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THE SCHOLAR'S SOCIAL ROLE IN THE PAST AND TODAY

In this study, I am using the notion of social role in the meaning in which Florian Znaniecki used it to discuss similar issues. It may be remembered that Znaniecki regarded the social role of a researcher and academic teacher as a component of the social system of science. The role, in its axiological meaning, amounts to expectations of the academic community towards the researcher, expectations of qualities a researcher should have. The expectations are, to some extent, explicitly rationalized, and partly they "are implicit in the given group's customary behaviours, passed on in the process of education and imitation from generation to generation." The specific "make-up of roles" a person performs during his or her lifetime constitutes that person's social personality. The central part of that personality is the self, which has specific properties in each case. The community of researchers and learned men develops a collective vision of the features and requirements that "self" must display, while a learned man is guided in his conduct by his self-awareness and by those requirements. The academic community's enduring vision of the learned man's role was called by Znaniecki "the cultural pattern of the role of a learned man or a scholar." While Znaniecki has more to say on this matter, the above synopsis will do for our purposes here.

What I think is particularly interesting in Znaniecki's concept is his indication of the significance of the academic community's collective awareness and also the cultural pattern of their role. That concept, on the one hand, makes it easier to study systematically the scholar's social role, and, on the other, it sets the limits for the socio-cultural benefits to be drawn from such sociological reflections. It is always necessary to determine collectively the axiological foundations of learned men's acts. It will always be necessary to spread knowledge of those axiological truths among young candidates to the circle of learned men. True membership in that circle is not determined by diplomas or nominations, posts or functions, but by meeting requirements involved in the cultural pattern of a scholar. The best service a senior university teacher can do

his junior colleague is to describe the meaning of that pattern to him, as that pattern is something like the backbone of many scholars' biographies as well as the "biography" of the discipline itself, namely its history.

In what follows I am going to use observations made in my own discipline. First let me make a few remarks about social roles of sociologists in prewar Poland. The foundations of the Polish sociological school were laid before World War II, and it was then the community of sociologists established itself along with their ethos, that is, the system of values and the style of work of sociologists, and also the counterparts of these in the individual and collective dimensions—the sociologist's cultural pattern.

One typical feature of that ethos was a very profound, close and vivid interest in the situation of the people and the nation. Studies, theoretical and empirical alike, were undertaken not only "to understand" and "to generalize" but also in order to get a feeling of what it is like being the kind of people studied. Was it not the spirit of theoretical, sociological and legal works by Leon Petrażycki in which he considered possibilities to build a society of people loving each other and being happy with one another? Was it not the same intention which was behind the great undertaking of Polish and world sociology which culminated in Znaniecki's and W. Thomas's *The Polish Peasant in Europe and North America*? Was it not for that particular kind of ethical and intellectual considerations that J. Chałasiński wrote his fundamental *Advancement Paths of Young Workers*? Didn't S. Rychliński study the dynamics of social structures and the democratization of culture, social policy, overpopulation, the labour market or education precisely because of that particular orientation? For similar reasons, L. Krzywicki wrote most of his scholarly studies in which Krzywicki, an intellectual in the purest meaning of the word, complained about his fellow intellectuals being largely indifferent towards the problems faced by the people, the entire nation, towards progress in general.

The ethos and cultural pattern of the sociologist's social role had a next aspect, namely the injunction to study and contemplate the state of Polish society in its entirety, and, more broadly, of the realm of European culture at large. The Poland which was reborn as an independent national state was poor, economically backward, riven by social, political and ethnic differences, hampered by unresolved problems of peasants and the working class, and all that was a cause of deep concern for sociologists. The sociologist's cultural pattern implied that sociological studies should be diagnostic and critical, and critical remarks should be deep-cutting and deeply rooted in social doctrine but in ethical principle as well. The sociologist, the implication was, should avoid compromise solutions and understatements. A sociologist had a duty to induce people to cure social diseases. He should encourage a creative kind of attitude along with a creative individual and group kind of activeness.

Student of society, and tutor of society; these two notions are indispensable when you want to discuss that pattern of the sociologist's social role. A sociologist had no right to keep his mouth shut when questions were being

asked. He should supply answers to anyone who asked questions everywhere, from every rostrum from which anything could be said which was regarded as true. But observe that those promoters of knowledge, those fighters for the truth, those technologists, as Znaniecki used to call them, had their most natural audience in the general public, in Polish society ; they did not define their own role through their ties with the authorities, with political parties, industrial corporations, churches, etc., but through their ties with the nation at large, with the community.

There was a third aspect to the scholar's ethos and cultural pattern of role, namely the injunction to engage in reforms. The principal meaning of that injunction was to design reforms in a very broad sense of the word, starting with reforms of social structures and rebuilding the state through to drafting modern concepts or roles of teacher, public figure, etc. Znaniecki's book *The People of Today and the Civilization of the Future* will for ever remain the most ambitious contribution to that particular line of work. Znaniecki presents a deep-cutting critique of the European education system along with suggestions about ways to mend it. An extra observation to be made in reference to this specific aspect of the scholar's social role is that the scholar had to stand above politics and above ideologies. Those injunctions followed from the concept of role held by the circle of learned sociologists at large.

Developing theory on the ground of empirical research, formulating diagnoses, designing reforms on as broad a scale as possible, acting as teacher and educator of all society, understanding and sharing society's life—that was a very ambitious programme for sociological research as well as a demanding cultural pattern for the scholar's role. And yet Polish sociologists of the time were able to live up to that programme, making it a true compass of their lives. Their biographies, notwithstanding the fact that people of entirely different orientations were involved, were similar to each other precisely owing to the shared values and pattern of social role. They were able to act in accordance with the model in very difficult conditions, in a society which showed little understanding for sociology's aspiration to grow, in a country whose authorities did not quite know what they could do with the benefits sociology could perhaps produce. They managed to defend that pattern against bureaucratic currents. They stood by that pattern when desperate attempts were made to put research into a strait jacket of regulations, to reduce it to the low status of a purely instrumental activity, to deprive it of its autonomous status, and to bring down researchers and university teachers to the role of administration officers. They managed to defend that pattern of their social role owing to their moral integrity and intellectual independence. That way they defended the national culture against losses those currents could have brought upon them if the reform which was undertaken at that time had been carried out to the end, that is, had that reform indeed succeeded in changing the customs and cultural patterns of scholars' roles, their research procedures and tuition models.

What happened to that cultural pattern after the war ?

In 1956, when sociology was readmitted as an academic discipline, there were several first-rate minds in Polnad, including people with close ties to European and American intellectual communities, representing different orientations in theory and method, and also people who were deeply committed to the Polish intellectual tradition and faithful to the moral and ideological implications of social doctrines they subscribed to. Those people could pride themselves on being the inheritors of the cultural pattern of the Polish sociologist's social role which was developed in the two-decade period between the two world wars.

Their authentic European orientation made them immune to the danger of slipping into a Polonocentric attitude. They were perfectly aware of the kind of country Poland was. They knew that, like many other countries emerging almost from nothing, from poverty and backwardness, Poland had no choice but to go through an indispensable yet costly process of industrialization and urbanization. Poland's cultural advancement, which was slow and late in coming, was in their eyes not an objective in itself but an indispensable condition for a massive spread of higher-order demands and a more rewarding life. They viewed Poland's educational revolution as a process of hoisting the masses to a higher level of development at which the people could partake of the national and universal cultural values. The nation's cultural advancement, in turn, was viewed by them as a condition for developing political needs and the ability to avail themselves of political benefits. They believed that individual and group freedom at a national scale should fulfil itself in a positive manner in public life, on the stage of civic life. The process of social development thus conceived of was to culminate in the development of a full-fledged nation in the sense of a political, democratic and sovereign community.

They realized Poland was not a unique country at that time. It was one of many countries undergoing similar processes. In great toil, Polnad was forging for itself a better future at huge cost and often unnecessary sacrifices. They wanted to watch the poor, ruined and ultimately very parochial Poland scramble up to the level of its would-be partners among the most advanced nations in the European cultural heritage.

Those masters, including S. Ossowski, M. Ossowska, J. Chałasiński, J. Szczepański, S. Szczurkiewicz, J. Hochfeld, P. Rybicki, K. Dobrowolski, were well aware that unlike many countries in Eastern and Southern Europe, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, Poland had two strong trump cards.

First, Poland could rely on a rich cultural heritage which had been created by groups which had a well-established national awareness and knew that the heritage fitted well into the European tradition. They saw that the cultural heritage of Poland will make it possible to complete the process of developing a national awareness among the masses, the process of endowing them with a cultural awareness and activation more quickly and more successfully than elsewhere, which could make Poland a leading nation among others which were trying to lift themselves from their fall and which were often devoid of any higher-order national cultural values. That was their idea of turning Poland's

parochialism into a strong trump card : it was the people absorbing the national cultural tradition and integrating it with its own heritage, abilities, energies and hard work, its unbridled desire to live a better life, that was to become the subject of national life from then on. That view was based upon a well-established concept of historical and sociological processes in the 19th and 20th centuries ; the history of our times is the history of birth and struggle for survival and for conditions of development of ancient and young nations. A reformist and educative kind of sociology was to serve those processes.

Second, there was the factor of Poland's geopolitical situation along with its significance in cultural and social processes. Poles are a frontier people. For centuries they have acted as go-betweens in cultural transmission processes. Their own national culture is a product of two different cultures. Poles are better than others—especially than other Slavs—disposed to perform such a specific function. In fact, the history of sociology in the postwar period well illustrates this belief. Sociology's rapid growth, its ability to absorb Western ideas and to adjust them to the requirements of countries in the socialist community, are evidence—along with the penetration of Polish accomplishments to other countries in that community—in support of that contention. Modernization of institutions and cultural facilities in those countries is bound to result in the absorption of the European cultural heritage, and Poland is capable of playing a prominent role in that.

This particular vision of the role of science and of the scholar, along with this particular vision of Poland, of the Polish people and its history, imparted singular importance to some matters. Poland emerged out of the war almost completely deprived of those groups which previously used to create the national culture. The most important of those groups, the intelligentsia, was composed of no more than 100,000 people with college education. In those first years after the war, Poland faced a genuine threat of losing its cultural identity, and thus also its national identity. A reinstatement of culture-producing groups, a revitalization of the intelligentsia—not just as a group of “specialists” but as a group in the sociological meaning along with its specific ethos, ethical system and life style, its sense of belonging, its sense of a mission and responsibility for the preservation and promotion of Polish culture—were the number one tasks then, the do-or-die for Poland at that time. With that anxiety at the back of their minds, people like Chałasinski wrote his studies, J. Szczepanski published his studies on the intelligentsia, M. Ossowska—hers on ethos and on the sociology of morals, S. Ossowski—on social psychology, specifically the sociology of value systems and national consciousness. The idea behind those studies was to induce the intelligentsia—the architects of new values—to take up and continue deliberately the cause of the national culture both individually and in groups. The scholar, according to that concept, had a special kind of responsibility for that. He not only produced new chunks of positive knowledge but also formed, through his works and his conduct as teacher, the social personalities of members of the intelligentsia. Sociologists at that time saw in that role not only themselves

and/or other representatives of the humanities, but all scholars including scientists. That was why they were opposed to the concept of society without an intelligentsia, the concept which reduced the intelligentsia to the role of experts waiting on the authorities to carry out their orders. Had the intelligentsia been eliminated as a sociological category, the group of people who played the decisive role in preserving Poland's cultural and national continuity would have been eliminated automatically. The concept of a ready-to-oblige member of the intelligentsia who was totally malleable implied the rejection of a certain ideal of the intelligentsia member as a person with a deep sense of moral integrity, patriotism and democratic orientation, a person with an autonomous conscience, intellectually and morally independent, and with a sense of responsibility for what the entire intelligentsia was doing for Polish culture. The concept of the malleable intelligentsia basically implied the liquidation of professional ethics, for such an ethics can be found above all in the ethos of the given social group.

This heritage of our masters included many more important elements. Let me point at two more now.

That group of brilliant minds, small as it was but very important for Polish sociology, represented a variety of theoretical and methodological attitudes. Moreover, they deliberately defended that particular state of affairs. Those people constituted a circle of individuals treating each other with respect and recognizing each other's right to hold different views, for in differences of views they saw an inspiration for themselves and for others, a factor of scholarly and cultural progress. Each of those eminent sociologists perfectly understood what another Pole, the architect of social anthropology Bronisław Malinowski, showed convincingly in his *Freedom and Civilization*, namely that a culture which has no features of pluralism or which is being deprived of such features cannot possibly develop. Diversity is a source of vitality and growth. However, diversity required to be underpinned by an institutional framework, and all Polish master sociologists subscribed to the view that political democracy was necessary for the state, autonomy was necessary for the entire sector of research and science, freedom of research and of publication was necessary for the academic community, and freedom was necessary to be shared equally by all members of that community whatever their orientation or school. Is it not remarkable that that canon of views could bring together people as different from each other as the afore-mentioned graduate of Cracow university Bronisław Malinowski with Stanisław Ossowski, the initiator of functionalism in social science and an independent intellectual with socialist leanings, and with Julian Hochfeld, who was an official Party champion of Marxism ?

This brings us to a difficult question, which however demands a clear and unequivocal reply, namely the attitude of those people towards the socialist idea.

None of the great masters of postwar Polish sociology was indifferent towards that idea. I could not name any one of them, however fundamental differences separated them, who was totally opposed to the substance of that ideology. They had certain points in common with one another, so let me point them out now.

They all seem to have subscribed to the idea of authentic “socialization” of labour, culture and government. They may have differed over the question of which actions were indispensable to determine the meaning of ownership, but their differences were anything but diametrically opposed even on that issue. But each of them wanted an end to the exploitation of labour, and all craved to see a system of economic conditions in which work helped men fulfil themselves and realize their personalities fully. A democratic brand of socialism which gave the people all power and made the people the recipient and co-author of higher-order values of national and universal culture easily won their hearts, and they for their part did a lot by their research and teaching work to win others over to that kind of socialism.

They typically subscribed to the views—although perhaps not always sharing all specific points—presented by Chałasiński in his reflection on the link between the idea of nation and the idea of socialism. Chałasiński did not conceive of socialism as an end in itself. Socialism, for him, was a value, provided it worked as a force making the populace more “nationally” aware, more aware of their status of citizens, a force enhancing the nation’s creative potential and boosting the nation’s viability and development.

Those, briefly, were the specific features of the cultural pattern of the scholar’s—the sociologist’s—role at the time the masters of the first postwar generation took to reviving their discipline of knowledge. I say “briefly,” for actually a lot more should be said, especially about the ethical attitude of those people, about their craving for truth, their refutation of compromise solutions, their ability to articulate truth in their research work and in their personal conduct which yields to moral evaluation. True, their disciples today are discussing their biographies and works, putting some of them over others for their integrity, their ability to choose their ways in life and to resist temptations to go in for compromises. But all those whom I have mentioned, and others probably too deserve to be named, valued that attitude very much, for it was in tune with their view of society, of the manner of sociological research into theoretical issues, and with the belief that a moral order is the foundation of the entire social order.

I am certain that this cultural pattern had, and still has, a broader significance for other disciplines too. At least for three reasons, that cultural pattern has not become obsolete nor is it going to lose its significance.

1. First notice that the pattern’s importance in the life of the academic community was determined by the universal ethical values which were parts of it. An individual or a group alike can discard them, condemning them to futility, sterility, to a loss of their individual and group personality, but that cannot deprive those values of their meaning. The defeat is a defeat for the people who repudiate those values. Seeking truth, preserving one’s intellectual and moral autonomy, candidness in presenting one’s views, respecting and keeping in practice to the principle of cultural pluralism, serving the nation, democratic views—all these are European cultural values which were born out of the

European cultural spirit and which have all along inspired it and decided its future. Abdication of these values means the abdication of Polish science's national identity, which has thrived within European culture ever since its birth. And it has thus thrived within culture in the universal meaning of the term, for all those values constitute Europe's contribution to world culture.

2. That cultural pattern, while displaying certain specifically Polish features, has universal features which make an individual not only a member of the circle of learned men but also determine that person's ability to act in keeping with objective laws of cultural processes. The most important attitude in this respect perhaps is to respect the diversity of views within the community, to respect each person's uniqueness and to take close interest in people's singular character. Such an attitude and the values which are at its foundation enable an individual to work amidst a culturally differentiated community and also to take advantage of cultural diversity, getting inspiration and impulses for creative action. In the past, nowadays and also in the future, culture, including science, can develop only where institutions, legal norms and customs, as well as the cultural pattern for the scholar's role, will be in tune with that principle. The well-established Polish pattern of the scholar's social role does meet these requirements, defending its own worth today and for the future.

3. Those features which are specifically Polish in that pattern emerged as a reflection of the most important of all processes in 19th and 20th century Poland, namely the development of a modern Polish nation. This process is still under way. Poland has a long way to go before it becomes a modern nation in the true sense of the word. The cultural pattern for the scholar's role—and thus also for the sociologist's role in Polish society—has always presupposed, and does so now, his active engagement in that process. This is another factor accounting for the vitality of the pattern, for its usefulness today and tomorrow.

Let us ask now exactly what is hampering that specific pattern from spreading? Why is Polish science, based as it is on a strong axiological foundation and on outstanding traditions and cultural patterns of scholar's roles, not always and not at all places developing the way it should?

A comprehensive analysis involving all discernible factors would reveal a number of different factors hampering the development of science. Much time and energy has been spent during the last 40 years on training and installing qualified staff. It is well known that Polish researchers have large workloads in tuition, coming close in that respect to the amount of tuition entrusted to college researchers in the poorest of the developing countries. The fact that spending on research is lower in Poland than in any other European country is also widely known. Practically no computer-controlled information system exists in Poland. The printing industry is far too inadequate. Foreign publications are difficult to get hold of and contacts with foreign research centres are difficult to establish, and so on and so forth. But others facts are more important than all these.

We live in a world of changing economic, social and political structures. All those structures, when viewed from the historical and sociological angle, appear

to be very young. In the new social systems, some groups no sooner emerge out of the inchoate stage than they begin to articulate their interests and defend them doggedly thus gradually forming their functions in the social division of labour, as can be seen in the cases of groups of the state administration, industry managers, etc. In each society, especially one immersed in a crisis, such situations involve sharp conflicts as vested interests of different groups vying with each other for more influence and for reassertion clash. The academic community is in such cases apparently powerless. Those people, short of their ability—however curtailed sometimes—to speak their minds, have no other possibilities of influencing developments and of acting directly on others. But on the whole as time goes by something like a *modus vivendi* establishes between those groups and the circle of learned men. Those who wield political or economic power begin to understand that cultural processes—and the authorities have an interest in those processes going on—command obedience to objective laws governing these processes, and, along with these laws, also principles underlying cultural patterns of roles learned men are to fulfil, for those principles are not just a heritage of the past, a burden, a reflection of egoistic interests of one specific group of people, but first of all a necessary response to requirements of the process of producing new knowledge. Something like a balance establishes itself, a fundamental factor of which is the relative autonomy of the entire research system. The longer it takes for that balance to establish itself, the greater the losses society stands to sustain in the process, namely the cultural process tends to founder and, in extreme cases, to stagnate completely. In the world today no society can afford to remain culturally stagnant for any longer period. With time, then, the circle of learned men do get the liberties, rights and legal recognition and institutional possibilities to create new values.

That is a first-rate issue in Poland. The present crisis, which cuts very deeply, cannot possibly be overcome without speeding up cultural processes very strongly. Fortunately in the initial stage of socio-political reforms legal foundations were laid for institutions which are of fundamental importance for the cultural pattern of the scholar's role in society, of such a role to be played by specialists in social science and specialists in natural science. Maybe that framework is yet far from perfect. But it is extremely badly needed now, after four decades of such foundations not existing, which caused cultural processes to slow down dramatically which was one of the factors responsible for the present crisis. There is no way nowadays to give a fair evaluation of those institutions in different aspects of their operation. The social system of science is not a mill churning out simple implements. New social institutions reveal their merits and faults only years after they have begun to work. It is necessary to look at least at one generation of researchers, their biographies and results of their labours, to see to it that the evaluation provided is indeed accurate and fair. But it is certain that they are institutions which were brought to other societies by the progress of science and a rapid growth of culture. It is therefore fair to pin so much hope upon them.

Unfortunately, now and then we observe a reversal on that road of reform in the direction of building institutions of the kind which was shown by history to be leading to stagnation. What is the sociological meaning of that tendency ?

An organizational structure is enforced upon science which is all right with the principles of bureaucratic rationalism. Groups whose entire body of experiences is associated with officialdom, with administrative practices, have usually easily arrived at the view—whatever the social system in which they operated—that that particular model of organization of social relations which was best for their own purposes would also be functional, sensible and efficient enough when applied to organization of social relations elsewhere, in other walks of life. People with that particular frame of mind often find it hard to comprehend that that bureaucratic rationalism may be totally unsuited for efficient work in other areas. This is, in fact, what is happening to the social system of science. A scholar who becomes a civil servant ceases to produce new knowledge. The best he will be able to do from then on will be to emulate existing standards, to rehash truths uttered by others, or to convey things discovered elsewhere.

But even in the toughest of times sociological reflections can be a source of useful counsel, a source of fresh hope. Social life is a sum total of controlled and noncontrolled processes. It has never and nowhere proved possible to ram those processes into arbitrary institutional frameworks especially such that were ill-suited for that purpose. Man's craving for truth, for knowledge, for creative work, cannot be put down. All these desires, however esoteric they may appear, eventually crush even the hardest rock. This is why we should quietly, prudently and patiently keep bringing it home to our legislators that they are setting out on a perilous job, which holds potentially huge losses for Polish culture, when they want to liquidate the just-born institutions of academic autonomy and the freedom of putting into practice the cultural pattern of the scholar's role. We must be doing that, for otherwise we may have to take some of the blame for a possible liquidation of that liberty.