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The regress of culture, the end of the future and the end of development – reading culture with Bauman and Wilber

Introduction: social theory at the dawn of the 21st century

The contemporary social theory is becoming one of the challenges facing researchers in the educational world. There are discussions by social scientists raising the issue of the status of the social theory – over the dense field of application of diverse perspectives in theorising about the nature and role of social theory. On the one hand, they touch upon the subtle process of transcending the postmodern era in social research; on the other hand, they appear in the context of the aftermath of cultural turns in the research field of contemporary cultural studies and the social sciences. I would like to focus on some of the contexts of the outlined problems. At this point there is definitely a need to articulate the thesis concerning the cultural crisis and regression that is included in the analyses of several social researchers. Two important analyses by prominent cultural experts should appear in the context of the title cultural regression: Zygmunt Bauman and Ken Wilber. On the one hand, Bauman is a figure who has brought to the analysis of contemporary culture extremely load-bearing categories, metaphors and rhetoric that transcend sociology, its domain, and assigned discipline. At the very beginning I would like to add that, in the context of the titular regression of culture, I will definitely refer to Bauman's recent analysis in *Retrotopia* (2018). The analysis of this peculiar "theoretical testament" in the form of the "retrotopia" of Zygmunt Bauman, an eminent contemporary thinker, clearly becomes a significant category allowing to read the essential relations between culture and its domains, including education. The second figure from the circle of prominent representatives of the trend presenting also the analyses of the regression of culture and the breakdown of the trajectory of cultural

evolution in the light of own integral theory is Ken Wilber. In the sketch presented here, it is precisely the work of Bauman and Wilber that provides me with a source of inspiration for the creative analysis of culture through a reference to the interpretation of culture in a state of regression and crisis developed by these scholars.

I want to present the synthetic view of the proposed subject. However, at this point I would like to propose a provisional solution, a kind of categorical scaffolding or quasi-mapping of social theory – following the example of Joanna Rutkowiak (1995) – and in this sketch in a way sort out the many interpretative tropes raised. Therefore, contemporary social theory will be explained by showing the multiplicity of so-called cultural turns in the reflection of contemporary cultural studies, as done by Doris Bachmann-Medick (2012), and Charles Taylor's (2010) included in his concept of the "social imaginary".

As an introduction to this strand of analysis, it should be noted that the social world, as well as the world of education, is currently experiencing a crisis of theorisation, and this phenomenon has been the subject of an important text by Maria Mendel and Tomasz Szkudlarek (2013). As the authors emphasise: "The narrative-discursive interpretation of the crisis carried out here gives an *ontological* dimension to attempts of creating such languages. That is because, the social world is built on communication activities. Its structure is the structure of discourse and its changes are trajectories of the narrative. The multidimensionality of this world at the same time constitutes its multilingualism, and the crisis situations only add to this complexity in that no single language can gain the status of a defining language" (Mendel, Szkudlarek 2013: 24). According to the authors: "Therefore theory plays *a reconfiguring* role in the field of educational discourse and as such […] makes it possible not only to grasp relations occurring (or precisely *not occurring,* deficient) in the here and now, but also to 'foretell' the entire narrative trajectory linking the past, the present as a time of its crisis and a vision of a possible future" (Mendel, Szkudlarek 2013: 29–30). Whereas, according to Anthony Elliott: "Contemporary social theory is a kind of dual enterprise: on the one hand, an imaginative, dynamic and interdisciplinary project of the social sciences and humanities; on the other, an urgent critique of ideological thought and discourses of reason, freedom, truth, subjectivity, culture, and politics" (Elliott 2011: 9–10). In this work, I wanted to show a trailblazing approach to the challenges facing social theory at the dawn of the 21st century and, using innovative examples, point to its multilingualism and a certain unifying problem of a breakthrough in theorisations concerning its nature. This limited intention reveals the fact that "such a reconstruction of the discourse *structure* can have an impact on the understanding of the social *process* and thus – creating a narrative different from the one that has been 'suspended' in the crisis phase" (Mendel, Szkudlarek 2013: 30).

Cultural turns

I would now like to pause for a moment on a number of topics relating to the status of theory and the possibility of exploring cultural reality. The first context I will discuss is the concept of the multiplicity of cultural turns presented by Bachmann-Medick, an attempt to "map the discourse of cultural studies". In order to explore the belief expressed above, I will refer to the work of Bachmann-Medick *Cultural Turns. Nowe kierunki w naukach o kulturze* (2012), constituting a theoretical account of the process of the emergence of cultural turns in the reflection of cultural studies.

As Bachmann-Medick noted: "In the period of postmodernism, the cultural sciences have, as is well known, hailed the end of the 'grand narrative' of emancipation and progress (Lyotard 1997). However, in doing so, have they not themselves became a product of a 'grand narrative'? After all, we are still talking about the *Cultural Turn*, which has seemingly taken a paradigmatic leap across all social and cultural disciplines and is still under the spell of the overwhelming *linguistic turn*. Admittedly, the *linguistic turn* gives the impression of a 'mega'-turn, even some kind of abrupt paradigm shift, but has it really dominated cultural studies theory-making so much that it now determines the following new theoretical directions?" (Bachmann-Medick 2012: 3). According to Bachmann-Medick, this approach can be "contrasted with the idea and image of a different history of the cultural sciences, in which the multiplicity of *cultural turns* was chosen as the guiding idea" (Bachmann-Medick 2012: 3). According to Bachmann-Medick, it is "[…] the tendency of cultural studies towards pluralism, going hand in hand with critical self-reflection and with the (inter)cultural positioning of its own theories, that has been and continues to be fertile ground for producing momentous *cultural turns* both within and across disciplines" (Bachmann-Medick 2012: 6). As Bachmann-Medick explains, she does not intend to write a history of cultural studies, rather, she emphasises: "A more fertile method might be to map cultural studies discourse in such a way that its dynamics can be anticipated and used directly in current struggles with the objects, subjects, or texts under study" (Bachmann-Medick 2012: 7). Viewed from the *cultural turns* perspective, the cultural sciences – according to the author – "do not produce linear sequences of theoretical 'progress'" (Bachmann-Medick 2012: 7). From this perspective, the cultural sciences "are rather distinguished by the fact that they create developmental spaces when, as *turns,* they still only initiate turns – including backwards – or constructive detours, shifts of focus, new focuses or changes of direction" (Bachmann-Medick 2012: 11). According to Bachmann-Medick, "[…] turns, with the leading ideas and categories introduced, the change of direction and the transformation of theory, are something significant, both in their own contextual

references and because they modify the 'scientific field' in cultural studies and the social sciences" (Bachmann-Medick 2012: 12). According to the author of *Cultural Turns*, "one can only speak of a *turn* when the new research focus from the object plane of a new kind of research field 'is thrown' to the category plane of analysis and concept, when it therefore no longer merely points to new cognitive *objects*, but itself becomes *an instrument* and *a medium of* cognition" (Bachmann-Medick 2012: 31). Fundamental to the formation of *cultural turns* is the first "Mega"-turn – as Bachmann-Medick calls it – the linguistic turn.

Social imaginary

It will be important, in the context of considering the peculiarities of social theory at the dawn of the 21st century, to zoom in on some characteristics for Charles Taylor's concept of the "social imaginary". According to Taylor, "the social imaginary is something broader and deeper than the intellectual schemas that people reach for when thinking about social reality in a detached way. It is […] rather about the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they adapt to others, how things go on between them and their fellow human beings; it is also about the expectations that tend to be fulfilled as well as the deeper normative concepts and images underlying them" (Taylor 2010: 37). Taylor uses the concept of "imaginary" in the aforementioned work because, unlike social theory, the concept of "social imaginary" makes it possible: firstly, to capture "how ordinary people 'imagine' their social environment, which they often express not in theoretical terms, but rather through images, stories, and legends"; secondly, "in the social imaginary […] what is really of interest are the beliefs shared by large groups of people, even entire societies"; thirdly, "the social imaginary of legitimacy shared by broad social groups" (Taylor 2010: 37). The interplay between social practice and understanding can be put this way: "[…] because just as practice without this understanding would not make sense – so it would not be possible – and therefore, this understanding, if it is to create meaning, presupposes the necessity of knowing where we are: how we relate to each other, how we got to where we are now, our relationship to other groups, and so on" (Taylor 2010: 39). I invoke the concept of the "social imaginary" mainly because often, as participants in social life in the age of liquid modernity, we do not perceive very clearly the meaning of the practices we enter into and we do not understand very clearly the meanings that our participation in them reveals.

Problematisation

This sketch constitutes a record of my struggles in trying to find the critical moment in contemporary culture analysis that regression and cultural crisis are becoming. I would like to make the issue of regression and cultural crisis the problematisation in this sketch. In the words of Helena Ostrowicka: "I am trying in it (the book) to capture the tropes and traces that can be followed by pedagogical thought seeking in scientific theory and methodology points of support for the critical valorisation of various versions of educational reality and truths about it" (Ostrowicka 2022: 7). According to Ostrowicka, "the appearance of the term 'problematisation' in the analysis signals a critical intention, a kind of challenge to the social and political *status quo*" (Ostrowicka 2022: 8). Problematisation is understood, "both as an object of research interest and as a scientific procedure and method of analysis. Researchers using this concept – despite the differences in its detailed approaches and applications – describe social relations as adventurous and non-obvious and are usually averse to positivist methods of analysis" (Ostrowicka 2022: 8). As stated by the author: "[…] I situate the concept of problematisation in the context of interdisciplinary discourse studies and their encounters with educational research, while being aware of the presence of this category in other theoretical contexts related to education" (Ostrowicka 2022: 9). It can be said, following Ostrowicka, that problematisation is characterised by a double meaning, "which refers both to the method, the mode of research procedure (to problematisation in the sense of the activity of problematising), and to the object of research, the object of thought" (Ostrowicka 2022: 103). The author proposes to frame discursive pedagogy as follows: "Here, discursive pedagogy functions as a concept that creates a convenient space for reflection that integrates the problematic of the discursivity of education in its multilayered view" (Ostrowicka 2022: 11). According to this: "From the perspective of discursive pedagogy, both science and scientific categories are objects of discourse, and thus their meanings depend on historically conditioned systems of norms and rules of knowledge formation. In this sense, discursive pedagogy is characterised by a kind of linguistic sensitivity to the processes of defining and constructing meanings, and thus to the context of its discursive identity formation" (Ostrowicka 2022: 12). In the conclusion to this work, Ostrowicka noted that "working with the category of problematisation, discursive pedagogy adopts a critical perspective. Based on past experiences and expectations related to the need to unmask various origins of truth claims, ambitions to universalise theories, and scientific explanations, it highlights the adventurous nature of pedagogical knowledge and its social relevance" (Ostrowicka 2022: 196).

Problem field: Bauman and Wilber
in the contexts of cultural theory

I believe that it is worth noting that the current crisis and regression of contemporary culture provides the context for the reflections of both Bauman (2018) and Wilber (2017). Bauman's aforementioned regressive trend appears in his work *Retrotopia* (2018), and Wilber's analysis of cultural regression in the light of the integral theory of cultural evolution appears in his work *Trump and the post-truth world* (2017). Although, Bauman's diagnosis touches on "retrotopia", i.e. reversing the course of evolution, and instead of the projects of the future, there is a return to the past, to the traces of the work of the past, which are not very durable as a foundation. The past is sometimes treated as a safe and secure era in the face of anxiety and uncertainty in the future. These regressive trends are reflected in other domains of culture and social life. In my opinion, the thesis concerning the regression of culture and its institutional background defines both the spiritual field of culture and contemporary education (also in Poland).

Retrotopias

 In this section of the study, I intend to refer once again to Bauman's work, this time to his posthumously published work *Retrotopia* (2018). Bauman's views appear in this this text in a number of places, but in the context of the reflections undertaken here, his recent work may provide a counterpoint to the views of Jean-François Lyotard (1997). This work contains numerous ideas concerning the complex nature of the contemporary cultural world, which is characterised by a certain perceptible mood of nostalgia. In the context of considerations concerning the nature of social theory at the dawn of the 21st century, I wish to recall more closely some of Bauman's theses on the retreat from utopian projects and the focus of contemporary inhabitants of the global village on the past. Therefore, what is "retrotopia" and how does it work within social theory? Will it provide an understanding of the contemporary world and reveal trends in developing culture and social theory itself? These are important questions taken up by the author in his "theoretical testament".
 It seems that Bauman's work touches upon the general tendency of late twentieth-century culture, and for this reason seems to be a significant voice of an experienced researcher of social life, who created many inspiring analyses of the world of liquid modernity. In the introduction Bauman quotes Svetlana Boym's reflections and concludes that "the 20th century began with utopia and ended with nostalgia" (Bauman 2018: 8). Below is an extract from the text:

Five hundred years after Thomas More bestowed the title of utopia on the dream, dreamt of by mankind for millennia to return to paradise or establish heaven on Earth, another Hegelian triad, created as a result of the double negation, is now approaching its starting point and bringing the cycle full circle. Once the hopes of achieving human happiness – since More's time linked to a topos (that is, a fixed place, a *polis*, a city, a sovereign state, each ruled by a wise and benevolent hand) – have been freed and severed from the concrete topos and individualised, privatised and personalised (in other words, deposited, like snail shells, on the shoulders of individuals, according to the principle of "subsidiarity"), it is apparent that it is precisely these hopes that are now to be negated by that against which they have so valiantly and almost victoriously attempted to act. Out of the movement of the double negation of utopia as understood in the tradition of More – its rejection and subsequent resurrection – today "retrotopias" are born: visions grounded in a lost/stolen/abandoned but undead past, rather than an attachment to what is yet to be born, and therefore to a future not yet in existence (Bauman 2018: 10).

Giving the floor to Bauman:

As old fears slowly faded into oblivion and new ones grew in significance and intensity, encouragement and humiliation, progress and retrogression swapped places, with a growing number of reluctant pawns in this game doomed – at least according to their own understanding – to failure. Such developments resulted in that the pendulum of public sentiment swung in exactly the opposite direction: from investing the hope of improved living conditions in an uncertain and all too evidently doubtful future to a renewed investment in a barely remembered past, valued for its supposed stability and thus for the impression that it could be trusted. As a result of such a radical turnaround, the future is transformed from a natural refuge of hope and legitimate expectations into a space of nightmare: the fear of having one's home and remaining life's possessions seized by creditors, the fear of being forced to watch passively as one's own children roll down the slope of well-being and prestige, and how one's own skills, acquired and assimilated by the sweat of one's brow, lose whatever remains of their marketability. The road into the future appears alarmingly as a path marked by decline and degeneration. Therefore, the road back, the road leading to the past, perhaps will not fail to turn into a route of purification, removing the obstacles that the future inflicts as soon as it turns into the present (Bauman 2018: 11).

The above quotations serve as an introduction to the author's definition of the meaning of "retrotopia". As stated by Bauman: "By the term retrotopia I refer to the phenomenon derived from second-degree negation – that is, something that is a negation made by utopia" (Bauman 2018: 13). According to Bauman: "Be that as it may, only those real or imagined aspects of the past that are considered effective, but have been prematurely abandoned or irresponsibly exposed to erosion, will now serve as major landmarks as we plot a map showing the path to retrotopia" (Bauman 2018: 13). The author traces the work of "retrotopia" in four contexts: back to Hobbes, back to tribes, back to inequality, back to the womb.

I have been wondering, since the publication of Bauman's book *Retrotopia* (2018), about the possibilities of reading the current state of culture and the social conditions of our time through the prism of this category of reality that Bauman's "testament" brings to the order of analysis. Is it possible to use this category in relation to the current situation of education, life in the face of disturbing developments in

politics and climate alarmism? To clarify, it is important to get ahead of the reading, the title does not point to "retrotopia" itself as a profiled category through which I perceive the world of education, the social world. In the face of the collapse of the project of neoliberal hegemony of educational discourse, in the light of numerous analyses that *de facto* indicate explicitly that education is missing something valuable to it, but forgotten in this approach. For an introduction to the subject matter, this is not enough – however, "retrotopia" appears rather as an invitation to address the themes of education, politics and ecology using various tools to analyse culture and education. Bauman's "Retrotopia" appears next to integral theory, next to weak theory or depth ecology, which indicates both the multifaceted nature of culture and the diversity of tools for analysing culture, as well as the multifaceted and multi-perspective nature of culture and education, and that politics here is not merely a background in the process of mapping contemporary culture".

These are all too obvious clues to explain the meaning of the titular "retrotopia": on the one hand, it raises questions concerning the meaning of education; on the other, it points to a weakening and undermining of the hegemony of neoliberalism, which, like postmodernism, has exhausted its compelling magic of simple prescriptions.

On the evolution of culture in the light of Ken Wilber's integral theory

The moment of the "transition" of culture to the integral level and the situation of postmodern culture, together with the dangers of the evolutionary trajectory to the integral stage, became the focus of Wilber's analysis in his recent texts. The topography of "transition" as well as the significant threats and some disturbing tendencies exemplified by Wilber's integral theory provide an opportunity to grasp several features in our cultural surroundings and also delineate symptoms of the existential condition of the inhabitants of the world undergoing these processes.

In my sketch I want to present Wilber's reflections from his recent work, above all from *Trump and the post-truth world. An evolutionary self-correction* (2017). Wilber's interesting analyses touch on matters concerning the essence of the integral approach to culture and the status of integral theory, and his most recent work deals with important resolutions in the face of disturbing regressive moves and his attempt to defend the delineated developmental process of cultural evolution towards an integral level. Wilber also continues his observations concerning the gravity of the green meme and regressive tendencies that have already appeared in his earlier work (e.g. Buddhist boomeritis and "boomeritis") (Wilber 2006).

Evolutionary correction

In *Trump and a post-truth world. An evolutionary self-correction* (2017) Wilber intends to present a more general and integral view in contrast to Americans disappointed with or satisfied with the election of Donald Trump. The example of electing Donald Trump is, in his view, a sign of deep adaptive moves within the evolution of culture. Wilber presents a more general picture that is perhaps "more enlightening and liberating" and expresses what no one before him has articulated. Wilber believes that "the evolution of culture itself must regulate the direction, in the light of new information, of how its path unfolds and begins (apparently spontaneously), but with a deep morphogenetic field (operating indeed) by making various movements that are in effect self-correcting evolutionary rearrangements" (Wilber 2017: 3). The forerunner of cultural evolution has been, for the past four or five decades, the "green wave", which means "a fundamental stage of human development referred to in many developmental models as pluralist, postmodern, relativist, individualist, multicultural – generically referred to as 'postmodern'" (Wilber 2017: 3). As Wilber expresses it, "the original purpose of the evolutionary summit is precisely to be the leader of evolutionary development", which means: "the search for the arenas that are the most appropriate, the most complex, the most capacious, and the most conscious forms that are possible at a particular time and point in evolution (in terms of integral theory, the forms that are best aligned with the ongoing development of the AQAL matrix in all its elements)" (Wilber 2017: 3). The beginning of the green wave dated to the early 1960s initiated many positive changes in culture and society, associated with liberating minorities from social oppression (the civil rights movement, the environmental movement, the development of personal and professional feminism) and soon surpassed the gains of the orange wave (known in many models as the modernist, rational, formal operations level, achievement, developmental) that preceded the green wave. The green wave, it should be added after Wilber, acknowledges "an understanding of the essential role of context in all truths of knowledge and a desire to be as inclusive as possible" (Wilber 2017: 4). In order to discuss Wilber's views, it should be briefly added that, in the light of the integral theory of cultural development and evolution, the various developmental stages have their positive, healthy expressions and also carry dangers that their pathological incarnations can produce. According to Wilber, the green wave has also produced a pathological variant of the green meme in the course of the passing decades, which he refers to as boomeritis. It is worth characterising its features in more detail, because Wilber's argument concerning the evolutionary correction is based largely on diagnosing a pathological version of the dominant green wave. According to Wilber, in the course of evolution, the gains of the green meme have contributed, in the extreme, to postmodern culture's aporias and the internal (performative) contradiction of discourse. It is worth pausing to take

a closer look at this form of green wave. Wilber puts the matter in the following way: "His tolerant pluralism slipped into a violent and evasive relativism (collapsing into nihilism), and the view that all truth is contextualised (or achieves meaning from cultural context), slipped into the view that there is no universal truth, there are only reflexive cultural interpretations (which in effect slipped into a pervasive narcissism)" (Wilber 2017: 4). Let me quote a few more sentences characterising this attitude: "Central views (which began as an important notion of 'true but partly', but collapsed into extreme and deeply contradictory views) containing the ideas that all knowledge is, in part, a cultural construction; all knowledge is context-bound; there is no privileged perspective; which imports truth as a cultural fashion and is always overtaken by one oppressive force or another (racism, sexism, Eurocentrism, patriarchy, capitalism, consumerism, greed, environmental exploitation)" (Wilber 2017: 4).

According to Wilber, the position of postmodern science has fallen into an internal contradiction, because since there is no privileged perspective or position, and therefore "knowledge is a cultural construct" of a particular culture, it cannot be inferred that this "truth" applies to all cultures and all humanity. This position is repeatedly referred to by Wilber as "aperspectivist lunacy", which has infected the lodgement of cultural evolution, and with it, its capacity for self-organisation and self-development has also collapsed.

According to Wilber, Trump's anti-green rhetoric resonates with and has activated three earlier pre-green developmental stages: the orange meme (world-centric – focused on achievement, development, excellence, profit); the blue meme (ethnocentric – racism, sexism, xenophobia, anti-immigration, hyper-terrorist sensitive); and the red meme (egocentric – pre-conventional, narcissistic). All these pre-green wave developmental stages are united by their shared anti-green character. According to Wilber, the described antinomies in the post-truth culture have allowed regressive tendencies of aggression, narcissism, hatred, also ethnocentric beliefs (sexism, racism, xenophobia, political bigotry, religious fanaticism – fundamentalism), conspiracy theories to erupt and fail to meet these challenges. Wilber also links this to the crisis of legitimacy in culture as a mismatch between the lower left (cultural quadrant) and the left right (social quadrant). This results in denying cultural beliefs concerning equality with social inequalities and in the belief that culture lies.

This conviction also led to the conclusion that "when all truth is cultural fiction, therefore, there is simply no truth – to epistemological and ontological nihilism" (Wilber 2017: 8). According to Wilber "nihilism and narcissism are no trope, and no developmental wave can properly operate here" (Wilber 2017: 8). The response to this consists in the development regression seen around the world. When the forefront of evolution falls into an internal contradiction, the evolution of culture makes certain movements, regressions to a point from which it can restart development.

According to Wilber, two ways to move forward are possible:

1. The first way is more likely, but less effective – it involves healing the broken abutments of the green wave, the green-on-green movement for self-healing and self-correction;
2. The second way is to go directly to the turquoise integral level and take the vanguard of development and evolution through the turquoise integral wave.

According to Wilber, it will be important in this context to heal "the disastrous confusion between hierarchies of domination (violence) and hierarchies of actualisation (development)" (Wilber 2017: 61). According to Wilber, "the green meme – fighting absolutism, nominalism, and hierarchical rule (characteristic of the blue and orange memes) – found all hierarchies equally destructive; opposed any hierarchies and got bogged down at the level of first-order thinking" (Wilber 2006: 53).

In the perspective of integral theory, developmental hierarchies constitute a belief that "the totality of each level contains itself as part of the totality of the next higher level' or, in other words, "each level is a whole/part" (Wilber 2017: 61). This is expressed by the basic force of evolution: "transcending and containing" or "distinguishing and integrating" (Wilber 2017: 62). Whereas, the green wave is associated with a lack of understanding of development hierarchies and an attachment to hierarchies of violence. From an integral level of development, all previous stages are necessary in the course of evolution, while at the same time this level generates strong pressure on the green wave to heal its broken and fragmented manifestations.

According to integral theory, "following waves become more and more closely linked, becoming more integral and therefore less and less marginalising and mutually exclusive – each successive wave includes the previous ones and at the same time transcends them" (Wilber 2006: 52). Whereas, in the context of critical analyses of boomerosis, Wilber adds at the same time that "by criticising the 'pre-green' levels in the green stage, one is just as effectively combating all the 'super-green' levels – with very destructive consequences". This struggle makes it difficult and often impossible for the green to take a step towards genuinely holistic, integral thinking" (Wilber 2006: 37). Referring to Wilber's reflections, using the work of Don Beck and Christopher Cowan's *Spiral Dynamics*, it should be supplemented that the six initial stages of evolution are levels of existence and characterise first-order thinking, while development also contains distinguishable three second-order levels, or levels of being. Wilber presents a brief characteristic of the yellow, turquoise, and coral memes. "The ability to think in both horizontal and vertical planes, using both hierarchies and heterarchies (and therefore the category of ranking levels as well as combining various dimensions). In this way, for the first time in the evolution of consciousness, it will be possible to grasp perfectly the entire spectrum of inner development and to see that the health of each level, each meme and each wave is fundamental to the health of the entire spiral" is characteristic for second-order thinking" (Wilber 2006: 32).

Summary

Culture often constitutes an area of interpretations, and conflicts of interpretations. According to the post-structural perspective, the conflict of interpretations within cultural domains, including education, should be perceived as a normal state of affairs. Michał P. Markowski (2019) believes that education is the art of interpretation. I would like to quote some of Olga Tokarczuk's thoughts from the collection *Czuły narrator* (2020). As the Nobel Prize winner writes:

> The world is a fabric that we spin every day on the great looms of information, discussions, films, books, gossip, anecdotes. Today, the reach of the work of these looms immense – thanks to the Internet, almost everyone can participate in the process, responsibly and irresponsibly, with love and with hate, for good and for evil, for life and for death. In this sense, the world is made of words. Therefore, the manner in which we think about the world and – perhaps more importantly – how we talk about it, matters enormously. Something that happens and is not told ceases to exist and dies (Tokarczuk 2020: 263).

According to Tokarczuk:

> The problem today – it seems – is that we do not yet have ready-made narratives not only for the future, but even for the specific now, for the ultra-fast transformations of today's world. We lack language, we lack points of view, metaphors, myths, and new tales. Instead, we are witnessing an attempt to draw these incongruous, rusty, and anachronistic old narratives into a vision of the future, perhaps on the assumption that an old something is better than a new nothing, or in an attempt to deal with the limitation of one's own horizons. In a word, we lack new ways of telling about the world (Tokarczuk 2020: 264).

Risk constitutes a clear aspect leading to Bauman's "retrotopia", but there are other social phenomena, such as political populism and environmental education linked to climate alerts. A culture of risk can lead to "retrotopia", while political populism can lead to division, the social disintegration of communities and a return to the idea of a closed society. Hence, the gains of liberal democracy can be undermined by populist policies that no longer appeal to the idea of the common good. Therefore, examples of "crisis" in culture are all too numerous. And should that be remedied by the mindfulness movement, which Ronald Purser calls "neoliberal pedagogy"? The ongoing crisis also accompanies education researchers, who declare a crisis of theorising in education. I have chosen these few themes not previously exposed only to show the causes of the cultural crisis and the impotence of education in the face of the influence of cultural institutions and the fundamentalism associated with the idea of a "closed society".

However, a legitimate question can be raised about the sense of juxtaposing the "developmental correction" of Wilber's evolutionary trajectory under discussion with Bauman's diagnosis of culture. As Wojciech Burszta wrote in a study on this work entitled *Ostatnia Metafora Baumana*: "In his posthumously published book,

Zygmunt Bauman left us yet another word useful to describe a world of mutual distrust, disbelief in the future and idealisation of the past: retrotopia" (Burszta 2017). One may risk to argue that, like according to Wilber, activating earlier stages of development and waves triggered by a misunderstanding of the importance of the green wave in the course of the evolution of culture to the integral stage, and thus the activation of the past and the strong gravity of the green wave triggering regressive tendencies and a return to the past, and a misunderstanding of the necessity of transcending these tendencies in the evolutionary ascent into the integral bands, Bauman's work, also presenting "retrotopia", touches on the essence of our tendency to return nostalgically to the past and disbelieve in utopian projects. According to Burszta, "retrotopia constitutes a turning to the imaginary of the past, a nostalgic return to realities considered safe, comprehensible and – less importantly – stable because predictable. It concerns collectivities, but also individuals, it is a search – for various reasons – for certainty and an escape from the unknown" (Burszta 2017).

Bauman's work concerning "retrotopia" may provide a closing bracket for reflections on the atrophic mood of utopia in the thought and attitudes of post-modern culture.

Both works provide a record of the breakdown and regression in contemporary culture, they may provide a diagnosis of culture and present mature variants of social theory that pose the problem of the future of theoretical analyses of culture, contributing much to the understanding of the search for the sources of the trends that have occurred. The concepts discussed can also serve as a background for explaining the situation of a crisis of theorising in education, which as a domain of culture is becoming an area of regression.

The titular categories represent a greatly capacious semantic field, but the sketch nevertheless develops several contexts to think about and look for the logic and "hidden grammar" of a culture that re-presents these themes in accessible ways. If one adopts Wilber's and Bauman's perspectives, it will be possible to take advantage of these metaphors, as well as to use "culture mapping" as a method to study it. It is possible to perceive Bauman's work – his "scientific testament" – as indicating the momentous role of cultural analysis around the four types of "retrotopia", while Wilber's vision also has an emancipatory character, as it makes the category of the map an operative concept and gives the phenomena and tendencies described a meaning in a new context. The "hidden logic" governing the tendencies of contemporary culture is captured in the category of "retrotopia" and in Wilber's concept of cultural evolution and integral development. One can say that these two perspectives shed much light on the processes currently taking place in the culture and its domains. One can confidently conclude that these two works represent a unique opportunity to capture processes that are difficult to analyse, while these researchers have left works that can still challenge social scientists, including educators.

In his last work *The religion of tomorrow* (2018), Wilber made some summary statements concerning the status of integral theory in the context of considering

"integral semiotics". According to Wilber, the upcoming world also demands a new language, and the practice of describing the integral world has a profound emancipatory value against the entanglements and reductive practices anchored in the flat earth. The contemporary problem with spirituality is a semiotic one: "most modernist and postmodernist cultures simply did not have a vocabulary for any third-order structure or any experience of a higher state of Spirit" (Wilber 2018: 642). Returning to the problem of the map, Wilber adds that "one should not confuse words with reality, map with territory, sign with referent, theory with fact. But at the same time when we don't want to confuse a map with a territory, we also don't want to have a completely inadequate map" (Wilber 2018: 642).

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Summary

The regress of culture, the end of the future and the end of development –
reading culture with Bauman and Wilber

The text presents two important analyses by experts of contemporary culture in the context of the regression and crisis of culture. On the basis of a Zygmunt Bauman's "retrotopia" and the work of Ken Wilber concerning the breakdown of the course of the evolution of culture within the last decades, I intend to present the significance of these problems in the context of the dispute concerning the status of the social theory. An analysis of the peculiar "theoretical testament" in the form of a "retrotopia" by Bauman, an exceptional contemporary thinker, becomes a significant category allowing to read important relations between the culture and its domains, including education. Whereas, in the case of Wilber, analyses of the regression of culture and the breakdown of the course of the evolution of culture are shown in the light of his own integral theory. In the work presented here it is precisely Bauman and Wilber's body of work that constitutes a source of inspiration for me to perform a creative analysis of culture through the references to interpreting culture in the condition of regression and crisis carried out by these researchers

Keywords

cultural studies, regression, crisis, retrotopia, postmodernism, integral theory