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Preface

The theory developed by the British sociologist Margaret Scotford Archer can justifiably be regarded as one of the most substantial ones in the social sciences of the modern times. These are times tainted by a huge civilizational crisis which has manifested itself in all aspects of human life. We believe that one of the theoretical concepts put forward by M. S. Archer offers the best chance for the sociological sciences to capably perform their cognitive and projective functions. For this reason, the works of Margaret S. Archer have been under constant scrutiny at the Department of Social Thought in the Institute of Sociology and the Faculty of Historical and Social Sciences at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (CSWU). This has led to the production of numerous research papers and debates, as well as master's, doctoral and habilitation dissertations.

The scientific accomplishments of this renowned sociologist are the source of the most critical studies undertaken by our Department. We have thus commenced the publishing of works by M. S. Archer herself, as well as papers pertaining to her theories or inspired by her research. It is of special importance in Poland, where this distinguished scientist has not been widely translated or cited so far. Our intention is to fill this gap. The Department of Social Thought aspires to introduce the works of Margaret S. Archer, along with her approach to critical realism to Polish sociology and other social sciences.

Critical realism is of course a philosophical concept. This British analytical approach to philosophy provides (rather unintentionally) the epistemological, ontological and axiological basis for analytic sociology (and its diverse paradigms). Critical realism has become the foundation of a different genre of sociology, though sadly in Poland, it is still relatively unknown in wider circles. Therefore, the Faculty of Historical and Social Sciences of CSWU, including the Institute of Sociology, and our Department, has initiated annual meetings relating directly to the works of M. S. Archer and the scholars associated with her theories,

for Polish scientists. They have already resulted in many publications in the Polish language. We wish to present the results of our activity to a larger audience, and this is the primary aim of this monograph. It has been purposefully titled: *Critical Realism and Humanity in the Social Sciences. Archerian Studies*, as it is devoted to one of the most crucial issues originating from M. S. Archer's inquiries. It is also one of the main themes of the research conducted at our Department, namely: the adequacy of sociology to understand the essence of human nature, as emerging from the perspective of critical realism.

The texts of this monograph address the paradigmatic and meta-methodological problems which contemporary sociology faces when trying to prove that in order to answer the question: 'how should it be examined?', the crucial point to define is: 'what exactly is it?' Thus we need to return to the ontology of man, society and culture. The presented studies are of a rather general character, referring mainly to the sphere of philosophical anthropology and – so to speak – sociological anthropology. These two fields are utilised in an attempt to scrutinize the issue more thoroughly, by exploring subjectivity and power, as well as the significance and legitimacy of religiously motivated social sciences.

It appears that the social sciences are currently standing at a paradigmatic crossroads. Many of the alluring concepts of the 1970s have lost their appeal – and in our opinion, rightly so. Critical realism, whose beginnings in social sciences go back to the same decade, has stood the test of time. In fact, it now seems to have gained new meaning and is perhaps more relevant than ever before. We strongly believe that it offers great hope for the disorientated and disconcerted social sciences, and that it is why it is worth serious investigation.

The first part of this monograph, titled: *Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, covers five chapters written by Krzysztof Wielecki, Wiesław Wójcik, Arkadiusz Jabłoński, Marcin Zarzecki and Izabela Bukalska, and commences by presenting the very substance of the paradigmatic and methodological propositions made by M. S. Archer.

Krzysztof Wielecki's essay, titled *Sociology at a Crossroads: the Significance of Margaret S. Archer's Theory*, is an attempt to show the impact of this theory on modern sociology. An analysis of the main

tendencies in the development of this science, as well as the idea of orientation typology as a consequence of paradigmatic stratification, form a map of sorts, which allows us to easily trace and understand the phenomenon of the works of the British sociologist and of critical realism more generally. These contemporary social theories have been classified by K. Wielecki into three major paradigms: subjectivist, objectivist and dialectic synthesis. The author pins his hope on the latter as it offers the greatest chance of escaping the paradigmatic crisis which – in his view– affects modern sociology and its related sciences. K. Wielecki argues: “Margaret S. Archer’s theory to be the most mature, integral, and advanced. Her theory is also the most dialectical one, meaning that it goes beyond the aporia of the other paradigms in the most decidedly and original way. It seems to me that M. S. Archer’s theory responds to the challenge of responsibility for modernity, its person, culture and society.”

The study prepared by Wiesław Wójcik, titled *Two Ways of Neo-Positivism Critique*, displays the methodological aspect of M. S. Archer’s theory, viewed from a philosophical perspective. According to the author: “The critique of neo-positivism presented in this study, although carried out in the spirit of acknowledging the value of science and its positive impact on man and society, was inspired by the sociological concept of Margaret. S. Archer. Following the course of the critical realism of K. Popper and Roy Bhaskar, the British sociologist builds the morphogenetic theory of social development with the key notions of humanity, agency and stratification of social reality.”

The critique of neo-positivism provided by W. Wójcik and carried out within the intellectual space, starts with a deep reflection on the views of K. Popper and erudite inquiries into the work of various Polish analytic philosophers, mathematicians and those representatives of other sciences, who in W. Wójcik’s view, have made a substantial contribution to the discussion on the paradigmatic foundations of social thought. That being said, the primary point of reference is still M. S. Archer’s theory, as: “Her approach aims at overcoming the concepts which degrade man and make man’s actions dependent on social structures (according to M. S. Archer, a human being in his carnality and emotionality always stands prior to a social being).”

The theory of M. S. Archer is analysed in a similar context by Arkadiusz Jabłoński in his study *Karl Popper's Method of Trial-and-Error as a Basis for the Sociological Analysis of Knowledge*. K. Popper's concept was crucial for the development of M. S. Archer's theory, and hence there is a great necessity to investigate the source of this inspiration. The study is even more worthwhile when we consider that it has been made by one of the leading experts on K. Popper's theories.

The methodological motif is continued in the study rendered by Marcin Zarzecki, under the title, *A Continuation of the Dispute over the Method of Realistic Philosophy and Critical Realism*, in which the author proposes a revisitation of methodological approaches with regard to the interpretative perspective of M. S. Archer's theory. M. Zarzecki asserts that: "M. S. Archer's metatheory is basically subsumed within a classic debate over the methods of cognition in the social sciences (*Methodenstreit*), and constitutes a contemporary variation – or actually a development of the original conflict – in understanding the relations between different social sciences (or more broadly speaking humanistic 'sciences of the spirit' – *Geisteswissenschaften*) and the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*)."

At first glance, not many sociological concepts are as far from M. S. Archer's theory and her critical realism as the grounded theory. They are divided by – so we think – the most cardinal differences of ontological and epistemological views. Nonetheless, Izabela Bukalska in her study *The Grounded Theory Methodology and the Theory of Margaret S. Archer*, demonstrates the basic assumptions of grounded theory methodology, revealing its major weaknesses, which lead many scientists to try withdrawing through the back door, that is to say, abandoning their basic assumptions. The question raised by I. Bukalska is: does the theory of critical realism make for a completely separate and unmediatable element of an alternative?, or is there some conjunction between it and the grounded theory which is worth scrutinising?

Dorota Leonarska, in her study *The Concept of the Human Person in Margaret S. Archer's Social Theory*, initiates the Second Part of this discourse: *The Human and Humanity*. It pertains to philosophical anthropology, the crucial motif of M. S. Archer's theory and of this

publication, or – as earlier described – ‘sociological anthropology’, with the entire concept of man, his psyche, spirituality, personality, reflexivity and identity. In short, a sociologist – deliberately or not, overtly, or in a disguised manner – still presents a certain conceptualization of man as an object and subject of social interrelations.

In her essay, D. Leonarska demonstrates the peculiar situation of a ‘human being’, without which we cannot comprehend – according to M. S. Archer – culture or society. D. Leonarska analyses the main reasons why it is no longer possible to retain the omnipresent and popular model of ‘modernity’s man’ – an ‘impoverished’ concept of the human being. In another vision – also popularised in sociology – an over-socialised version of man as ‘society’s being’ is often indiscriminately referenced after Aristotle, in the hope that the authority of the ancient philosopher will somehow justify one’s own lack of reflection on social anthropology. As the author of the study elucidates: “M. S. Archer reminds us that it is not possible to study society while omitting the human person, because without this element, the fundamental subject of sociological research would not exist. The social theory of this prominent theorist also shows that the human person and the reality in which he is rooted are very complex and complicated entities.”

The study presented by Rev. Alfred Marek Wierzbicki, *Reading the Text of Human (Glosses on Plato, Karol Wojtyła and Margaret S. Archer)* instantly recognised M. S. Archer’s concern for realistic social theory which might combine the advantages of its ontological foundation, with its epistemologically acceptable utility for sociological research. Those sociologists who are sensitive to this subject should also be read from this perspective. The author notices: “Plato’s metaphor related to the double reading of human and republic, despite being ontologically erroneous, remains inspiring. You do not need to share Plato’s ontology in order to understand the anchoring of the philosophy of politics in anthropology.” In this manner he introduces M. S. Archer’s ideas into the philosophical discourse, and for the purpose of his article examines the associations between selected theses of M. S. Archer and Plato’s philosophy. The second referential point of his study over M. S. Archer’s theory, are the ideas of Karol Wojtyła, particularly those presented in

The Acting Person, probably the most significant work on philosophical anthropology. Thus the study provides – in our opinion – a most subtle and thorough – albeit necessarily abridged – analysis of the selected views of Karol Wojtyła, carried out by a well-known authority in this field. Those two points of reference allow A. M. Wierzbicki to exhibit the significance and value of M. S. Archer's theory, its originality, its important place in the mainstream of philosophical reflection, and therefore its significance, and usefulness for sociological studies.

Karol Wojtyła's thought is also recalled in the study written by Klaudia Śledzińska, titled *Humanity Recovered. Social Theories between Individualism and Totalism: Conceptions of Karol Wojtyła and Margaret S. Archer*. The author targets selected elements of both theories, which despite their slightly different perspectives, are nonetheless complementary, becoming indispensable elements for developing an integral concept of man. The latter, in turn, provides the underpinnings for social theories which might prepare an intermediary way between individualism and totalism. The completion of these theories is the concept of participation, namely, such inveteracy of the relational personal subject within social structures, which enables self-realisation and the cultivation of inner life in a close relationship with the outside world.

The final aspect of the problems in this monograph addresses the references of M. S. Archer's concept to the spheres of human life, which are often associated with going beyond the borders of transcendence. Marek Rembierz scrutinises one of the most critical dimensions of M. S. Archer's theory: agency and authority. His study *The Play between Freedom and Power. On the Human Quest for Self-Determination and Subjectivity in Times of Ideological Fighting for Man's Appropriation*, is an interesting attempt to construct a sphere, crucial also for the British sociologist, of interrelations between what is individual and what is collective and social. Freedom, as a feature ascribed to a subject, is a necessary condition of subjectivity, whilst power is an attribute and condition of the existence of social subjects. Thus, we may conclude that M. Rembierz addresses one of the most essential issues of the sociology based on the paradigm of critical realism.

Rev. Artur Wysocki is absorbed by another of Margaret S. Archer's motifs, that of scientific reflections pertaining to man and society and related to religion, religiousness and transcendence. In his study *Transcendence according to Margaret S. Archer*, he refers to an extremely important book published in 2004 under M. S. Archer's editorship: *Transcendence. Critical realism and God* [Archer, Collier, Porpora, 2004]. A. Wysocki skilfully depicts M. S. Archer's attempts to reposition the sphere of religiousness and the discourse upon God, under scientific research. Religious inspirations, are no more and also no less excluded from scientificity than atheistic or sceptical ones in this respect. A. Wysocki also reveals M. S. Archer's view on whether scientific practice in this regard is even possible, if empirical – and very often rational – methods are inadequate.

We do hope that the proposed studies of the selected facets of Margaret S. Archer's theory shall not only popularise the scientific achievements of this renowned scholar, but that they will become an inspiration for further debate among academics, providing an opportunity to promote Polish scientists.

Klaudia Śledzińska and Krzysztof Wielecki