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The Problem of Ontological Insecurity. What Can We Learn from Sociology Today? Some Zen Buddhist Inspirations

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Abstract Can we learn about the art of living from sociology? Sociology teaches us that we are the part of a broader group called society. We are taught that society should be first described in order to be understood and/or explained, and that the cognitive function is the most important part in understanding the role sociology should play in a democratic and modern society. Is this understanding (cognition) enough? What more can we get to better our quality of life and live a wholesome life from studying sociology or society using a sociological perspective? Is sociology a tool for the art of living or is it just a play of the “sophisticated”? In this paper, we analyze the sociology from the philosophy of Zen Buddhism to show the connection between the work of mind and the sociological concepts that are used to analyze “society.” Moreover, we analyze the approaches of George H. Mead, Robert Merton, and especially and separately Anthony Giddens that created, very important for our considerations, the concept of “ontological security.” We also reconstruct the structural conditions of the art of living and happiness, analyzing the concept of *greedy institutions* by Lewis Coser. We analytically connect the structural conditions of work in contemporary greedy institutions (working on projects) with the loss of ontological security. We analyze the displacement of the meaning of work, career, autonomy, time structure, identity, privacy and happiness, and finally the sociology. We try to use a Buddhist inspiration to analyze issues of suffering and, associated with it, so called ontological insecurity and the welfare of the individual and/or society.

Keywords art of living; Zen Buddhism; sociology; ontological insecurity; mind; self; meditation; suffering; greedy institutions

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Men are disturbed, not by things, but by the principles and notions which they form concerning things.
(Epictetus, *Encheiridion*, 5)

The issue of ontological insecurity is at the heart of interests of many social scientists (Giddens 1990; 1991; Beck 1992; Bauman 2000; 2001; Luhmann 2002). It is often called by other terms, strongly associated with this type of experience, such as *risk society* (feeling anxiety because of the continuing situation of insecurity of our decisions, Beck 1992), the *liquid reality* (feeling anxiety due to a lack of continuity and social change, Bauman 2000), *contingency* (multiplicity of communication’s possibilities in contemporary society, Luhmann 2002). Generally, anxiety aroused in the situation is associated with scarcity of security feelings caused by the lack of social roots and stable social structures (Giddens 1990) and the abundance of possibilities that creates insecurity (Luhmann 2002).

This concern manifests itself therefore as a phenomenon on a psychological level, but it has social causes. Working in the so-called greedy institutions (Coser 1972; Egger de Campo 2013), which totally dominate the personality of participants, their work time, and free time, isolate them from other communities, and redefine the concepts and categories of everyday life also contributes to the formation of ontological insecurity. An individual, asking herself/himself who she/he is and where she/he belongs, experiences inner turmoil. She/he wants to belong to the structures of traditional society (family, close friends) and actually must redefine the desires (often it is self-deception), for desires of greedy institutions that create other opportunities of identifica-

tion. The concept of “work in organization” to “life in the organization,” is redefined and the concept of “employee satisfaction” to the notion of “customer satisfaction” is redefined. Moreover, the concept of “work” is redefined to the notion of “fun” (such a situation is observed in Google corporation, see: Egger de Campo in 2013:981 and others).

In addition, anxiety is associated with something more basic, namely, the accepted model of our knowledge. It can be defined as a Cartesian model of cognition, which causes the so-called “Cartesian anxiety” and which is associated with the foundations of our cognition and knowledge. The drama of this anxiety, setup very strongly by Descartes in his *Meditations*, lies in the fact that either we have a solid and stable foundation of our knowledge, to know where to begin the cognitive process, or plunge into some kind of darkness, chaos, and confusion. Kant solved this problem by determining the existence of *a priori* categories which are the basis for the formation of our knowledge. (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1993:140-141). The search for knowledge bases can reach to the external or internal world, to our mind. This strong desire of inviolable foundation of knowledge evokes a feeling of anxiety, because if we do not find the base, or form the rational reasons we must reject it, the only alternative seems to be nihilism or anarchy. This distinction, which is treating the mind and the world as the opposition, makes Cartesian anxiety oscillating between these two poles (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1993:141). In addition, the Cartesian concept refers to treating the mind as a mirror of nature. Knowledge in this concept applies to an independent and earlier given world and this knowledge should be achieved

methodically with high accuracy (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1993:142-143). “We can begin to appreciate that this grasping after an inner ground is itself a moment in a larger pattern of grasping that includes our clinging to an outer ground in the form of the idea of a pre-given and independent world. In other words, our grasping after a ground, whether inner or outer, is the deep source of frustration and anxiety” (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1993:143).

Sociology works, in this trend, where it is believed that knowledge can be constructed in a methodical way through a mind that can reflect the reality, to present her as she is. Despite the weak grounds to obtain such knowledge, sociologists work to improve their research methods to make sociology a more disciplined field of knowledge (cf. Foucault’s notion of discipline, Foucault 2003:179ff as cited in Nyström 2007:126). Moreover, we can cite here an infinite number of methodological manuals and books that still refine their search methods of the social world, thinking that we can get closer to reality and fully reflect the world in the mind of the investigator. Although the investigator could eventually become locked in a cage of methods and procedures of the research and analysis of data. Grids of the cage define a perceptual matrix of the investigator.

This is what we propose in this article—to draw attention to contextual knowledge production, on its processual nature, which is associated with the minding and interdependent co-arising. This aspect of cognition is associated with the phenomenon experienced very often in the modern world, which has been aptly named by A. Giddens, “ontological security” and that was in this article rephrased to

“ontological insecurity.” What is the ontological insecurity? How does it arise? Here are the questions which we will discuss and analyze in this article. We will use here the inspiration of Buddhism, mainly from the philosophical considerations, but also from the practice of Zen Buddhism.

Our art of living is disturbed by ontological insecurity, a lack of confidence in the continuity of self and stability of the human environment. We have lost trust in some basic assumptions of everyday life and our natural attitude is often broken and runs out of data. We also live in a risk society and in emotional turbulence, communicational and cognitive abundance and confusion. Our self is constantly reconstructed and does not give us the sense of continuity and security. The mind disappoints us and does not give us a clear overview of society and our identity/ties.

Hence, the main issues addressed in this paper are:

- What can sociology *explain* but *not solve* today? The problem of distinction of ontological security *versus* insecurity will be discussed and explained.
- How can we improve the sociological understanding of society and the self (the problem of mind and minding) to solve the problem of ontological insecurity? The problem of attachment to place, self, and attachment to greedy institutions will be described and discussed.
- How can we use some Zen Buddhist inspirations to improve the sociological understand-

ing of contemporary society? The issue of the “distinctions’ trap” will be shown and how it limits the feelings of happiness.

- What is the relation between sociology and the art of living in the light of some Zen Buddhist statements? The issue of mind and cognition, and the connection of mind with suffering (*dukkha*) and with the “well-being of society/individual” will be explained.

Zen Buddhist Inspirations for Sociology

We begin by presenting the main concepts of Buddhism. It was decided onto Buddhism for the analysis of selected categories due to it being a powerful philosophical thought in explaining the phenomenon of the mind, how the mind works and how it generates a certain perception of reality and the self. In Buddhism, there is also searching for causes of the formation of concepts of world perception. From the Buddhist concept of mind dwells such useful ideas for the construction of a certain art of living. In conjunction with the sociological theories, which also seek the causes for the functioning of the mind and the self and co-determination emergence of different ideas and social phenomena, can be a useful source of inspiration for the construction of a particular art of living. We could see the connection between the cognition and our well-being as individuals and also well-being on the societal level. The question how we see the world is associated with the feeling of happiness.

Buddhist philosophy (to some it is a religion, but we treat it rather as a philosophical theory) is inter-

nally a very diverse tradition (Loy 2003; 2008). So, the choice of concepts and interpretation is a very delicate issue. We have decided to follow here the interpretation and teaching of Zen Buddhism by Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh and the ideas of Buddhism described according to his writings (for more information about Thich Nhat Hanh, see: <http://plumvillage.org/about/thich-nhat-hanh/>). His teachings are based on a combination of Zen Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism concepts (Thich Nhat Hanh 1976; 1999; 2006). We also use some inspirations from the teachings of Seung Sahn, Korean Buddhist teacher and master in the Kwan Um school (1976) and we support our reconstruction and interpretation of Zen by Japanese scholar Daizetsu Suzuki (1964; 1994). These teachers stress the importance of meditation practice and mindfulness. The awareness of cognition (being mindful) intersects the duality of the perceiving subject and perceived object. A very important scholar with respect to understanding the social consequences of Buddhism is David Loy (2003; 2008).

The perception of the world is an influence upon the self-definitions, who we are, and on how we feel, experiencing happiness or suffering. **Suffering** is the basic concept of Buddhism. We know it from the four noble truths: suffering, creation of suffering, cessation of creating suffering, and the Noble Eightfold Path. The eightfold right practices, as the Chinese call them, can stop your suffering. These eight aspects are interconnected and they are one whole. These are assumptions that we make to see the things as they are: **right view, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right diligence, right mindfulness, and right concentration**. The concept

of “rightness” means to be correct not in the moral sense, but rather in cognitive sense, to be straight, not bent, in the sense of seeing reality as it is. We see that ontology is here strictly connected with epistemology. The structure of the world is such as we see it through our “minding.” All eight aspects also have a moral character, a morality strongly associated with cognition and the thinking process. Through seeing the world in some particular way, we create it and shape the path to the future.

Below these assumptions are briefly defined:

- Right View – the view of temporality of phenomena, objects, and concepts;
- Right Intention/Thinking – this is the intent of self-improvement, whereby in every moment a person tries to be a better person and not to do harm to others, and strives to be more compassionate;
- Right Speech – words should not cause suffering to other people; we should avoid bad words with wrong intentions and use words which enhance people’s quality of life;
- Right Action – this means to avoid harming other living creatures, not stealing and avoiding sexual misconduct;
- Right Livelihood – we should earn our living and avoid harming others (e.g., by butchery, trading arms or drugs, trading slaves, prostitution, etc.);

- Right Diligence – putting much effort into reaching understanding of the four truths,¹ engaging mental energy to be disciplined and have compassion for the suffering of all sentient creatures;
- Right Mindfulness – many people see the world filtered through their own concepts. “Right mindfulness” means that we should be aware of this process, aware of our consciousness as it is going on during life events, moment by moment;
- Right Concentration – This is about concentrating on one object or point for a long time. We can concentrate, for example, on the noble truths, or on one aspect of the eightfold path.

Below we discuss the three most interesting and important paths to us: right view, right concentration, and right mindfulness. We have chosen these three assumptions because they fully express the connections between the cognition and the existential position of the individual. The suffering and happiness depends on the views and skills to maintain the undisturbed and clear views of reality (mindfulness and concentration).

In cultivating, by contemplation and meditation, the Right View we see the temporary nature of ideas and concepts. Meditation means, among other things, observing the thoughts that relate to objects

¹ Here it should be recalled that the four noble truths of Buddhism are: affliction/suffering (*dukkha*), accumulation of suffering (source of suffering), ways to alleviate suffering (cessation of suffering), and the right paths (Chuang and Chen 2003).

by concepts or feelings. We can also observe them as the result of *karma*,² which means the causes of our concepts and feelings.

The Right View is deepened by Right Concentration and Right Mindfulness. Right Concentration could be a very important skill for a sociologist inspired by Buddhist philosophy. To achieve this skill, he/she has to practice meditation. We have a lot of layers that cover the reality and we see the reality through them. We should unlearn the knowledge that we obtained during socialization, both primary and secondary. If we suspend our knowledge, stereotypes, and categories, we can concentrate on the objects in this moment. This will be direct knowledge, not inherited from our history of perception of the object (in preconceptualized knowledge).

By Right Concentration you can see *one in many* (a whole in the part). The concentration on no-self (by human beings that have the sense of self), for example, shows the inter-being of all humans and the interconnectedness of the social worlds in which they participate (Strauss 1984). It is difficult to express the experience of the no-self. It happens sometimes during meditation. If we contemplate our self (asking the question: Who am I?), we can also get the direct view of our self/no-self. In some moment, we see the absurdity of the question and

² Karma means that our fate is caused by previous deeds and by our thinking. Karma concerning the body (body karma) also comes from thinking (Seung Sahn 1976:40). “The creation of suffering comes from karma and by meditation we can stop its activity (cessation of suffering): These actions, anger, fear, et cetera– are made by past karma, so the result is the actions made in anger et cetera. If a person sits Zen, he will make his karma disappear and he will no longer be caught in these actions. So, when you are angry, afraid, et cetera only try Zen” (Seung Sahn 1976:65).

the answer, which is not suggested by the question directly.

Right Mindfulness means being mindful of the whole of our life and of our thinking and doing. “The Sanskrit word for mindfulness, *smriti*, means, “remember.” Mindfulness is remembering to come back to the present moment. The character that the Chinese use for “mindfulness” (念) has two parts: the upper part means “now,” and the lower part means “mind” or “heart” (Nhât Hanh, Thich 1999:64-65). The meaning is: to be present here and now. Right Mindfulness helps us to identify the body as a construct (*rûpa*—awareness of the body is the first base of right mindfulness) by being mindful of all the parts of the body (while contemplating them during scanning of the body). Observing the heat of the body, weight, and also breathing gives the same effects. Mindful breathing is a practice of mindfulness. We can see the body in parts and in its totality. However, it depends on the perception in each moment.

The second base of right mindfulness is awareness of feelings (*vedana*). Identifying feelings, giving them names (anger, hate, love) helps to see them more deeply and deconstruct their empty nature. During meditation and contemplation, one does not cling to feelings, whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Meditation helps to see them as they are, impermanent, created, not really determined externally, but induced by minding and volition.

The third base of mindfulness is the mind itself (*chitta samskara*). Here we are aware of mind formations (*samskara*). Formation means that everything is

formed from something else; a tree is a formation and our hate is a formation, prejudices (as stereotypes) are formations (as a theory of conspiracy) and volition is a formation. If we observe wholesome feelings and thoughts, they are positive, because they give a direct, clear view. “The basic unwholesome mental formations are greed, ignorance, pride, doubts, and views” (Thich Nhat Hanh 1999:74). So, we have unwholesome views that should be understood as opinions here. The mental formation called *uddhacca* (Pali—restlessness, anxiety) exists in unwholesome consciousness; it is a very harmful threat that is connected with suffering.

We can see the sociological sense of mindfulness in the interconnectedness of individuals and collectives. We can do research on the individual consciousness and at the same time we are investigating a community: “Individual consciousness is made of collective consciousness, and the collective consciousness is made of individual consciousness. They cannot be separated. Looking deeply into our individual consciousness, we touch the collective consciousness” (Thich Nhat Hanh 1999:75; see also 181). Our consciousness is a product of interaction between the society and the individual mind. Mindfulness discovers the connections and allows us to look deep inside the consciousness to see the mental formations that can arise at some moments.

The fourth base is the mindfulness of images (*dharma*s) understood as phenomena. “Phenomena are objects of our mind. Each of our mental formations has to have an object” (Thich Nhat Hanh 1999:76). Perception comes from our mind. If we look at a table, the image of a table arises in our mind. The objects of

our thinking are images (*dharma*s). “In Chinese, the character for perception 想 is composed of the ideograms for sign and mind. A perception is a sign, an image in our mind” (Thich Nhat Hanh 1999).

Right Mindfulness is the essence of the path to Right View and could be important to sociologists for right/credible research and analysis. We can analyze data, however, we should remember that the data are in our mind and we can contemplate ideas that are socially important to see their true nature, to see them as they are and what is behind them. If we want to understand “society,” we should deconstruct the elements of the “being” (declassification—enumeration and observing the connectedness between them) and see their origin and temporal character, and finally see what we get from having a concept such as “society” in our work in our life as sociologists. Usually, we do not much use inspirations from this concept in our research. They are useful in “ideological” introductions and conclusions about the sense of our research and the importance of our results for the well-being of the society. However, can we improve the life of the human beings being researched? Can we stop their sufferings? Can we analyze and find the causes of suffering? Why do we use such a concept/concepts? What are the reasons to put so much effort into maintaining the concept (society, integration, anomy)? So, being mindful of concepts, here and now, in every moment of research practice, could enrich the research and let us see the “researched,” or “co-researched reality” as it is.

Buddhists are very suspicious of language. “Zen thinks we are too much slaves to words and log-

ic...Zen deals with facts and not with logical, verbal, prejudiced, and lame representations” (Suzuki 1964: 61). Meditation and mindfulness help us to see the emptiness of all the ideologies expressed in language; it can free us from the delusions of ideology. We should analyze the existing theories, ideologies, and discourses to refuse them, in order to get a higher level of cognition, according to Buddhist epistemology. It also aims to free us from Buddhist thoughts too, on the deeper level of understanding (see Loy 2003:26). This does not mean that we should be attached to emptiness (*shunyata*). Such an attachment is a trap in meditation; emptiness could also be a delusion. “The original Buddhist term usually translated as emptiness (Pali—*shunnata*; Sanskrit—*shunyata*) actually has this double-sided meaning. It derives from the root *shu*, which means “swollen” in both senses: not only the swollenness of a blown-up balloon but also the swollenness of an expectant woman, pregnant with possibility. So, a more accurate translation of *shunyata* would be: emptiness/fullness, which describes quite well the experience of our own empty core, both the problem and the solution” (Loy 2008:22). For Thich Nhat Hanh (1999:89), emptiness means rather the interdependence and not having essence. “We are empty of a separate, independent self. We cannot be by ourselves alone. We can only inter-be with everything else in the cosmos. The practice is to nourish the insight into emptiness all day long. Wherever we go, we touch the nature of emptiness in everything we contact. We look deeply at the table, the blue sky, our friend, the mountain, the river, our anger, and our happiness and see that these are all empty of a separate self. When we touch these things deeply, we see the interbeing and interpenetrat-

ing nature of all that is. Emptiness does not mean nonexistence. It means Interdependent Co-Arising, impermanence, and nonself.” “Emptiness” means empty of a separate self. It is full of everything, full of life. The word emptiness should not scare us. It is a wonderful word. To be empty does not mean non-existent” (Thich Nhat Hanh 2012:421). So it is not a nihilistic concept but rather an optimistic view of cognition of the world with its complication and interdependence with other phenomena. It could be a good starting for constructing the art of living that is, from the Buddhist point of view, connected with the issue of suffering.

The concept of delusions is very important in Buddhism: “The role of delusion has a special meaning in Buddhism. The fundamental delusion is our sense of separation from the world we live in, including our alienation from other people” (Loy 2003:44). When we see, for example, that evil is outside of our self, outside of our community, and that we are attached to the dualistic concept of good and evil; we are taking delusions for reality. The evil often starts on our side (self or community) and we do not want to see it. However, the interconnectedness of things in the world can lead us to understanding why evil comes to us, as we think in a language that suggests opposites and dualistic thinking.³ **We are to concentrate on antithetical concepts:** “Buddhism encourages us to be wary of antithetical con-

³ “Realizing our interdependence and mutual responsibility for each other implies something more than just an insight or an intellectual awareness. Trying to live this interdependence is love” (Loy 2003:108). The ethical dimension in Buddhism is always connected with cognition. This is the next step when we redefine our way of researching the reality: we not only get to know but also, we are engaged ethically in what we research. Concepts that we use or deconstruct have meanings and are value-loaded.

cepts: good and evil, success and failure, rich and poor, and even enlightenment and delusion" (Loy 2003:110).

What is important for consideration on cognition in Buddhism is the suggestion to be aware of antithetical conceptions, because if we look at them more deeply, they finally appear as delusions. If we explore the problem of security/insecurity, we can state after Loy that:

"I think we will do better to distinguish between two basic modes of being in the world, two different ways of responding to the uncertainty—the death-haunted insecurity—of our life in the world. This insecurity involves not only the impermanence of our circumstances (the fact that everything is changing all the time) but the fragility of our own constructed identities (that 'everything changing all the time' includes our sense of self). One mode of being in the world involves trying to stabilize ourselves by controlling and fixating the world we are in, so that it becomes less threatening and more amenable to our will. The other mode involves a very different strategy: giving priority to opening ourselves up to the world and a greater acceptance of the open-ended impermanence of our existence" (Loy 2003:113).

Loy then goes on to write about how we deal with insecurity in the modern world, choosing between two strategies: "The first way is more dualistic: I try to manipulate the world in order to fixate my situation, including my own sense of who I am. The second way is more non-dual: greater openness to the world is possible because that world is perceived as less threatening and more welcoming, so my own

boundaries can be more permeable. The best terms that I can think of for these two modes of being are fear and love. Notice that, despite the tension between them in our lives, they are not antitheses in the way that good/evil, rich/poor, and high/low are; the meaning of each is not the opposite of the other" (Loy 2003:113-114).

So, we have a dualistic strategy and a non-dualistic one. We can choose one or the other. Analysis of the categories that are images and volition (the possibility of rational choosing from many alternatives) creates our art of living. The art of living is the consequence of our perception of the world. If we choose the second strategy, we can see that the person in front of us is not an "other" (*stranger*) person but is us; we are this person. External and internal is delusion, we are interconnected in one life and we are one common World, not only social. This type of awareness is an important step to shaping the art of living according to Buddhist philosophy. This awareness can be achieved through the practice of meditation and mindfulness and the art of living can come from these practices.

Sociological Inspirations

Generally, if we want to answer to the question "how to live," we turn usually to psychology, psychotherapy, philosophy, or religion; very rarely to sociology. The art of living and the idea of happiness connected with it are not usually the topics of sociological reflection and prescriptions. Psychologists are more interested in the concept (Csikszentmihalyi 2008). Sociologists do not want to take responsibility for the welfare and ethics of the society; they want only

to do research on it and to be "objective," to be outside of it. When we ask the question "how to live?" we turn our attention to the problem of suffering and our own well-being. Sometimes we ask how to be happy, or penetrate the problem individually: am I really happy? There is no answer from the sociological sage to such questions. We are left to answer it by ourselves alone, and here the so-called "subjective experience" becomes important (although from a Buddhist perspective it is not subjective, if we refuse distinction: subjective/objective).

We try to use three eminent sociological concepts coming from R. Merton, G. H. Mead (that was also the philosopher and social psychologist), and A. Giddens to see how sociology is actually used and can be used for analysis of cognition and eventually the art of living. The choice was difficult, but we wanted to show how an interactionist approach, where the mind is considered (G. H. Mead), and structural—a functionalist perspective (R. Merton) see the mentioned issue. A. Giddens ideas were the last ones connecting, among others, structural and interactionist views and we analyze his concepts in a different paragraph.

First, we start from a sociological approach that is individualistic and more psychological in social ontology, to answer the questions that come from Buddhist inspirations: How to live? How to be happy? How to avoid/liquidate suffering? George Herbert Mead (and later symbolic interactionism) concentrates on the relations between the individual and the community. How does the individual become social and how does the community deal with the egoistic/individual motivations?

For **George Herbert Mead**, one of the commonly approved protagonists of symbolic interactionism (Blumer 2004), there are important **dialectics between "I" and "me."** The self is a conversation of individual inclinations and social norms and limits (Mead 1934:192-200; Blumer 2004:65-66). Activity is self-directed (Blumer 2004:31). "Over against the 'me' is the 'I.' The individual not only has rights, but he has duties; he is not only a citizen, a member of the community, but he is a person who reacts to this community and in his reaction to it and, as we have seen in the conversation of gestures, changes it. The 'I' is the response of the individual to the attitude of the community as this appears in his own experience. His response to that organized attitude in turn changes it" (Mead 1934:196).

There are also the dialectics of freedom, both on the individual level and at the level of society, that is, social norms. There is a freedom of "I" that can rebel against external pressures and the freedom to social innovation (Mead 1934:196).

The individual could suffer because of limits. He/she could always take into consideration the social pressures and demands. Expressing the self ("I") could be difficult in social surroundings wherein he/she always enters into internal dialogue as "me."

Self is a process. It is a permanent work between external social pressures and individual desires. Self, in this process, creates the feeling of self and the content of identity. Identity does not have a stable base, because it changes during the constant dialectics that are taking place. This creates the insecurity about our self and our identity too. We are never

sure how we are perceived while the new features of our identity are being assumed. There are also changes in the demands of society, which is also in constant transformation and change. So, we experience insecurity all the time. Uncertainty regarding the identity belongs to the ontological characteristics of the existence of the individual in the world.

Humans live in the world of meanings and we give the meanings to the objects (Blumer 2004:42, 47).

The objects do not have internal features that define their essence, even physical objects. We give them meanings during the social interaction (or self-interaction) and interpret their utility (Blumer 2004:54). The subject is the definer of objects, self, and also society. The individual does this by using the mind (Charon 1998:99). If we look at the theorem of the Thomases (Thomas and Thomas 1928:571-572), we see that an individual not only creates the reality but also community/society: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." So, we can say that social reality is constructed in the process of defining the meaning of objects. The mind defines situations, controls the action, gives instructions during an internal conversation, and solves problems. This does not mean that society does not have an influence on these definitions; it delivers the vocabularies of motives, ready-made definitions of situations, typifications of objects, and identities as well. The individual chooses and decides how to define the situation taking into consideration the socialized, through the learned language, knowledge about reality (Berger and Luckman 1991). Deciding, for example, by trying the certain activities in the imagination and anticipation of the consequences is the domain of the mind. The mind is involved also

in evaluating activities (Charon 1998:102-103). **Society, according to symbolic interactionism, is a process. Social institutions are created by negotiating individuals.** They also later maintain the net of institutions by the process of interpretation, taking the role of others (especially the "generalized other," Mead 1934:261), giving meanings and negotiating identities and rules. There is not any structural necessity that the social order has this, that, or another form (Mead 1934:261-262). The institutions change, so society also changes and hence provides a fragile basis for the self and identity. Society has a processual character because it is connected with the process of self: "Social institutions, like individual selves, are developments within, or particular and formalized manifestations of, the social life-process at its human evolutionary level" (Mead 1934:262-263). Very often creating a personal relationship is very important to keeping the social organization intact; the self of an individual is included in the process (Mead 1934:312, 315).

The mind is engaged in the above-mentioned processes of the creation of self and society. Mind is a process, not a structure, and is engaged in the process of taking the attitudes of others into consideration: "We are more or less unconsciously seeing ourselves as others see us...We are calling out in the other person something we are calling out in ourselves, so that unconsciously we take over these attitudes" (Mead 1934:68-69).

Mind is evaluating the self, identity, and objects. It gives the main input to decision-making and action. Mind is evaluating the possibilities of achieving a goal. It creates the hypothesis, like in experiments, and

checks them in the process of thinking and weighing. It is helpful to the mind to use language that could be a stimulus to imagination and to predict the future response of the interaction partner (Mead 1934:68-75).

Mind is a very important feature of humanity and creates human community. Without minding we would be instinctual creatures without human traces or the possibility to withdraw from direct reaction to a stimulus, and without the possibility to act based on language-self-directions: "For Mead, this rich area of inner life—which constitutes substantially the realm of the 'mind'—is fundamentally a social world of happening in which individuals are engaged in making indications to themselves and responding to their indications" (Blumer 2004:64). "Mind exists in the form of the social or communicative activity one carries on with oneself" (Blumer 2004:94; see also Manis and Meltzer 1978:7; Charon 1998:105-106). Symbolic interactionism puts great accent on the mind and minding in defining the reality. Everything that is valuable in society is thoughtful and rational. There is no self and no society without minding. The body is directed by mind and language. It does not have agency. The body is a silent actor that comes into action when it is troubled (illness, injury, death). Generally, the body is denied in self-reflection in the sociological theories, and in classical symbolic interactionism too.⁴ The

⁴ European culture is based on Christianity, which is almost totally devoid from the reflection corporeality and does not accept the body as an active agent comparable to soul. Christianity absorbed many ideas from ancient stoicism, the concentration on the body is not approved in stoicism (Epictetus 2012:41; see also Robertson 2010; Stankiewicz 2012). Also, in sociology, the problem of corporeality in the process of communication and socialization has been for many years neglected (see Konecki 2005:166-184, where the problem of body and corporeality in symbolic interactionism has been described).

work of the mind never stops in the process of definition of situations and attachment of meaning, it lasts "during one's waking life" (Blumer 1969:13). When it stops, the social processes stop and there is destruction of the self, institutions, and society. "Think or die"—we can thus interpret symbolic interactionism at this point in our consideration. The ontological security of the individual is here based on minding. Often the definition of a situation is uncertain and the emotions that it creates are connected with anxiety, anguish, and angst and in consequence with the disruption of social bonds. We negotiate the meanings of objects and negotiate their identity; hence, the meanings and our identity are uncertain. If we negotiate the rules and assumptions of our activities in our everyday life and work, then an atmosphere of insecurity in social surroundings can arise because the partner of interactions does the same, at least in our mind. Moreover, if the insecurity becomes a permanent state of mind, then the well-being of the individual could be questioned by emotions with negative signs.⁵ We cannot always control our emotions nor the social conditions upon which they arise (Scheff 1990; 2000). In such situations, a serious insecurity can develop. The mind conversing and constantly evaluating activities and the self does not produce the distance to itself, we do not realize its work (Konecki 2010). The mind, according to symbolic interactionism, is an action (Charon 1998:99), so the subject is almost constantly immersed in the action, when giving directions,

⁵ Emotions in symbolic interactionism are also directed by mind. We socialize to feel some emotions by taking the role of the other, learning how to experience emotions and how to express them. *Role-taking-emotions* are the basis of social control and self-control (Shott 1979:1323). So, the freedom to choose the right, owned by the individual and beyond or against the community, is here limited.

controlling the activities, and solving problems. The mind devotes a significant part of its activities for evaluating the actions of subject and the actions of others. Evaluating, especially when it is negative, and controlling the actions, especially when they are ineffective, lead to the accumulation of layers of ontological uncertainty, and also emotions of shame and fear, and it all becomes a source of suffering. The self becomes threatened and the ego cannot cope with the lack of confirmation of self-worth.

When we read the works of the classical sociologist **Robert Merton**, we can see that the topic of happiness or anxiety is covered by other terms. The society is a system and when the system is healthy, we have the “right” social order as a desired state of things. But, if it is not healthy, then what are the consequences of such a situation? How do people feel? Are they happy, anxious, or suffer? What do they need? What do they look for in such a situation?

Crime could be a consequence of an unhealthy system, but what is behind crime? Why does crime increase in modern societies? This is the proper question that should be asked by a functional sociologist.

The answer given by Merton is as follows: crime increases because there is a tension between the individual and social structure, cultural goals, and social culture (Merton 1968:201). There is a discontinuity of cultural goals and institutional/legitimate means, and this creates anomie. **Deprivation (in the situation of social inequality) causes deviation, which is some kind of adaptation to the situation** (the strategies are the following: conformity,

innovation, ritualism, retreatism, rebellion; Merton 1968:193-209; see Table. 1; see also Tepperman and Curtis 2006:117).

Table 1. A Typology of Modes of Individual Adaptation (by Merton 1968:194).

Modes of Adaptation	Culture Goals	Institutionalized Means
I. Conformity	+	+
II. Innovation	+	-
III. Ritualism	-	+
IV. Retreatism	-	-
V. Rebellion	+ -	+ -

Rebellion, for example, leads the individual beyond the social structure and leads to changing the actual cultural and social structure (Merton 1968:209). So, the society creates a “deviation” because, for example, the propagations by media, common ideologies, advertisements, and an educational system that values affluence as an important goal for the poor to achieve cannot be achieved by socially accepted means. So, crime is a certain choice. When a sociologist like Merton states such a truth, it is easy to deduce the prescription to treat the social system as an organism, and the principle that institutions should harmonize their goals and means. There is a difficulty at this level of abstraction to infer what exactly should be done, but anyway it is possible to construct means (creation of legal sources of income,

education of poor, creating a social security system, etc.) to fit to the social/cultural goals (affluence). However, it is very difficult to infer from this the “functionalist art of living.” How to live in dignity when we try to be rich? How to live with dignity being rich? When the happiness could be achieved (in trying or while being already rich)?

The term “anomy” is a euphemism that sociologists often use to cover the subjective feelings of people that suffer from living in unfavorable structural conditions. These conditions are “a scientific excuse,” commonly called in scientific discourse “a reason/cause” to explain some phenomena. However, we cannot infer the deep psychology from the Mertonian concept; we do not see deprivation as the suffering of an individual and/or community. “Anomy” indicated by the index of crime is an abstract concept that does not touch upon individual experience, perceptions of the situation, desires, and the socialized norms and values that lead to suffering. Not everybody is assumed to go down the crime path to fulfill the same needs or to achieve affluence. But, the meaning of deprivation can be different for each individual. It could be socially-based, but not necessarily chosen by an individual. Beyond social dictates there are moral and individual choices and individual experiencing of the life situations.

Moreover, we do not see negotiation (of identity, or negotiations of resources and chances) as a strategy of adaptation. If we accept the negotiation approach, it means that the social structure is negotiable and impermanent. An individual can find personal and innovative ways to increase his or her chances to achieve affluence or by her skillful negotiation

may try to enter the social groups that give him/her support (legitimate means) in achieving the goals (i.e., socially accepted and promoted goals). The other strategy could be to change one’s personal values, reconstructing the identity and desires, or controlling personal desires.

What Is Ontological Security?

We have to start our reflection about security/insecurity from **Anthony Giddens’s concept of ontological security**, which has well-illustrated the problem of the life of individuals in contemporary society. According to Giddens’s analysis of the “consequences of modernity,” the concept could be defined as follows:

Ontological security is one form, but a very important form, of feelings of security in the wide sense... The phrase refers to the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action. A sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security; hence the two are psychologically closely related. Ontological security has to do with “being” or, in the terms of phenomenology, “being-in-the-world.” But, it is an emotional, rather than a cognitive, phenomenon, and it is rooted in the unconscious... Certain questions—“Do I really exist?” “Am I the same person today as I was yesterday?” “Do other people really exist?” “Does what I see in front of me continue to be there when I turn my back on it?”—cannot be answered in an indubitable way by rational argument. [Giddens 1990:92-93]

These are very important philosophical questions. So, the concept for sociologists is very much based on the social grounding of the individual in the concept of self and on a stable social and material order. According to Giddens, the “naturalness” of surrounding plays an important role. But, we should stress here that “naturalness” is a consequence of perception, and that those things are natural that we define as natural. For Giddens, ontological security also has a historical dimension: “There are some definite respects in which levels of ontological insecurity are higher in the modern world than in most circumstances of pre-modern social life” (Giddens 1990:105, see also Giddens 1991). So, we can say that his perception of ontological security is both historical and sociological, however, we lose here many interesting reflections on the aforementioned philosophical questions (and possible answers) that could be extremely helpful in constructing the art of living in a state of ontological insecurity.

According to Giddens, **our ontological security is based on daily routines**. It is created and maintained in interactions. It is based on basic assumptions that we unconsciously accept. Breaking these assumptions destroys the micro order within which individuals live, as Garfinkel (1967) has shown and the ontological security is also lost. The ontological security is based on “autonomy of bodily control within predictable routines and encounters” (Giddens 1984:64). Habituation is, according to Giddens, “a generalized motivational commitment to the integration of habitual practices across time and space” (Giddens 1984:64). So, we have a “natural” tendency to maintain interactional order to save our ontological security. Routinization is inherent in everyday

life activities and forms of actions that are taken for granted, and when the assumptions underlying them are broken, we become anxious and lose our ontological security. We can say that we lose trust. Illustrative examples of this are shown in Garfinkel’s experiments with trust when the interactional rules are broken (Garfinkel 1967). The lack of understanding of the broken interactions destroys the ontological security of individuals, who are hit by sudden and new situations with different options of interaction. Insecurity and lack of trust towards others creates anxiety (Giddens 1990:98). The trust is connected with the risk, however, it is not the issue of individual activity, it is a matter of “environments of risks” (Giddens 1990:35). This system of security is created by those socialization practices whereby we start to inculcate our knowledge of trust and skills into children’s psyche in order to help them avoid situations that create anxiety. Predictability is thus based on **caring practices of parents**, as suggested by Giddens, following Erikson (Giddens 1984:50). “Basic trust” is built during childhood, mainly by mother and parents and it is based even on a *somatic conviction* “that there is a meaning to what they are doing” (Giddens 1990:95). This trust concerns not only others, but also the sense of trustworthiness that becomes the basis of self-identity stability (Giddens 1990:94).

In critical situations, we lose our basis for interpretation and anxiety arises. For Giddens, what is important here is the “reflexive monitoring of action by ‘I,’ but it is not the agent nor the self. Self has some social forms; agent reflexively shows the origin of an action” (Giddens 1984:51). What is then “I” for Giddens? It looks like awareness, observer

of an action. However, we do not know what are, or could be, the consequences of the observing for an individual. We also do not know how to become a competent observer. Is everybody an observer? Does an observer sometimes get lost in observing engaging in the activity? If so, what are the consequences for the observer? We do not know whether it is meta-perspective for the direct experience of the world, or just awareness of thinking and acting? Giddens does not tell us anything about these problems, about how consciousness works.

The monitoring of the body and tact are the techniques leading to a social integration which gives a sense of ontological security (Giddens 1984:86). Other ways of sustaining ontological security may be “regionalization” of interactions between “front and back regions,” and keeping up the “façade,” using Goffman’s terms (Giddens 1984:124, 125).

An interesting component in Giddens’s concept of ontological security is the space location (**geography**) of an individual and his attachment to his or her place of living: “A sense of place seems of major importance in the sustaining of ontological security precisely because it provides a psychological tie between the biography of the individual and the locales that are the settings of the time-space path through which that individual moves” (Giddens 1984:367). Time and space are the “real” constituencies that help an individual remain coherent and create the sense of continuity. However, we know that this is not always the case; that individuals are constantly moving and changing their place of living, and the sense of security is also changing or it is lost (Hiscock et al. 2001). The idea of nations and regions as a base

for self-identification are not so stable anymore, as we could see when the boundaries of Ukraine changed in the last few years (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimea>, accessed on 28.11.14.). The boundaries are changing and they are consequences of interpretation, as for an example obtained on google maps and Wikipedia (<https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9A%D1%80%D1%8B%D0%BC>, accessed on 28.11.14). As Giddens rightly put it, “In human geography spatial forms are always social forms” (Giddens 1984:367). The space is a social construction and the individual must find/locate himself/herself in this constructive process. If he/she is doing it mindfully, it is more safe and secure and ontological insecurity could be avoided and/or passed over.

Trust is an important feature of ontological security. But, the social surroundings maintaining and promoting trust have changed (Giddens 1990:102). This has changed the context of trust, for example, from the kinship system. Social ties are stabilized by friendship and sexual intimacy, not by kinship relations. Moreover, the local community is not stabilizing social relations; it rather belongs to those abstract systems going across time and space. Religious cosmologies no longer deliver the one and only basic interpretation of human action. People are oriented towards the future and not the past. In modern society, tradition no longer connects the past and the future.

Another feature affecting ontological security is, according to A. Giddens, the “environment of risk.” In traditional societies, dangers came from nature and the physical world, while in modern cultures,

they are emanating from reflexivity of the life and self. The danger in traditional societies came from the human violence of brigands, robbers, or local lords; today violence is rather connected with the *industrialization of war*. Risk becomes secularized and is not connected with a *fall from religious grace*, but the main threats come from the reflexivity of the modern world and self (Giddens 1990: 102-111).

The concept of shame is very important in maintaining the social security system. The boundaries are delineated by the mechanisms of shame and/or embarrassment, or by predicting the feeling of shame by individuals. This is an important mechanism in community ties, especially when traditional customs are in decline. The integration of society is shame-based (Scheff 1990; 2000) and on the individual level is connected with the reflexive project of the self (Giddens 1991:8-9). The problem of contemporary society is that shame is repressed and the social control is invisible, which creates some problems for individuals. Such an individual could be annoyed, anxious, and not certain what is going on in his/her mind and body. The shame is not openly felt. Ontological insecurity could arise and not be recognized by individuals because of their repression of shame, which could remain unacknowledged or by-passed. The “shame trap”—that we are ashamed of being ashamed—can lead to anger and hate and be a cause of aggression and auto-aggression (Lewis 1971; Scheff and Retzinger 1997; Retzinger and Scheff 2000). The mind is uneasy and emotions of anger and hate form easily.

Without recognizable shame/embarrassment it is difficult to start applying remedial practices (Goffman 1967). As Giddens has written: “To be ashamed of somebody else’s behavior indicates a tie with that other, signaling a certain recognition of association with, or even responsibility for, the other” (Giddens 1990:55). But, an open showing of shame has positive consequences for social ties and the composure of mind of an individual.

However, when the system of social security is achieved by unacknowledged shame processes, we, as individuals, could have problems with psychological stability, and shame could create the basis for low esteem and anxiety, envy, anger, retaliation, and other negative feelings that disturb our daily routine. These factors lead to suffering. This is a paradox of the “ontological security social system”—when it is created *outside* of the individual and comes to the individual from the *outside*, the inside feeling of certainty and calmness could be lost. The individual also feels this distinctiveness. This distinction works when we use/create the concept of *inside/outside*, although it is often done unintentionally, usually being a direct consequence of our conduct and minding. It is not unacknowledged shame that is the problem for the individual but making the distinction between unacknowledged (covered) and open shame. The lack of unity and lack of perception of the connections between reasons and consequences in the longitudinal processes of human activity creates the basis for ontological insecurity by creating an anxious and distressed mind. We can see in the next paragraph that minding—rational thinking (e.g., making distinctions) can cause suffering.

Suffering

We can say that in the psychological sense the ontological insecurity of our time is connected with psychological uncertainty. It is restlessness in unwholesome consciousness.

This uncertainty is an *individualized force*: “It divides instead of uniting, and since there is no telling who might wake up in what division, the idea of ‘common interests’ grows even more nebulous and in the end incomprehensible. Fears, anxieties, and grievances are made in such a way as to be suffered alone” (Bauman 2001:24). This is especially experienced in the labor market when the employment is insecure and temporary: “Working life is saturated with uncertainty” (Bauman 2001:24). Bauman connects the suffering with the feeling of lack of control over what are we doing (Bauman 2001:32), and also with the lack of trust and confidence in social relations (Bauman 2000:166) and lack of embodiment in the present time (Bauman 2001:156). Security can be achieved when we liquidate the suffering (Bauman 2001:41-56). So, according to Bauman, we have these two concepts defining two spheres of activities that are decisive about suffering. However, how do we make changes in these spheres? The answers to this question are missing from Bauman’s reflections. Nor do we know how the mind of the individual is involved in the definition of loss of confidence and loss of social ties.

Sociology always oscillates around the concept of suffering. It does not call it “suffering” directly, but often refers to it by using other concepts, some of which are directly connected with suffering, and

some less directly (insecurity, trajectory, social loss, poverty, inequality, global chaos, loss of trust, “second shift,” “time bind,” “failed romance,” or people living in pain). Some sociological works make more direct references to suffering (Wilkinson 2005). Examples include pain and suffering “under the impact of extreme social hardship and events of social atrocity” and suffering arising from social injustice and political repression (Wilkinson 2005:4-6). The concept of “social suffering” makes the suffering common to groups and communities, although sociologists must reach the suffering through the analysis of the *lived experience* of those persons touched by the misery and distress, as we could see in autoethnographical reports (Ellis 1993; 1995; 2002; Key 2012).

With regard to the opposite concept, we find sociology less interested in the concept of happiness. Zygmunt Bauman, while discussing the problem of happiness, shows that sociology deals mainly with unhappiness of people; it makes the assumption that people are not happy and we should use concepts referring to unhappiness to understand the context of it, or explain the causes creating unhappiness. Moreover, the assumptions are treated as social facts (e.g., in the interview with Zygmunt Bauman, Jacobsen 2014:209). Sociologists use the concepts of alienation, deprivation, social oppression, and estrangement to touch the core of the problem of suffering, however, all concepts are based on the stipulation that we can find the reasons for suffering in the social structure (e.g., inequality; see the inequality-adjusted Human Development Index, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf, accessed on 22.05.2018; see

also Hochschild 1983 on the social origin of negative emotions). Sometimes social inequality can be just a synonym for the suffering of a large group of people. There is then a second stipulation, that if we liquidate the social inequality, the suffering will disappear. However, sociology does not say how to achieve this. This happens for a variety of reasons—methodological or paradigmatic, or associated with the understanding of what constitutes objective social science.

Sociologists understand the state of non-suffering in the state of suffering (i.e., they understand non-suffering as the absence of suffering). Accordingly, when the reasons of suffering will be eliminated, a non-suffering state should be achieved. The sociologists looking for the ideal state of society operate by distinguishing suffering/non-suffering, and generally based on this distinction attempt to negate suffering. However, suffering is common and basic to the individual experiences of all human beings. Birth and death are indices of suffering that are connected with the temporality of both social and individual life. Looking for the social facts of suffering and the reasons for suffering is the first step of research. It could be empirical research, but finally it should lead to our consciousness showing us that the distinctions are false, or at least do not yield a solution to terminate suffering. Non-suffering is already included in suffering. But, sociologists do not look for this, because they think in the material sense of suffering (like with the other side, happiness, too). Suffering has a material character arising from the problems of the physiological body, and happiness from a material context of living and peace or excitement of mind.

Sociologists looking for social facts can look at indices for the measurement of happiness. There they can also find suffering that more suits, generally, to their taste than happiness. The Human Development Index (HDI, <https://data.undp.org/dataset/Table-1-Human-Development-Index-and-its-components/wxub-qc5k>, accessed on 22.05.2018), that measures health, education, and income, is used as a recognized indicator of happiness, or at least, the structural conditions for happiness, instead of researching happiness *per se*. It is more “objective” because the indices are material and/or objectively measured; and if it is measurable, then they supposedly have a material character, which can be manipulated or altered.

Below are the most developed countries according to the HDI from 2015.

Table 2. Human Development Index (2015).

1. Norway	0.949
2. Australia	0.939
3. Switzerland	0.831
4. Germany	0.801
5. Singapore;	0.718
and some countries less developed:	
66. Costa Rica	0.776
95. Columbia	0.727
115. Vietnam	0.683
132. Bhutan	0.607

Source: *The Human Development Index (HDI, <https://data.undp.org/dataset/Table-1-Human-Development-Index-and-its-components/wxub-qc5k>, accessed on 30.03.2018).*

The above-mentioned index refers to the social facts of a social structure that is based on the health, education, and income of the population of a country.

We do not know if those people are really happy, but we can infer that high income generates high consumption, and that wealth produces more happy people. The lessening of suffering would thus be here based on fulfilling the needs of the people (mainly by material gratifications), but we should remember that needs are also created for consumers, especially in highly developed countries. Does fulfillment of constructed needs give to the individual satisfaction and happiness? Is it rather a realization of the propagated model of happiness? Let’s look at another index, that is constructed as follows:

$$\text{Happy Planet Index} \approx \frac{(\text{Life expectancy} \times \text{Experienced wellbeing}) \times \text{Inequality of outcomes}}{\text{Ecological Footprint}}$$

Table 3. Happy Planet Index (2016).

Country	HPI	Experienced well-being	Life expectancy	Ecological footprint
1. Costa Rica	44.7	7.3	79.1	2.8
2. Mexico	40.7	5.8	76.4	2.9
3. Colombia	40.7	6.4	73.7	1.9
4. Vanuatu	40.6	6.5	71.3	1.9
5. Vietnam	40.3	5.5	75.5	1.7
6. Panama	39.5	6.9	77.2	2.8
7. Nicaragua	38.7	5.4	74.3	1.4
8. Bangladesh	38.7	4.7	70.8	0.7
9. Thailand	37.3	6.3	74.1	2.7
10. Ecuador	37.0	6.0	75.4	2.2
Other chosen countries				
23. Brazil	34.3	6.9	73.9	3.1
49. Germany	29.8	6.7	80.6	5.3
56. Bhutan	28.6	5.6	68.7	2.3
62. Poland	27.5	5.9	76.9	4.4
68. Turkey	26.4	5.3	74.7	3.3

Source: <http://happyplanetindex.org/countries/> (accessed on 30.03.2018).

This index also includes experienced well-being (we could call it “lived experience”), which means that not only economic progress and activity is included but also the subjective feelings of the people. More important is the inclusion of the ecological footprint, which measures resource consumption, that is, how many happy people the country creates per unit of environmental input.

We can see from the comparison of the two Tables that economic power (the HDI) is not the same as the happiness of the people connected with the amount of resources consumed. Costa Rica, for example, is in 66th place in terms of its socio-economic development (HDI=0.776), but is first on the Happy Planet Index. The feeling of the happiness (experienced well-being) is not necessarily connected with socio-economic development (Costa Rica has the highest score, 7.3 out of a possible 10). A similar situation is observed with Vietnam and Colombia (compare Tables 1 and 2).⁶

A special marker of happiness has been created in Bhutan—the Gross National Happiness Index (GNHI). The index was constructed because of the significant differences between the Western and Eastern Buddhist culture. It includes collectivities and relations of people and serving them are very important values in the country and the values are included in the measurement of the index: “From the start, it is vital to clarify that GNH in Bhutan is

⁶ The other index that could be used to estimate the conditions for happiness is the “Legatum Prosperity Index,” where Norway, Switzerland, Canada, Sweden, and New Zealand lead in the ranking (data from 2017, <http://www.prosperity.com/rankings>, accessed on 22.05.2018; see also The World Happiness Report, <http://worldhappiness.report/>).

distinct from the western literature on ‘happiness’ in two ways. First it is multidimensional—not focused only on subjective well-being to the exclusion of other dimensions—and second, it internalizes responsibility and other—regarding motivations explicitly” (Ura et al. 2012:7). The Prime Minister of Bhutan explicitly referred to the idea as follows:

We have now clearly distinguished the “happiness”... in GNH from the fleeting, pleasurable “feel good” moods so often associated with that term. We know that true abiding happiness cannot exist while others suffer, and comes only from serving others, living in harmony with nature, and realizing our innate wisdom and the true and brilliant nature of our own minds. [Ura et al. 2012:7]

The happiness index in Bhutan is not necessarily associated with per capita income (Ura et al. 2012:55)⁷ and also in other countries (see: <http://worldhappiness.report/>).

An advanced economy brings new needs, competition, anxiety, and destroys tradition and often also the existing social bonds. It also creates new needs that should be fulfilled and creates the power of “greedy institutions” that encompass the entire personality of its members (see Coser 1974, and also see the next section). Competition concerns consump-

⁷ According to the GNHI research, 10.4% of the population of Bhutan were unhappy in 2010. However, there are no unhappy people among persons with diplomas or post-graduate studies or among monks. “This profile of unhappiness, when contrasted with the profile of the deeply happy people, is quite striking, in showing that no single category finds happiness unattainable, but in the same way very few categories leave one ‘immune’ from unhappiness, with the possible exception of post-graduate education and the monastic or spiritually committed life” (Ura et al. 2012:71).

tion. We never consume enough, we always want more, our **greediness** is compatible with goals of *greedy business institutions*, that control us by creating new needs and new products and services that are supposed to fulfill our needs, but never can accomplish that because we will always want more according to the common ideology that we should achieve more, want more, and develop more. We are often ashamed or even humiliated when we are not able to buy some products or offered services. Our psychic well-being is put in danger. As Zygmunt Bauman suggests, human happiness has become highly individualized and commercialized and has become a private experience, like spirituality and religion (Jacobsen 2014:2012). Happiness is sought in an objective and material world which, however, can never be reached on the mass level in the contemporary highly individualized society.

Greedy Institutions

Here we would like to introduce the concept of greedy institutions, proffered by Lewis Coser (1973; 1974), which aids us in understanding sociologically the problem of ontological insecurity in contemporary societies when we consider the specific, contemporary structural conditions of human life. The analysis of institutions is a very important task for sociologists.

Greedy institutions are very hard taskmasters. They create boundaries between outsiders and insiders in order to keep strong social bonds inside the community. Membership is not coerced, but “voluntary.” The institutions want to encompass the whole personality of the individual. “These

might be called ‘greedy organizations’ in so far as they make claims of competing status positions on those they wish to draw within their circle. Their demands on the person are omnivorous” (Coser 1973:111; see also Coser 1974). As examples of greedy institutions Coser offers the example of the Jesuits after the Reformation period, and Lenin’s Bolsheviks when they broke from the rest of the Social Democrats in Russia at the beginning of the XXth century. The institution works on the individual identity: “The grip on the individual is especially strong, however, where active and militant service in the world is the central goal of greedy organizations. In such cases, total obedience and total commitments will be normatively required and actively enforced. Militant organizations of this totalistic type are likely to arise in situations that are defined as presenting an extreme crises and desperate urgency” (Coser 1973:112).⁸ The members of greedy institutions described by Coser (Jesuits and Bolsheviks) are separated from their original communities and rootless in the new surroundings where they operate (see also Coser 1972).

It would seem that greedy institutions are going against the trends of contemporary, modernistic

⁸ “Coser discusses a number of ‘greedy’ structural elements in his analysis of religious sects, which can be delineated as follows: (1) formal sanctions against association in outside social spheres; (2) an immersion in a rigid and highly visible symbolic status structure; (3) a promoted feeling of exclusiveness or elite status in the group; and (4) trials of worthiness that monitor, punish, and root out weak members” (Puddephatt 2008:157). The concept of greedy institutions looks similar to the concept of “total institutions” (Goffman 1961). However, greedy institutions create the collective bonds, the access to them is voluntary, and the members feel the pride from membership, they have also the feeling of exclusiveness. These features are generally differentiating the greedy institutions from total institutions, although both of them absorb wholly the personalities of the members.

society, where the web of affiliations is broad and the institutions “make only limited demands on the person. An individual is connected with many groups and not with only one” (Simmel 1955; Coser 1973).

However, contemporary corporations have many of the features of greedy organizations that Lewis Coser writes about. They are hard taskmasters. They work on the identity of the members by creating an organizational culture based on values and norms, as well on the strong identification with the institution and competitive attitudes towards other organizations. The organizations try to focus the activity of the individual on just one loyalty, that is, one group. However, the sophistication of contemporary corporations or corporate-like institutions (e.g., some Universities and Scientific Academies, or small and medium size business organizations) is great and introduces the concept of the “project” as the scheme around which work is organized. Employees voluntarily join the projects. The employees also wish to become entrepreneurs that take care of their fate (Shih 2004:242). They engage in the project work without regard to other affiliations and obligations. They devote almost all the time of their life to the project time: “What is problematic about the speeded-up and erratic nature of project time is that it results in a disruption and displacement of other temporal spheres and rhythms. In particular, a desynchronization with the more routinized needs of bodily time and interaction time appears common, as individuals report being burnt out, unable to care for their own bodies and those of others, and unable to engage in regular social interaction with friends and families” (Shih 2004:242).

Employees become so engaged in project work that they have no private time. These projects seem to be “greedy institutions” that engage the whole personality and are usually without social roots in the contexts where they operate: “We don’t have a life. We don’t have free time, you just go home and sleep, and on weekends you just recuperate, or you have to work. And a lot of people travel ...and that takes a lot out of you. It’s nomadic, people traveling all the time, so there is no home base. It’s very hard to maintain a relationship that way” (quotation from the research and paper by Shih 2004:239; see also Hochschild 1997). One respondent in this research noted that they have no time to reflect on their status and life. It seems that they are totally overwhelmed by the projects (especially project deadlines) and their work for the projects. Their personality belongs to the projects, and in the same way they become thinking collectives: “I’m trying to think if it’s because everyone else is doing the same thing so you don’t realize you have a choice, or if it’s because you’ve been working so hard for so long that you don’t have a life so you don’t miss it ...I mean it’s not as if we could keep on going like this forever. I don’t know; this is a hard question” (Shih 2004:240). The project work brings suffering, as reflected in the excerpt below from the researcher’s conversation with one of the researched persons. As she talked to me about these project cycles, her vivacious manner diminished as she lost her composure and became quite upset.

I’ve been in this industry for eight years. I’ve worked the long hours. I’ve worked the grind, I’ve given a period of my *life* to this company as I’m sure you have heard others say...Basically, I remember being young

[laughs] and getting here at 7, say, outta here 9, 10, 11, 12, 1, OK, and doing this for prolonged periods of times for extensive deadlines, for big projects and stuff. So, you can imagine that doing this for a number of projects, *it can take its toll*. (Shih 2004:238)

These employees have problems with creating friendships. Their normative structure becomes displaced by their commitment to the projects and start-up companies that they are supposed to create. The traditional life career has been changed, from family and friendship orientation to focus on occupation and their work career. It is here that ontological insecurity arises: *the basic assumptions about how to construct the course of one’s life are destroyed*. Moreover, in many companies’ project cycles displace bodily rhythm (sleeping and eating cycles). Together with the body the mind becomes totally involved in work for the company: “When I worked at [this company], I woke up thinking about work, and I went to bed thinking about work. It was totally consuming and there were very few moments when I wasn’t thinking about work” (a report from one employee, Shih 2004:238). Here we also see the changing process of ontological security of the person. *The traditional time schedule is completely displaced by the trajectory of work*. It is project time, not clock time, that directs the tempo, deadlines, and any “free time” of the employee, who is in fact a person. Such a person could easily become lost in this new situation because of changing the basic assumptions about his/her worldview and everyday life activities. Full commitment to work for the greedy institution does not allow for distance and insight into the employees’ perception of the world with relation to the specific characteristics of these institutions.

These greedy institutions are changing the structural base of ontological security in contemporary society. The use of projects as a management strategy or the way of science management in academic institutions gives the illusory feeling that members of the project are autonomous in their decisions about the plans and timeframe for their work. It is easy to manipulate the deadlines because of “market demands”—real or illusory (we do not usually know)—that direct the project timeline. Displacement of the meaning of many concepts takes place; here, for example, “autonomy,” which actually becomes a trap. Moreover, there are displacements and desynchronizations of traditional life careers and the basic assumptions about time structure (work time versus free time), as well as displacement of family time versus work time. The worker’s “potentially free” time becomes devoted totally to the task of projects, not to the family; the structure of relevancies and importance thus becomes radically changed. Generally, engagement in the work projects makes it better to be single than have a family. There is no time for family and friends. Performance-based evaluations create a situation where “the time dedicated to work is limitless” (Shih 2004:234). Time takes on new qualities; in work these are hectic and erratic ones. It is difficult to plan a stable and sustainable organization of time.

At this point it is worth asking the question of what are the psychological consequences of greedy institutions for the members? Do jobs generate happiness in them or perhaps suffering? As previously stated in this article, greedy institutions expect full commitment of employees and this is done “voluntarily.” Although voluntarism is here also redefined,

as the subject redefines her/his life’s career in terms of employee careers imposed by corporations.

What do we get psychologically when we work in greedy institutions? Happiness or suffering? As we know the greedy institutions demand the full commitment that is “voluntarily” devoted to such organizations. “While modern urban society respects that each individual is faced with competing obligations for time and allegiance, the greedy institution transgresses the normative limits that protect the private life and autonomy of the individual” (Egger de Campo 2013:970). So, privacy also becomes a redefined concept that changes the basic assumptions of the worldview of a person.

Similarly, the concept of happiness is changed. It becomes connected with work and the time spent at work and with the happiness of the company’s customers. The customers’ happiness becomes the employees’ happiness (Egger de Campo 2013:981). The recruitment video from the company Google includes the following: “The pages with descriptions of life [note, “life,” not just “work!”] at Google present the company as a cheerful community, where employees can bring their dogs to work, where the organic food in the cafés is grown on the premises, and where there are slides instead of stairways” [see the video on youtube.com, Google 2009; quoted in Egger de Campo 2013:981]. We can add that this workplace is shown as a home-like facility, with the fun-flavor accentuated by showing the leisure/sport furnishings. There are also indices of the sustainable use of resources, and it is a place where all the needs of employees are fulfilled. In addition, we also see the scope of power of the Google network

in the World. The comments below the film clip on the website are very positive. Viewers/people want to work in Google, “be adopted” by Google, want to be there, and they see the place as “a geek heaven.” The “happiness” is included in the work, which is defined as fun [see the movie at the www.youtube.com, Google 2011; quoted in Egger de Campo 2013:981].

The company seems to want to devour the whole personality of the employee, we can see this from the video Google 2011: “The company’s paternalistic yet exploitative approach is also expressed in Larry Page’s motto: ‘We don’t just want you to have a great job. We want you to have a great life. We provide you with everything you need to be productive and happy on and off the clock’” (quotation in Egger de Campo 2013:981-982). We should add, after seeing the video, that the company gives its employees “peace, love, and happiness,” fun and enjoyment. **Happiness is given here, not achieved.** Once again, the vast majority of viewers’ comments are positive (see comments below the presented film on youtube.com movies about Google). There is only one comment that is, perhaps, not positive and touches the problem a little bit from our sociological perspective: “Oh snap! brainwash!”

What is interesting with respect to happiness in the Google Corporation is that they have created an algorithm which identifies unhappy workers. A Google spokesman renders it as follows: “As anyone who has observed Google over the years knows, we’re serious about keeping our employees happy. The work we do in predictive attrition helps us to find situations that may increase the likeli-

hood of some Googlers leaving the company so that managers and HR staff can work on avoiding those situations. These efforts don’t identify specific people at risk of leaving, but instead focus on the less obvious factors that may contribute to the decision to leave the company” (Churchard 2009). This is also an indicator of the control that contemporary greedy institutions exercise over the individual and his/her privacy, here even on *the individual minding*, which Lewis Coser mentions.⁹ Concepts and their linguistic sedimentation shape the perception of the world, to which it cannot be found mindful insight, due to the level of commitment of time and energy by individuals for the benefit of greedy institutions.

This “belonging” to some organization gives a sense of prestige. The prestige is rewarding and gives further motivation to act and belong to: “Greedy institutions are always exclusive” (Coser 1974:8). Hence, belonging to such an exclusive corporation as Google gives one a sense of pride. The more an employee invests time and energy to the work in the greedy institution, the stronger is his or her commitment to the organization. After entering the elite group, the “member” should work even harder to keep the achieved status (see Puddephatt 2008:171). In this case, the institutions shape the ego-identity (with the pride as a leading emotion), which is impenetrable for the subject’s awareness of the world. Mindfulness that is present in meditation and/or is

⁹ The well-being of employees could be also measured by mental health. One of the main health problems in the workplace in the USA is depression; about 70% of people diagnosed with depression are employed (<http://www.mentalhealthconnection.org/pdfs/brc-final-report-full.pdf>, accessed on 29.06.2014). This type of analysis big corporations do not carry out, or this type of data they do not reveal.

a consequence of meditation could break the cage of ego and the matrix of perceiving the world.

The examples above could be indices of the displacement of the concepts of time and life careers and the desynchronization of time structures. The concept of work is mixed with the concept of free time and fun time (displacement of meaning), home is mixed with workplace (see also Hochschild 1997). The above concepts are elements of the category of ontological insecurity that depicts the phenomenon of contemporary society (at the present moment when I am writing about it, 2014). The phenomenon is created in specific institutions which we have called, after Lewis Coser, greedy institutions. The time of “employed persons” could belong totally to the other institution of work that has the features of greedy institutions as, for example, temporary staffing agencies:

I’m available on Monday, I’m available on Tuesday, I’m available on Wednesday, I’m available on Thursday, I’m available on Friday and even the weekend. I’m available in the morning. I’m available in the afternoon. I’m even [sigh] available in the evening. I have my chef coat, I have my white shirt, I have my chef pants, I have my shoes, I have my knives [cooks need their own knives for certain job assignments]. I’m available. Call me. (voicemail left for Instant People staff by Timothy, an Instant People employee). [quote from the research of Elcioglu 2010:117]

This displacement is not a subject of reflection of an individual. The “participants” of the institutions do not have sufficient cognitive and emotional distance to assess their offers and analyze the basic assump-

tions they inculcate. The employees’ well-being is defined mainly in monetary terms and so they do not want to abandon their financial security (which is also illusory) to get to the real meaning of work and life balance. Mindful insight about the process of inclusion into the greedy institutions is dangerous for the newly recomposed assumptions of the ontological insecurity¹⁰ that is becoming so natural and readily accepted by participants.

Conclusions

Ontological insecurity is connected with the displacement and desynchronization of traditional life careers and the basic assumptions about time structure (work time versus free time). There is also displacement of the meanings of many previously accepted concepts, such as family, relationships/friendships, career, home, et cetera. This state of insecurity of one’s being is connected with suffering.

Sociology concentrates on suffering, although it is not directly focused on the *lived experience*. The focus is on social injustice, cultural poverty, and moral anxiety (Wilkinson 2005:2-3) or on suicides and mental disorders. Sociologists are more interested in the social structure of oppression than concerned with individuals’ definition of the situation and experiencing the situation. In spite of the opinion of C. Wright Mills that sociologists are “social pathologists,” some sociologists now suggest that we should

¹⁰ Risk is inherent in contemporary society (Giddens 1990:30-31, 36, 102-111; Beck 1992). It is generally accepted it does not give a psychological sense of security and has negative psychic consequences (see the suicide rate <http://www.newstalk.ie/MAP:-Suicide-rates-around-the-world;> <http://newstalk.ie/AUDIO:-Stigma-keeps-suicidal-people-from-seeking-help-says-President>).

concentrate on positive sociology today, that is, on how people organize themselves to make their life more rewarding and satisfying (Jacobsen 2014:213-214; see also Stebbins 2009). This positive sociology should start from diagnosing the problem, contemplating, and analyzing it to determine possible developments (trends), and seeking a solution. Traditional sociology could do this with the instruments it has got, that is, methods, theories, and patterns of inferring conclusions from the observation of empirical reality. However, implementation could be a problem here. Sociology should go further. It should construct the framework for practical implementation of the conclusions it is able to produce.

Happiness is strictly connected with suffering. They are two sides of the same coin. Psychological understanding (and research) shows that valuing happiness might paradoxically not be necessary in rewarding and contributing to the well-being of a person. People could become disappointed when they highly value happiness and find themselves unable to achieve it. This is a psychological hypothesis (Mauss et al. 2011); that concentrating on happiness could lead to suffering. Both concepts are constructed as separate dimensions, however, they should be considered together as one phenomenon. Psychology makes distinctions and, in this way, it creates paradoxes. There are two sides of the coin, but the coin is one. The perception is our choice. The reflections on symbolic interactionism show us the power of imagination and mind work (the defining of situations and giving meaning to objects, giving the indications, solving the problem, the defining of self, the transforming of identity). The constructions are delusions, and they are impermanent

and changing. However, they bring about activity as a consequence of our images of reality. Lack of systematic and continuous awareness, insight into this state of affairs contributes to suffering because of our attempts to stop and to sediment phenomena that are naturally unstable. Exercise of mindfulness could help to deconstruct the concepts that underlie the actions of individuals and see the phenomena as they are.

The problem is how to manage in the greedy institutions where we work and with which we have contact in our everyday lives. They seem to be structural factors, encompassing the individual personality in the contemporary world, and it seems that the individual has no choice. This is the way it is, as reflected in the “happy” faces of Google corporation employees or the intensive work engagement of engineers at Silicon Valley. However, these movies on Google do not show us exactly how the employees feel and how they manage the time and work burden and deal with their emotions at work. Making a career could be the root cause of suffering. The concept of career suggests that we should concentrate on the future; everything is done for the future; we always live mentally in the future. While obtaining the distance to what we are thinking and doing is only possible here and now, as suggested by Buddhist philosophy. An exercise in mindfulness by meditation draws attention to our mood, emotions, perception of the world, and relationships with others (Thich Nhat Hanh 1976; 2006). The concept of career is based on the greediness not only of institutions but also often of the “volunteers” that want to be employed there, not always mindfully.

If the members of contemporary greedy institutions suffer (usually in silence), we should be able to offer some remedy that we can get from careful analysis of sociological achievements (both from theory and research) and the consequences coming from some theories. This remedy comes in the form of seeing sociological theories (as theory of R. Merton, G. H. Mead, or L. Coser) from the perspective of the “art of living,” that is, how we can live mindfully (Buddhist inspirations) taking into consideration sociological thinking about the conditions of life. We combine here all our considerations set out in the individual paragraphs and we conclude on the sociologically inspired, the art of living:

1. Stop and reflect (here we use sociology as an inspiration).

Reflection as a consequence of minding gives one the chance not only for rational analysis but also for contemplation and implementation of this social rationality to the sociological art of living. Here should start the reconstruction and contemplation of the basic assumptions which direct our thinking. We can use sociology, for example, to look at how greedy institutions operate and what they really offer to the individual.

We can also analyze and reconstruct the basic concepts such as: work time and free time, money, relationship, work, play, home, body, and emotions. But, these reconstructions should touch our everyday life praxis, and not take place only on the theoretical level. By contemplating the social forces and their influence on our ontological security and daily life we are better prepared to make choices.

2. Practice the “here and now” to gain insight (praxis—here we go beyond sociological inspirations and use Buddhist ones). Concentrate on the experience of here and now (thoughts and activity). Concentration only on the future (especially future goals and deadlines, which are connected with risk and psychological uncertainty) does not give one the opportunity to feel the present, which is the only time we can experience directly. Ontological insecurity has its basis in the future perspective.

3. Perception and awareness (of self, mind, society) is your choice (here we use sociological inspirations together with Buddhist ones). Concentration on self and the process of individuation, understood as ego-identity, is considered to be a natural psycho-sociological process. However, it produces suffering because the ego can be easily attacked, shamed, demolished (e.g., as the sense of pride). Perception of one’s self as a construct of social processes yields awareness on a different level. It gives one the possibility to observe the ego and gives a perspective of distance to it. The self as a process does not give stable consequences. The reality of the self is changing, so the concept as a mirror of something real, with essential features, is a delusion. The same thing is connected with the mind and society. Although we think that mind is a stable dimension of our existence, even a brief insight shows that it is a process without beginning or end, so the content in the middle is also questionable as a reality. Society is also a temporary entity. Trying to apply the concept of society, we cannot get it and nail it down, although we

want to see it as the body of an animal in a test tube. In fact, it is always moving, escaping our concepts and vanishing, only to rise again after some time, in our mind however. The concept of society is a construct of our mind. This kind of perception we can achieve by contemplation and/or by meditation. We can see that the concepts about impermanent entities themselves are often useless or even devoid of practical meaning. The practices of contemplation and meditation could give us the basis for choosing our perception and become a part of the art of living day by day.

4. Clean the mind (here we should go beyond a sociology that makes distinctions: security/insecurity; happiness/unhappiness, and use Buddhist inspirations). We reconsider here the distinctions that cover the unity of scientific socio-psychological reality, but also common-sense perspectives. Distinctions are the product of minding. Distinctions show us a society divided into discrepant parts, that is, that poverty and affluence are separate beings, even though poverty is included in affluence and affluence in poverty. That there is an "I" and an "other," even though without the "other" there is no "I" and without "I" there is no "other" (Ames 1973). That there exists happiness and unhappiness, although the two concepts are difficult to sense and capture in *lived experience*. The contemplation of these concepts can show their inseparable relationship and can allow us to go beyond distinction.

5. Do not blame external and structural forces for your self-feeling (here we go beyond so-

ciology and use not only sociological but also Buddhist inspirations). As the sociologist is reconstructing the chain of causes of some phenomena, he/she gives us reasons for blaming external and structural forces for our fate. Greedy institutions are not responsible for our self-feeling. However, by looking deeply at the work of mind, we can see that external forces are in our minding and well-being could be created by our minding and individual choice. The concept of external forces is based on the dualistic thinking (external/internal), although we know from George Herbert Mead's teachings that internal and external are flexible concepts because the "me" and "I" is engaged in a permanent conversation and often changing their positions. However, we rarely elevate to the level of meta-awareness and see that it is only a dialogue which makes the distinction and also the assessment. We need contemplation, reflection on the dialogue to see how it produces concepts and distinctions and we can ultimately cleanse our mind of unnecessary concepts (strategy of *anamnesis*, see, Konecki 2010). The loss of trust is, for Giddens, a source of disintegration of traditional social structures. However, the concept of trust is a concept in our mind. *Trust or not trust* this distinction is made by the individual experiences with others in everyday life. Lack of confidence is not given, it is produced by the mind, which itself is an action. The consequences of lack of confidence are already at the time of imagining/visualizing it, not in the later actions in the so-called outside world. The art of living begins at the moment when the mind begins to work, and our awareness of this work and in-

sight in it gives us a new perspective of acceptance of impermanence and ongoing changes, including a feeling of emptiness of our self and the trust too.

6. Activity comes later (here is also praxis—lack of concepts leads to pure action; we use Buddhist inspirations).

If we see concepts as empty and the interconnected co-arising we are better prepared to act. Action comes about spontaneously and is right, without any preconceptions and false assumptions. We are not attached to the concepts as ideas having immanent features that should guide our activity in everyday life. We are "on alert" in every moment. We can make a choice and act. Google has power, but you decide how big of an influence it has on you. We can make a choice to what point we deceive ourselves by giving meanings to our feelings and concepts as it is externally suggested. If we do not trust others, it depends on us whether we will be clinging to this idea or reject it. But, this requires contemplation and meditation (see: Thich Nhat Hanh 1976; 2006).

7. Who are you? (sociological and Buddhist inspirations could help to answer this question).

If you take into consideration in your contemplation or meditation the input of sociology to your wisdom, you will see the interconnectedness of things and phenomena (although sometimes connections are very far away from the observed phenomenon). You can get answers about the structural influences on your sense

of happiness. You can also answer who is your real self and your identity in these networks of causes and variables influencing each other and permanently changing the reality of the self. You will see that the self has no permanent substance. Then what is permanent? And what is substance? What is the difference between happiness and unhappiness? Maintaining these questions in contemplation and meditation may not produce rational and verifiable answers, but will help to make some choices regarding the art of living that will have not only the scientific basis but will also be sensed in the individual experience of the world here and now. Mindfully seeking the "I" can become a useful game that will lead to a full insight into this concept and allow us to see that there are no essential characteristics of self, and that it is the product of our perceptions and feelings in a continuous process of co-arising of various social phenomena.

The art of living is based on questions, not necessarily answers. But, accepting this is a real change for the art of living inspired by sociology. Acceptance could be achieved by using some techniques of work on mind, body, and emotions, and developing of mindfulness. This would require devoting the same attention to the sociological awareness through the systematic development of research methodology from the point of view of the first-person exploratory methodologies (Bentz and Shapiro 1998; Shear and Jevning 2002:190; see also Rehoric and Bentz 2008). This discussion thread has only been touched upon here. This, however, is a topic for another paper.

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Problem ontologicznej niepewności. Czego możemy się nauczyć od socjologii dzisiaj? Inspiracje buddyzmem zen

Abstrakt: Czy możemy nauczyć się sztuki życia z socjologii? Socjologia uczy nas, że jesteśmy częścią szerszej grupy zwanej społeczeństwem. Nauczono nas, że społeczeństwo powinno być najpierw opisane, aby mogło być zrozumiane i/lub wyjaśnione, a funkcja poznawcza jest najważniejszą częścią zrozumienia roli, jaką powinna odgrywać socjologia w demokratycznym i nowoczesnym społeczeństwie. Czy to zrozumienie (poznanie) jest wystarczające? Co jeszcze możemy uzyskać od socjologii, by ulepszyć jakość naszego życia? Czy socjologia jest narzędziem sztuki życia, czy jest grą „wyrafinowanych” naukowców? W niniejszym artykule analizujemy socjologię z punktu widzenia filozofii buddyzmu zen, aby pokazać związek pomiędzy pracą umysłu a koncepcjami socjologicznymi, które są używane do analizy „społeczeństwa”. Ponadto analizujemy podejścia George’a H. Meada, Roberta Mertona, a zwłaszcza i osobno Anthony’ego Giddensa, który stworzył bardzo ważne dla naszych rozważań pojęcie „bezpieczeństwa ontologicznego”. Odtworzymy również strukturalne warunki sztuki życia i szczęścia, analizując koncepcję tak zwanych *chciwych instytucji* Lewisa Cosera. Analitycznie połączymy strukturalne warunki pracy we współczesnych chciwych instytucjach (szczególnie tych pracujących nad projektami) z utratą bezpieczeństwa ontologicznego. Analizujemy przesunięcie znaczenia pracy, kariery, autonomii, struktury czasu, tożsamości, prywatności i szczęścia, i wreszcie socjologii. Staramy się używać inspiracji buddyjskich do analizowania problemów cierpienia i związanych z nimi: *ontologicznej niepewności* oraz dobrostanu jednostki i/lub społeczeństwa.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuka życia, buddyzm zen, socjologia, niepewność ontologiczna, umysł, jaźń, medytacja, cierpienie, chciwe instytucje