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CLASSICS' SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION OF THE THEORY OF RISK SOCIETY: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF SCIENTIFIC IDEAS

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Стаття присвячена аналізу основних положень теорії суспільства ризику, представлених у розвідках У. Бека, Н. Лумана, Е. Гідденса. Спираючись на дослідження першоджерел, автор здійснює спробу структурування теорій суспільства ризику завдяки виокремленню схожості і відмінності наукових позицій класиків цього соціологічного напрямку в поглядах на соціальну природу ризику як конституванту соціального в сучасних суспільствах. У статті представлені основні напрямки критики теорії суспільства ризику у творчому доробку У. Бека, проаналізована онтологія ризику як складової комунікацій і соціальних систем у теорії Н. Лумана, наведені ризик-оптимістичні прогнози, представлені у роботах Е. Гідденса. Особу увагу приділено аналізу категоріального апарату теорій суспільства ризику класиків цього напрямку. У висновках дослідження йдеться про спільну позицію класиків теорії суспільства ризику щодо подвійної присутності ризику на структурному та діяльнісному рівнях як індикатора синтетичності їхніх соціологічних підходів. Автор аргументує тезу про трансформацію загроз і небезпек, з якими стикаються сучасні суспільства, у соціальні ризики. У дослідженні наведені «слабкі сторони» теорій суспільства ризику, наявність яких актуалізує необхідність подальшої розробки означеної проблематики, в тому числі вітчизняними соціологами.

Ключові слова: суспільство ризику, ризик, діяльність, рішення, сучасність, загрози, небезпека, ризики середовища.

Статья посвящена анализу основных положений теории общества риска, представленных в исследованиях У. Бека, Н. Лумана, Е. Гидденса. Опираясь на исследования первоисточников, автор осуществляет попытку структурирования теорий общества риска благодаря выделению сходств и различий научных позиций классиков этого социологического направления во взглядах на социальную природу риска как конституванту социального в современных обществах. В статье представлены основные направления критики теории общества риска в творчестве У. Бека, проанализирована онтология риска как составляющей коммуникаций и социальных систем в теории Н. Лумана, приведены риск-оптимистичные прогнозы, представленные в работах Е. Гидденса. Особое внимание уделено анализу категориального аппарата теорий общества риска классиков этого направления. В выводах исследования подчеркивается общность позиции классиков теории общества риска в отношении двойного присутствия риска на структурном и деятельностном уровнях как индикатора синтетичности их социологических подходов. Автор аргументирует тезис о трансформации угроз и опасностей, с которыми сталкиваются современные общества, в социальные риски. В исследовании представлены «слабые стороны» теорий общества риска, наличие которых актуализирует необходимость дальнейшей разработки обозначенной проблематики, в том числе отечественными социологами.

Ключевые слова: общество риска, риск, деятельность, решение, современность, угрозы, опасность, риски среды.

This article analyzes the main provisions of the theory of risk society represented in U. Beck's, N. Luhmann's, E. Giddens's works. Based on research of primary sources, the author has attempted structuring theories of risk society through provision on similarities and differences of classical approaches to the theory of risk society in sociological views on the nature of risk as social base of contemporary societies. In the article the directions of criticism of the U. Beck's theory of risk society are presented, the ontology of risk as part of communication and social systems by N. Luhmann is analyzed, the risk-optimistic forecasts by E. Giddens are given. The author emphasizes the common position of classical theory of risk society of the double risk presence on structural and activity levels as an indicator of their synthetic sociological approaches. The author argues the thesis about the transformation of contemporary society threats and hazards in social risks. The study shows «weaknesses» of theories of the risk society, which actualizes the need for further development of the designated problems, including domestic sociologists.

Keywords: risk society, risk, activity, decisions, modernity, threat, danger, environmental risks.

Over the last decade risk as a sociocultural phenomenon and sociological category takes its place in thematic mainstream of modern scientific sociological research. However, modern sociology researcher Julia Zubok risk [1-3] indicates pretty eclectic nature of the current state of the theory of risk society. According to her view, the definition of «risk society» in the classical theory of W. Beck and A. Giddens is limited to a very general

wording about a special stage of social development because of modernization crisis in which production of goods and services is displaced by manufacturing risks. Moreover, the researcher states that analytical models mostly are based only on the Western society and the Eastern European bloc of countries is ignored [4].

It is difficult to disagree with this opinion of the researcher because it is not only a marker of stylistic differences of contemporary sociological theorizing of the Western European and post-Soviet studies but evidence of different levels of constructing sociological theory of risk. While classics 'scientific exploration of the Western theory of risk society, to which, by the way, we also include achievements by N. Luhmann, is more inclined to constructing macrosociological vision of risk as constituent of social sphere, leading former Soviet sociologists' scientific explorations who study risk (mainly Ju. Zubok) contribute to the establishment of risk sociology as a theory of average level with a strong reliance on case studies.

That is how we explain the lack of a clear answer to the question of methodological status of sociology of risk as a sociological theory in modern scientific discourse and moreover, quite eclectic nature of sociological knowledge about risk that can hardly be nominated as an independent theory of 'risk society' (not concepts or approaches).

One of the steps towards institutionalizing the theory of «risk society» has to be structuring of scientific envisions, an option of formation it is finding common methodological ideas on the various aspects of risk and its associated phenomena of classics of the sociological thought, as well as singling out differences in their views. That's why the aim of this research is not only an analysis of key aspects of the theory of risk society in works by W. Beck, N. Luhmann, and A. Giddens but structuring the Western theory of risk society through a prism of similarity and differences of social views of these theoreticians.

In the opinion of Liverpool sociologist G. Mizen [5], the book 'Risk society' by W. Beck should be included into the list of the most influential academic works of the second half of the 20th century. Modern societies by W. Beck should be considered as risk societies, simultaneously exposed both to global threats (nuclear war, man-made disasters, and natural disasters) and to local risks of various kinds (family, professional, industrial, educational, etc.). In risk societies former criteria of stratification non actualize (education, wealth, property availability, gender, age, etc.) and are replaced by stratification axis 'risk appetite'. Risk is an inherent characteristic of modern society of reflexive modernism, so that on the institutional level stable social structures such as economy, family, political system, science, class division of society and other bases of industrial society frame in terms of reflexive development can no longer be reliable guides. Paradoxically their stability becomes a 'rupture cause' of social fabric: «People are released from forms of life and habits of industrial and public modern epoch... coordinate system ... life and thinking of industrial modernism – axis 'family and profession', «faith in science and progress' are shaken, link between opportunities and risks appears, risk society is outlined» [6, p. 16].

William Beck was one of the first who draws attention to a dual nature of risk – structural and constructive causes of risk – and in later works risk is defined as a social construct, in creation of which social groups take part – entrepreneurs, politicians, experts, representatives of the media. But W. Beck's position about risk perception is rather ambiguous: the author does not raise risk awareness problem, insisting on their outer nature concerning agents and their independence from perception process: «Evidence of poverty replaces risk perception; but only their perception, not their presence and influence: risks that are unseen grow particularly quickly. Social intangibility of risk society is not evidence of its unreality; on the contrary, it is the driving force that leads to this society, and therefore proof of its reality» [6, p. 76]. On the one hand, the researcher does not reveal the potential of risk perception as a behavioral strategy starting point for its elimination (prevention). Thus, he 'puts along' internalization and externalization of risks to activity-level of agent that deprives research scheme of completeness and integrity. On the other hand, the presented above quote demonstrates methodological weakness of Thomas's theorem and updates research potential of Hoffman theorem [7] which focuses on the importance of determining the correct context situation (definition of a situation as risky).

Categorical device of W. Beck's concept is presented in two categories – 'industrial (manufactory) risks' and 'global threats'. The first is a result of human activity, they are local-scale effects, always accompanied by human activities; global threats are independent of human and occur from time to time. W. Beck describes it in the following way: 'In the center of risk society there are modernization risks are their consequences that manifest in irreparable harm to life of plants, animals and humans. They cannot be located, reduced to specific groups; a trend towards globalization is present in them which encompasses production and consumption, crosses national and state borders, so it creates supranational and global threats with their distinctive social and political dynamics' [6, p. 45]. However, W. Beck does not make a distinction between 'manufacturing risks' and 'global threats' or illustrate their interdependence, 'Chernobyl – is the end of the 'other', the end of all our opportunities of distancing from each other which has become evident after radioactive contamination. From poverty one can protect with borders, from dangers of the atomic age it is impossible' [6, p. 23].

Contesting the last argument, it is very important to note that in the XXI century industrial risks rather do not displace global threats but take their traits. Forensic risk is just that now one cannot protect neither from poverty nor attacks on independence. In the globalized world industrial (local) risks are becoming global. Another methodological error of W. Beck is that industrial risks and global threats are essentially the same. The thing is that 'risk society is a kind of mixture of nature and society. By the end of the XX century nature has been used to limit and turned from the outside phenomenon into the inner one, from the existing before us into the recreated one. ...

At the same time it has become an inevitable prerequisite of lifestyle in the industrial system. Dependence on consumption and market means a new form of depending on the «nature»; this inherent «natural» dependence on the market system becomes law of industrial civilization in this system» [6, p. 28]. «Seamless unity» of society and nature (similarly to culture and social cohesion by F. Tenbruck) identifies content of industrial risks and global threats, since natural disasters and global warming are products of human technological intervention.

Another area of criticism of W. Beck is his concept of «benefit» in conjunction with «risk». The researcher considers «benefits» and «risks» in parallel planes, ignoring prospects of their serial connection. «Risks as benefits are a subject of distribution; both of them create situations – situations of risk and class situation. But here and there we are talking about a completely different product. In the case of public benefits we are talking about goods, income, chances to get education, etc. as things that people aspire to get. ... A positive logic of assignment is opposed to negative logic of rejection, prevention, elimination, reinterpretation» [10, p. 58]. So W. Beck clearly separates behavioral strategies of responding to «benefits» and «risks» on different sides of the barricades. But benefits and risks are in linked in consistent ways: to achieve benefit (successful result) is impossible without risk (activity or environmental one) – the same is about winning in competition or a successful synthesis of nuclear energy. So, the greater benefit cause we achieve, the more we are able to overcome risks. Benefits and risks are two sides of the same coin in the society of the «cult of success» and priority of achievement.

The view on the theory of risk society by N. Luhmann is interesting, first of all, for his ideas on the ontology of risk. According to N. Luhmann, « risk refusal, especially in modern conditions is an abdication of rationality» [8, p. 148]. The problem of risk arises as a result of decision-making in specific contexts. According to N. Luhmann risk refers to the sphere of the subject who actively operates and makes decisions. Danger is a product of the environment and refers to the object [8, p. 151-152].

Guided by the key tenets of systems' theory, N. Luhmann notes that the word «risk» refers to a variety of distinctions. On the one hand, the definition is as wide as possible and does not give a specific idea either about the nature of risk nor on the marginal areas of its values as «distinction» is the main category of N. Luhmann, it is a condition of existence of the system (to exist is to differ from the environment) [8]. On the other hand, this definition makes the concept of risk a central category of systems' theory because: a) risk is a condition of existence of the system (as it distinguishes it from the environment), b) it accumulates discernment, that is, a constant of the system and accompanies the cycle of autotots and self-reference; c) taking into account the herby, modern social systems reproduce themselves as risk systems.

N. Luhmann says about the risk when he writes about reconstruction of the phenomenon of multiple contingents. In this context one can speak about risk when there is no corresponding of the signal sent by one system to the signal obtained and decoded by another system, taken into account the subjective nature of communication in the process of interaction. Thus, the risk «field» is largely related to the «field» of noise that disrupts signal transmission. According to N. Luhmann, multiple contingency arises when «one signal opens different perspectives to different observers» [9, p. 153]. Stating that multiple contingency accompanies most communications, risk becomes a permanent attribute of communication implementation in modern social systems.

The second N. Luhmann's dichotomy is «risk/danger»; it is largely consonant with concepts of «modernization risks» and «global threats» by W. Beck. Distinction of risk and danger implies (thereby differs from other distinctions) that there is uncertainty regarding the future damage or potential damage considered as a result of the decision, that is, it is formed as a result of the decision (then we talk about risk, about risk of the decision); or causes of such damage are outside, i.e. they are imputed to the world (then we speak about danger) [8, p. 147]. Distinction between «risk/reliability» as distinction between «risk/danger» is built asymmetrically. In both cases risk refers to a complex set of circumstances that exists in modern society. The opposite side acts only as a concept of reflection, function of which is to clarify contingency of the circumstances falling under the concept of risk [8].

Also N. Luhmann draws attention to the fact that in literature on the study of risk distinction of «risk/danger» is sometimes missing (there are samples of definitions of one concept through another). The researcher attributes this to linguistic features: in the English literature such words as «risk», «hazard», «danger» are primarily used in the same sense [8]. Let us note that this confusion is not so much connected with linguistic features as with intuitive similarity of content of the concepts that arises from determining risk through danger and vice versa (it is quite often seen in scientific and journalistic literature). Moreover, another similarity of ideas by W. Beck and N. Luhmann is a thesis about actualization of risks instead of hazards (Beck's modernization risks). «Defining risk, one can forget about danger, indicating the danger – those benefits that could be achieved by risky decisions. Therefore, in traditional societies, danger is rather defined while in modern risk is because it is about making chance usage better and better» [8, p. 153]. Danger of the meteor shower with catastrophic consequences is an example of an event which probability is underestimated only because nothing can be done. This methodological turn is especially interesting in our study. It allows to «breaking» somewhat artificial separation of risks and hazards in the understanding of their essence. As we noted earlier, in today's world risks squeeze danger because the meteor shower and consequences of nuclear war are results of human activity (results of solutions in the terminology of N. Luhmann). N. Luhmann spreads the risks and dangers in such a way: «In accumulation of effects of decisions in long-term consequences of decisions that are impossible to identify anymore, in complicated causal relations, which cannot be traced separately, there are conditions that may cause significant harm, however, it is

impossible to settle them separately, although it is clear that without solutions business would not come to such detriment» [8, p.154].

Another important component of N. Luhmann's concept of risk is solution that has a special role in theory the researcher. Solution is connected with time. Implications of different solutions have different function utility and different probability, describing a solution itself (as results may be different) as risky. N. Luhmann also agrees with W. Beck noting that conduct free from risk does not exist. This means that there is no absolute reliability, on the other hand, if the decision is taken, the risk is not possible to avoid. Any option of repertoire of solutions, that is, the entire field of alternatives is risky even if risk is only that the subject does not perceive clear chances which in the future might be favorable [8]. There appears a range of a branched decisions, or a «decision tree» which accumulates risks. Recognizing objectivity of risk presence in social systems, the explorer shows synthetic methodological intentions, noting that «risk» does not mean «fact» that exists regardless of who studies it or how it is done. By itself, the outside world does not know any risk, because it is unaware of any distinctions, expectations, evaluations, probabilities - unless results of study of other systems in the world [8]. That is, the researcher considers risk as a characteristic of the social system and a part of communication.

One can also estimate that the sociological approach to the study of risk N. Luhmann formulates through the prism of analysis of communication meaning attracting messages about individually taken decisions. Thus, decisions, messages and communication create a methodological outline for the study of risk and conditions for its existence. Based on the definition of information by the researcher as a «selection from a repertoire of possibilities – known and unknown» [10] and a message as a «selected segment» [11], risk is part of communicative process: in the process of «selection of repertoire of possibilities» a solution is implemented that «runs» the mechanism of risk. Thus, continuing the logic s by N. Luhmann, we discover an additional essential aspect of risk –its presence a priori not only in the situation of solution making, but in a situation of choice, i.e. formation of alternative solutions.

Thus, in the framework of theory of social systems by N. Luhmann risk is an invariable attribute of not only interaction of social systems, but also internal communication component that facilitates implementation of selection process and occurs at the stage of message formation. Risk is in distinction of systems, it grows in terms of multiple contingency. Understanding the nature of risk largely contributes to revision of existing ideas about risk as: a) a category which describes an activity component, but not a component of the system of internal determinants of subject activity, b) a phenomenon that cannot take on the characteristics of threats in modern conditions; C) a phenomenon of perception and awareness which does not affect preventing/activation of future damage.

An example of another excursion into the concept of risk society are ideas of A. Giddens in whose works there are risk potencies. The English explorer interprets characteristics of the society of reflexive modernity in a special risk status, viewing the latter as an attribute characteristic of the era of «high modernity». This status is not just to increase risks and, above all, to think through the prism of risk and its assessment has become property of expert knowledge, mass consciousness [12, p. 119]. The difference in views of W. Beck and A. Giddens in this context lies in the fact that, in the opinion of the English sociologist, modern people already think in terms of risk; instead the realization of modernization risks does not appear as a central thesis in the theory of W. Beck.

As A. Giddens noted, the community realizes itself in categories of risk, uncertainty and need for choice. Any situation threatens with risk – inaction is also risky. A. Giddens agrees with W. Beck and N. Luhmann that risks are product of human activities rather than external threats, and are generated by society institutions of reflexive modernity [13, p. 50]. A. Giddens also supplements the thesis made by W. Beck on global threats, emphasizing that society institutions of reflexive modernity pose risks not only because of society dynamics, but also because in the context of globalization they become «free» from local contexts with a specific spatio-temporal reference. This is one more consonant idea to W. Beck and A. Giddens' views.

W. Beck and A. Giddens link emergence of risk society not only to modernization, but also with globalization. For W. Beck, globalization leads to the unity of the world in which there is no «hiding» from threats and risks. For A. Giddens globalization is a factor of «separation» of individuals, social groups and institutions from binding to local socio-cultural situations, as well as a condition of «separation» and risk spreading. A. Giddens focuses on the changing of socio-cultural foundations of risk society: in the context of globalization collapse of communication happens, when in traditional and industrial societies it acted for the formation of social order: gave to an individual stability, reliability, existence, confidence in the future and security, but also restricting his initiative, restricting freedom, subordinating group. Destruction of these bonds releases an individual from constraints that deprive him, reliability and confidence, increases anxiety and fear before necessity to choose. An individual does not have possibilities to rely on tradition or to pass a burden of risk on to someone else (community, leader, and specialist). Therefore, according to A. Giddens, globalization creates risk society as a condition of universal concern, anxiety and fear [13].

A. Giddens uses the term «risk environment» that constitute social institutions of the global society. Effects of institutionalized systems of risk production can be appealed by almost everyone, regardless of whether he is a member of the system or not. Difference between the institutionalized system of risk production and its other forms is that in the first case, risk is mainly foundation of a system than an accident. Institutionalized system of risk production connects individual and collective risk. Today individual life opportunities or economic security level is connected with dangers that generate dynamics of the global economy. Institutions remain functional due to trust in

«abstract systems» that maintain, in virtue of impersonality, dynamic stability in the context of globalization. These include money, expertise system less dependent on local contexts and therefore credible.

A. Giddens opposing W. Beck dissociates from the theory of modernization and post-modernism, positioning risk as one of four attribute features of «high modernity» (or «late modernity») [12]. Attributiveness of risk in modern conditions is determined by the fundamental uncertainty of a number of situations and processes that threaten not individuals and small communities, and humanity as a whole. As attributes of modernity he considers universalism, globalization, risk institutionalization and risk increasing in unintentional side effects of certain factors of certain human actions.

A. Giddens expresses great hope for minimizing risk and offers his vision of future of risk. His points about risk are stated within hypotheses relative to the overall prospects of life safety. The scientist believes that the future is not necessarily expected to be determined by unidirectional trends that would be associated with catastrophes: «The world is not regarded as a change of events in a certain direction, but as a structure possessing its own form» [14]. Following optimism regarding prospects of risk society A. Giddens notes that the emphasis on risk in modern social life is not directly connected with actual increasing dangers. At the level of individual life project, if we are talking about attitudes and degree of freedom of diseases, people in developed societies are more secure than in the previous century [13]. This thesis contradicts the ideas of W. Beck, who describes the current situation in the world as a constant threat (due to possible terrorist attacks, environmental disasters, accidents, etc.). In our opinion, both positions require amplification and analysis of demographic material. Let us only note that instead of mass deaths of people from unknown diseases (global threats in terminology of W. Beck), from terrorism or car crash results not less people continue to die today (modern risks by W. Beck).

In «Fate, risk and security» the English explorer reveals an additional characteristic of risk society, which is not mentioned by W. Beck and N. Luhmann. He ties actualization of risk in modern societies with intention to exercise control over time and events, thereby implementing colonization of the future. The notion of risk becomes central in the society which says goodbye to the past, traditional ways of working and opens to the unknown future. This statement applies equally to risk as in institutionalized environment as other areas. Insurance is one of the basic elements of economic order in modern world; it is part of a more general phenomenon associated with control of time that A. Giddens calls colonization of the future [12]. And although the statement about forgetting past (traditional) ways of activity seems doubtful, taking into account simultaneous presence of components from different eras in any society, emphasis on the desire to control the future is an attribute of modern consciousness and activity.

A. Giddens, along with relevance of environmental risks emphasizes presence of risk on the activity level. Risk relates to future events as it is correlated with the current activity. As W. Beck and N. Luhmann, the researcher emphasizes capacity of self-reproduction and risk increase: colonization of the future creates new forms of risk, and some of them are institutionally organized. A striking feature of the concept of risk society in the interpretation of A. Giddens is a socio-cultural analysis of risk through the prism of concepts such as fate and rock. In the environment where there is no more rock (according to A. Giddens, this environment should be called modern society which is not peculiar to determinism in vision of the future and hope for conditionality of its results), any activity even strictly associated with set of samples is calculated in terms of risk and thus lends itself to a kind of overall assessment of riskiness speaking about possible outcomes. Intrusion of abstract systems (science) in everyday life, coupled with dynamic nature of knowledge means that risk awareness permeates activities of almost everyone. All members of theories of risk society converge on impossibility of a complete and accurate calculation of risk, noting weakness of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to its study: calculation of risk can never be complete, because even in the environment with relatively limited risk there is always a possibility of unexpected and unintended consequences [14].

Summing up, we should pay attention to the overall scientific position of the classics of the theory of risk society, which will help in the further structuring of sociological knowledge:

1) Synthetic theoretical approaches of W. Beck, N. Luhmann and A. Giddens allow us to consider risk on the structural (societal) and activity (level of entity) levels at the same time, risk becomes the main constant of autotots and self-reference of societies in the era of globalization and postmodernity.

2) Despite differences between sociological structures of W. Beck, N. Luhmann and A. Giddens, the categorical apparatus of the study of risk society in the works of classics shows usage of general categories («risk», «danger», «activity», «resolution», «system», «present», «threat», «probability», «rationality», etc.). Besides, different concepts used by the authors, they have a similar meaning (for example, a pair of concepts «risk/danger» by N. Luhmann is consistent with notions of «modernization risks» and «global threat» by W. Beck).

3) All researchers agree about meaningful conclusions about inherent presence of risk in the fabric of social impact and increase of the risks in modern societies.

4) In the conclusions of classics in risk theory a conclusion can be traced that in societies of risk, threats, dangers are transformed into risks and natural disasters; global warming is a product of technological intervention of a man.

The analyzed approaches of risk society in the works by W. Beck, N. Luhmann and A. Giddens also have significant differences:

1) N. Luhmann reflects risk more «closer» to the of the subject treating it as an internal component of communication. His achievements have significantly enriched the already existing ideas about risk as: a) a category which describes activity component, but not a component of the system of internal determinants of activity of the subject, b) a phenomenon that can not take on characteristics of threats in modern conditions; c) a phenomenon of perception and awareness which does not affect preventing/activation of future damage. Achievements by W. Beck and A. Giddens are more associated with emphasis on macrophenomena of producing risks.

2) The researchers analyze awareness of risks in different ways. According to A. Giddens, modern people already think in terms of risk; realization of modernization risks does not appear as a central thesis in the theory of W. Beck. N. Luhmann notes the presence of risk not only in a situation of decision-making and formation of its alternatives, bypassing the aspect of risk perception as such.

Generally, «weaknesses» of Western theories of risk society include the following:

- Lack of chronological and spatial certainty of risk societies;
- Lack of understanding neither about the mechanism of risk reproduction, risk society, nor understanding of risk society as a special type of social system with its inherent macro-, meso- and micro levels of social interaction.
- Lack of empirical operationalization of risk, experience of empirical research and a high level of theoretical abstraction;
- Eclecticism and incompleteness of risk theories.

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