative notion suggesting that the dimensions of human agency and systemic and structural constraints should be treated in terms of a binary opposition. In this conventional sense, the idea of structures (or systems) is conceptualized as a depository of persistence, a relatively stable universe of objective relations which, as the case of Durkheimian/de Saussurean structural-functional approach teaches us, are constituted in the *longue durée* of socio-cultural evolution, not in the protean reality of everyday action or language use. On the other hand, the category of human activity is deposited in the hermeneutic and agential capacities of human consciousness whose intentional grasp functions to deploy subjective meanings to transitory acts of perception.

The contemporary insights into the nature of cultural practice[30] suggest that the two conventional perspectives, nevertheless, offer dilemmas as inexplicable as squaring the circle. Consequently, there is a need for developing a more synthetic discourse that would leave these debates behind:

> In the model of social becoming, the levels of structure in operation and of agents in actions will be treated neither as analytically separable nor as mutually reducible. Instead a third, intermediate level will be postulated, and it will be claimed that it represents the only true substance of social reality, the specific social fabric. If we think of any empirical event or phenomenon in a society, anything that is actually happening, is it not always, without exception, a fusion of structures and agents, of operation and action? Show me an agent who is not enmeshed in some structure. Show me a structure which exists apart from individuals. Show me an action which does not participate in societal operation. Show me societal operation not resolving into action. There are neither structureless agents nor agentless structures.[31]

The fusion of structures and agents is rendered possible by means of taking temporal variables into account. Time, as Margaret S. Archer observes, is an inevitable element of theory-making since "structure and action operate over different time periods … structure logically predates the actions that transform it and structural elaboration [morphogenesis –

[30] This perspective is most evident in Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration, Piotr Sztompka's theory of social becoming and Margaret S. Archer's morphogenetic approach.

[31] Sztompka, *Society in Action*, 91-92.

T.B.] logically post-dates those actions."[32] In this way, the introduction of time gives rise to a methodology which reflects the dynamic, inherently changeable nature of social and cultural realities and explains it in terms of the alternating sequences of structural determination and structural elaboration.

This temporally-oriented duality of agency and structure paves the way for an image of socio-cultural ontology that rests upon five interrelated premises: 1) structuralism, 2) creativism, 3) processualism, 4) possibilism and 5) reflexiveness.[33] These tenets constitute a theoretical basis for providing a more informed perspective on cultural phenomena in which time-related variables assume crucial explanatory functions with reference to observing changes taking place *within* the system of culture. In this sense, furthermore, the factor of time is indispensable in order to understand the nature of mutual relationships occurring between human action and interpretation, and structural rules and resources existing in the shape of constraints and facilitations implicit in systems of signs, norms, or values. Needless to say, the ultimate goal is to suggest an ontology that would be liberated both from the idiosyncrasies of interpretative theories as well as the structural-functional paradigm's scientific rigidity.

> It is a world in which reflexive individuals are seen as creatures and creators as the same time, social wholes as fluid relational networks humanly made, but also affecting people, and historical processes as the stream of incessant interplay of emergence and determination, in the course of which both individuals and society undergo cumulative transformations.[34]

Despite its deceptive name, the first premise rests upon a new interpretation of structuralism which postulates the necessity of perceiving socio-cultural realities in terms of patterns or regularities that may be observed within diverse empirical phenomena. In this context, cultural structures and systems are deprived of their nature *sui generis* and, consequently, are conceptualised in terms of societal aggregates comprising organised cultural practices. In this sense, culture is perceived as displaying certain structural proprieties; that is, regular patterns of symbolic-oriented actions which are undertaken in a relatively conscious manner. As a result, methodologies should be concerned, first and foremost, with observing

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[32] Margaret S. Archer, *Taking Time to Link Structure and Agency* (New Delhi: Eleventh World Congress of Sociology, 1986), 22. Quoted after: Sztompka, *Society in Action*, 106.
[33] Sztompka, *Society in Action*, 51-86.
[34] Sztompka, *Society in Action*, 86.

temporal regularities in the socio-cultural reality without granting them any mode of operation which is pre-existent with reference to actions undertaken by agents. This line of explanation, consequently, follows from the dimension of human actions towards the realm of emergent socio-cultural structures.

The premise of "creativism" refers to the dimension of creative drives implicit in agents perceived as active and goal-oriented participants in socio-cultural environments. In this context, individuals are inherently endowed with an impulse to act, and with an innate energy to initiate actions. Yet, at the same time, they refer to the external reality as a sphere of incentives and disincentives facilitating or restraining undertaken actions. In other words, agents are, to a certain extent, constituted and constructed within social and linguistic structures. However, at the same time, these systems function as the main vehicles of intentional, reflective creativity typical of human beings. From this perspective, an individual resembles the *homo creator*, an entity that uses encountered circumstances or objects in order to produce innovations. Consequently, in the context of operating agents, the creation made *ex nihilo* constitutes a totally illusory idea.

The premise of "processualism" refers to the nature of changes which take place with regard to society and culture understood as complete systems. As a product of human *praxis*, history is conceived in terms of an amalgamation of cumulated social actions and, consequently, is perceived as being deprived of its final objective. Nevertheless, the process of historical changeability does not constitute a chaotic universe of phenomena that manifest themselves in a random or accidental manner. It is characterised by a number of supra-individual rules constituting its sequential logic, which could be represented as the reversible time of institutions.

> Thus, in this image, the pattern of history is not superimposed or pre-established, but rather emerges out of the intermeshed plurality of events. Such a pattern is not treated as unique or singular, but rather emerges as the combined product of multiple sequences … .[35]

In other words, in spite of hopes expressed by enlightened Western intellectuals, the pattern of modernization is not a historical necessity and underdeveloped countries face plenty of possible routes towards modernisation, not only the one that has been conceived *ex post*, on the basis of historical experiences of the West. Hence, the notions of "multiple

[35] Sztompka, *Society in Action*, 71.

modernities" and "reflexive modernisation"[36] have been coined in order to put an emphasis on the non-linear, non-teleological process of socio-cultural development.

The premise of "possibilism" is based upon an assumption that actions participating in the re-production of the common socio-cultural habitat are simultaneously determined by their external circumstances. In a way, the assumption is a logical ramification of the aforementioned theses. Individuals are creators of the external socio-cultural environment, their agential potentialities become accumulated as patterns of historical changeability, yet history provides structural circumstances for human actions.

Finally, the duality of structure and agency assumes the reflexivity of social actors; that is, the intentionality of action which is a core aspect of human agency:

> 'Reflexivity' hence should be understood not merely as 'self-consciousness' but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life. To be a human being is to be a purposive agent who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively about those reasons (including lying about them).[37]

The idea of reflexivity is, nonetheless, strikingly dissimilar with reference to the structural-functional perspective on human subjectivity. Hence, it is the ideology heralding the demise of the subject – no matter how provocative it may be – that situates individuals as being irrelevant to the general construction of society and culture: "intentions or actions of human subjects, whether individual or collective, can easily be disposed of as irrelevant to the structural properties of the system."[38]

## Conclusions

The importance of time-related considerations and variables in the conceptual and methodological framework of cultural studies and social sciences may be perceived in terms of synthetic discourses that aim to bind the dimension of agency and structure in a form of cultural ontology that

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[36] Ulrich Beck, "Preface," in *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, eds. Urlich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 6.
[37] Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 3.
[38] Andrew Miller and Jeff Browitt, *Contemporary Cultural Theory* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 98.