

Goćkowski, Janusz

Theory of Civilisation as Sociology of Knowledge : (on Feliks Koneczny's Ideas)

Organon 28 30, 269-282

1999 2001

Artykuł umieszczony jest w kolekcji cyfrowej Bazhum, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych tworzonej przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego.

Artykuł został zdigitalizowany i opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie ze środków specjalnych MNiSW dzięki Wydziałowi Historycznemu Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.



Janusz Goćkowski (Poland)

THEORY OF CIVILISATION AS SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE
(On Feliks Koneczny's Ideas)

We are looking herein at ideas mooted by Feliks Koneczny, a writer on civilization¹, who always insisted on the significance of patterns of knowledge and cognition testifying to the character of socio-cultural orders and operating as factors of development or stagnation of society. In our view, what Feliks Koneczny had to say on civilization deserves the attention of sociologists of knowledge as well.

Morality and law are a first pair of structural components of what Koneczny describes as a "method of arranging collective life". As he studied those components Koneczny made the following points on it:

1. The status of morality vis-à-vis law. Any of three ways can be chosen to follow: law is adjusted to morality, on the belief that "principles shall be the foundation and guideline for regulations"; or, law is constituted and applied along political and administrative guidelines, with no regard to adjustments to morality; or, morality is subordinated to law, is its complement and a tool of its reinforcement – this, essentially being indicative of the supremacy of political and administrative considerations arguments over moral principles and standards, as well as a symptom of supremacy of the state over society. Koneczny declares himself, as ideologist – champion and proponent of "Latin civilization" – in favour of the first of the three ways. Law adjusted to morality, in Koneczny's perspective, is strictly linked to politics deriving from ethics. This is why Koneczny holds it to be so keenly important to familiarity with morals as knowledge which is a prerequisite of developing an awareness of constituting and applying law and of conceiving and implementing political projects.

2. The separation of private from public law. Any of three ways can be chosen to go: collective life "can do without any separate public law system, with private law applying in public life (...) public law relying on private law,

¹ An English rendering of Koneczny's work on *The Multiplicity of Civilisations* was published in London in 1962, with Arnold Toynbee's foreword. Another book of Koneczny's, *O ład w historii* (Order in History), with a commentary, came out in Polish in London as well, in 1977. Several studies of Koneczny's work appeared in recent years, noted in bibliographies in Poland and elsewhere.

reflecting state application of private law (...) with private law being applied more and more often as clans tend to expand into tribes, tribal duchies, states, with no qualitative change taking place” and such state “relies on the private law of the ruler as holder of the state and all its people and all their property”; or, a “monism of public law” subsists in collective life, a “state-centred statehood”, operating “in the name of the state”, thus “embracing all human relations as private law is being curtailed in the name of public law, which is represented by those in power”, and the circumstance that “private law is getting increasingly dissolved in public law, melting therein” is accompanied by that the “will of the state” ultimately decides “how much private law shall be allowed to stay on and be in force” and that there appear “tendencies to get private law superseded altogether, not leaving even family law”; or, the two types of law are kept apart from each other, which runs along the separation of society from state, with society composed of individuals (with personality owing to an adequate status) and associations (with personality owing to adequate competencies).

3. Unity of morality. Either of two ways can be followed: morality does not hold for certain walks of collective life (in particular not politics or economics) or is diversified depending on “our own” or “others” are concerned, and whether you operate “inside” or “outside”; or, morality comprises all walks of collective life and is applied identically in all identical cases, no matter who shall be judged for morals, or where, or how, the judgement shall be made.

4. The substance of civil law. Koneczny was fascinated by the following features: coherence of “family law with marital law”, “property law” (material along with the resulting provisions of contract law) with “inheritance law”; or, the creation and stabilisation by that “triple law” of the status of the human being and of citizen – a man being an individual player in different walks of human relations (no matter whether or not having such status one participates in games as an autonomous entity or as one operating together with others).

The distinctions Koneczny presents and highlights in his reasoning show that he comprehends and treats morality and law as modes of recognising the way in which the world of human relations is structured and how it can (and should) be arranged. Diversities of moral orders and orders of law are evidence of differences in world outlook, that is, of visions, convictions and strivings, let alone the ingenuity and cleverness in designing and applying modes and tools of ensuring the continuity and viability of precisely this, rather than another, “method of arranging collective life”.

Recognition of the real human world and recognition of the heavenly world, are the next pair of structural components of the “method of arranging collective life”. Civilisations differ by: the substance of those recognitions, the roads to arrive at them, and their mutual relationship. Knowledge of “the truth (natural and supernatural)” takes, in certain socio-cultural circumstance only, the form of division into science and theology – two basic, unique and sepa-

rate, mutually autonomous and sovereign orders of knowledge and cognition. Koneczny wants to know this: a) whether the roads to truth are autonomous and idiomatic, or had the boundaries between different types of recognising the world become blurred; b) whether these roads interact with one each other, or are they like monads; and c) is the recognition of the natural world (the orders of nature) and the social world (the orders of culture), in its most authoritative segment, an authentic science, or is science in the proper sense merely a marginal development barely tolerated or a deviation with no test approval. Separation between the orders of knowledge and cognition, or the erasure of boundaries between them, is, in Koneczny's opinion, of fundamental significance. All-embracing knowledge is characterised by cognitive apathy. Multiplicity of mutually complementary and corresponding modes of recognising and representing the world opens the doors to success: to raising level of knowledge, and to fine-tuning cognition. Of the many types of knowledge and cognition he distinguishes two. In what people find recognition of the verifiable world – the science that derives from Aristotle is the most important of all. In what people find recognition of the unverifiable world – it is theology, based on St. Thomas Aquinas' work, which is truly significant.

A third pair of structural components of the "method of arranging collective life" are institutions and techniques that furnish evidence of how human beings are being provided for their existence and functioning. *There are five categories of human existence. Two concern physical existence, bodily existence: health and welfare, and two comprise the spiritual aspect of life: Good and Truth; and a fifth category, beauty, which is common to body and soul, as it speaks to the mind through the senses. Anything human we are able to perceive, comprehend or imagine, will fit in any of these categories. This quincunx holds true for individual as well as collective life, indeed even for historical life. Existence cannot be complete where all these categories do not exist. With any one of them missing, life is defective. However, total multifariousness of life is the exception rather than the rule; so, with multifariousness missing, it is multiplicity that decides development of individuals and associations alike. It is extremely rare that any one category of our human quincunx stands alone, rather, they tend to get entangled with one another. All of them are continually dependent on one another, so much so that it is plainly inconceivable even to start considering any of them without coming across the other ones. The edifice of life is positioned in such a way that from wherever you look at it closely you do see all its parts.*

Institutions (in Bronisław Malinowski's words, "organised systems of targeted activity"), along with techniques of designing and realising individual and collective objectives, are evidence of the way the "five categories" are perceived and treated in their aspect of satisfying human wants and rights to take care of their wants and of their ingenuity and cleverness in satisfying those wants as well as providing conditions enabling such satisfaction. Ways and means of striving to satisfy wants and of ensuring (recognised and estab-

lished) rights to satisfy wants disclose: a) the extent and accuracy of recognition of different walks, or segments, of the real human world; b) the tools of cognition which allow such and no other recognition of actors playing roles in theatres of cultural life whose “intended function” is to ensure the status of each of the “five categories”.

Of institutions that are really important for the status of the “five categories”, special attention should be paid to institutions distinctive for the state as the legitimate system of governing the people. Of techniques, special attention should be paid to ways and means classifiable as belonging to the *modus operandi* of politics. Koneczny wanted to know the nature of the knowledge politicians employ, and need to have. *All those a priori fellows spray poisonous seeds whenever they take to their jobs, yet despite that they think of themselves candidly as first-rate hygienists of public life. Doctrine is one thing, theory is another. In politics, bare logic will lead you up to a priori doctrines, whereas theory stems from psychology and observation, seeing to it that you make proper use of experience.* Koneczny regarded the presence or absence of ethical arguments and directives in politics as truly a first-rate issue regarding the nature of institutions and techniques of social life. One of the worst misdirections of public life, in his view, was the absence of ethics in politics. He associated that with the character of state and law. *In the world today, moral progress can only be achieved through a moral renaissance of statehood. Our times are such that morality is shaped upon matters public, on their foundation; a moralist therefore has not merely to deal with them but indeed internalise them. A moralist these days has to cultivate political science, but at least to have close familiarity with it. Without pause, he must wage his battle against legal notions of non-ethical statehood, until the principle is restored that the purpose of law is to reinforce new ethical postulates vis-à-vis the state as well. We have to demand the state to submit to the Decalogue and to Catechism in the name of total ethics. In matters public, ethics is even more necessary than in private matters; and it has to be much more rigorous there. False and perverse ideas about the relationship between ethics and law bear far-reaching consequences. If law is perceived as being independent of ethics, and that statehood shall not obey ethics, you land in what is a totalist and omnicompetent state. A state organised on a foundation of such notions becomes a hub of all kinds of inferiorities. A powerful drive emerges then to quash anything any superiority, and whatever stands out higher becomes hateful. Also in such circumstances, evil goes increasingly often gets away with impunity. Moral standards of private life and public life remain in what is a constant relation to each other. If the state is allowed to lie and loot, then any ‘politician’ declaring to be doing that in the service of state, must be allowed to do likewise. False notions breed false habits. Officials tend to their businesses at the expense of the state. The omnicompetent state eventually ends up being looted by everyone who has access to it. When ethics rises, or subsides, it does so in the human life at micro and at macro scale at the same time.*

Ideas of state and law, conceived and respected models of authority, and political innovation and activity patterns, Koneczny says, all do affect attitudes of state officers as well as activists of political parties and movements. Perverse knowledge of what politics is and should be, leads up to perverse behaviour patterns. *Admiration of the 'rule of power' has spread widely among those who feel they have a 'call to power', as something like men of providence, who are predestined to rule. You can tell a 'man of call' by the zeal with which he takes to doing things, careless about the means he puts to his jobs, noisily pushing for his predestination all through his life. Politics is defined as the art of getting to power. A short step from there you see an obvious consequence thereof: the purpose of government is to stay in power. The desire of power for its own sake not only is no proof of any call but is a most hideous and most dangerous passion to society and state. Such governors will always be committed to loot, economic as well as moral.*

For diagnosis to be right and therapy to be efficient, the right taxonomy of political system has to be applied. *We need to realise, at long last, that there two types of state: bureaucratic states, and autonomous civic states. In totalist and omnipotent state, amidst the autocracy of governors and their administrative henchmen, where is there room for ethics?* This idea is then developed, to put forward socio-technical suggestions: *Only that politics can be good that is always and in all respects a state-and-society focused at the same time. Viewing state in isolation from society is not only wrong, but also dangerous, as it leads to underrating the significance of social forces and often ends up in subordinating society to state to the extent that society becomes merely an object of state political experimentation. (...) There is no better way of providing state with political prowess than by cultivating social forces. (...) Social force cannot possibly be generated just by using the state apparatus. State may help or prevent, yet it cannot invoke social forces, and eventually it has to accommodate itself to them, or else to fall. (...) The more policy there is in a country, the less politicking will you be witnessing there, because relations, as they are evolving, leave relatively little room for political experiment. (...) one precise measure of link between social forces and state matters is the degree of autonomy, as can be witnessed in all European countries. (...) Remarkably enough, the same holds true applied to civic liberty. Freedom means autonomy!* Then Koneczny goes on to say, alluding to his own country,

In this respect, Polish history is similar (...) to English one. Neither of these countries have been through bureaucracy. England cannot possibly be imagined to be ruled by a bureaucratic administration. It Poland, it was only the occupying states that imposed it, and for the revived Polish state, as long as it has not found back to itself, as long as it continues to dawdle aimlessly, it cannot cut out that parasitic cancer from its body; unless we manage to restore autonomy, national independence itself is going to be on the line all along, for a bureaucratic Poland is unable to hit the right road of social and state evolution.

Should the bureaucratic state stay a lot longer, a split between state and society would be inevitable, as a result of which state would never be able to strengthen its position and would be unable to pursue any goal at all beyond a most rudimentary struggle for survival. This is a case of practising politics – in this case administrative politics – in contravention to the social structure, which had been honed up by evolution. Bureaucracy is basically alien to Poland's evolution, indeed it is viscerally opposed to the spirit of the nation. It was enforced upon us by foreign rule, and was left to stay with independence restored, only by the force of inertia.

*

Latin civilisation distinguishes itself from other “methods of arranging collective life” by three features (important against the backdrop of cognitive interests of theory of science and anthropology of knowledge): 1. its “personalism”, or holding it important that knowledge which is significant to recognising the world and activity in it is generated and conveyed by “individual people”, who have their own cognitive ends and their own views on the structure of the real world; 2. its “aposteriorism”, or creating images and legends of the world based on cognition, which is importantly shaped by experience – the test of empirical knowledge or the test of experiment; 3. its “unity in diversity”, or holding it important that different (specific and separate) “world perspectives” exist autonomously, and that a polyphony is heard in any circle of the knowledgeable ones, derived from an idiomatic “world perspective”.

The type of knowledge that can be called typical of Latin civilisation, is science. Civilisation, Koneczny points out, provides a setting that may be favourable or unfavourable to science's survival and development in its identity. That particular perception links up Koneczny's views close to those of Znaniecki and Popper, Merton and Needham. In his deliberations performed on the ground of comparisons of different “methods of arranging collective life” he holds that Latin civilisation is ultimately the only one that is ecologically positive, where it comes to the functioning of science in the proper sense, to an authentic “game for scientific truth”. In his opinion, what is normal, standard, in Latin civilisation, is its drive for cognition, leading up to knowledge, which can be put to use but that not to be equated with skills – it is, above all, essentially a knowledge yielding the kind of recognition of specific real world structures and processes that are available to human cognition, and one that is obtained via the application of specific procedures (method) and that expresses itself in the form of specific form (theory).

What in Koneczny's reflections can be said to belong in the domain of the study of science proper, is an extended science-of-science argument with a strong and pronounced socio-cultural perspective thereto. Let us start with his reminder of the importance of tradition.

It is Logos alone that not only provides uninterrupted continuity but indeed is gaining by that: the longer it is active, the more it strengthens itself. Continuity is the perfection of Logos.

Continuity of science, as a form of knowledge and cognition, is tidentical to variation, because the essence of science is the unity of consistency in striving for truth and of self-correction of the strivings, actions and cognitive values in different groups and circles of the world of scientists.

Human science tends to err. It used to preach untruths; what the worth of those it preaches now is for posteriority to know, and that posteriority itself is going to have its scientific 'temporariness'. If science often errs, then as it forges ideas ... is it feeding us erroneous notions? To some extent, it is indeed; and erroneous notions are bound to breed erroneous actions. That is but part of the truth though. The whole truth in this case is that every scientific notion marks a step forward on the previous one, so science holds fewer and fewer errors in it, getting closer to Truth, and so the notions – derived as they are from the status of science – are getting increasingly true. If science had to pass through a series of mistakes to arrive at what today is held to be true, because its status now is a result of the previous one, so basic notions, derived from science, had to go through the particular stages of development – and actions had always to bow to notions of Truth.

Koneczny believed in an “ground-laying meaning of tradition in science”.

As in everything else, in science as well, tradition is the backbone of all culture, of the culture of science. Interruptions of scientific tradition are all the more painful experiences as intellectual progress cannot unfold except in a step by step process. (...) You can get converted by miracle, you cannot be enlightened by miracle.

We are looking at tradition of cultivating science in the proper sense when: 1. civilisation is seriously furthering science; 2. science is seriously being played as a game for truth as a value that is autotelic and universal at the same time:

Entire civilisations can do without science (...) the position of science differs from case to case in different civilisations. The position science occupies depends above all on the civilisation within which it is hatched and grows, or where it cannot hatch. Civilisation does have a constitutive effect on science. Now how does that go along with the question about the objective nature of science, the absolute validity of the truths it discovers? Are they scientific truths, or perhaps (...) they are truths of the civilisation in the guise of science? That particular question yields all types of answers, a multitude of configurations, and no universal rule.

And, he goes on, to dot the i's:

Science will not fit in any civilisation. Try to transplant in to the Turanian civilisation; either you fail, or the Turanian civilisation falls apart.

The following words are remarkable:

A scrutiny of the relationship of different civilisations to science will lead you up to the observation that science exists now in one civilisation only; the Latin civilisation. Do not think that this state of things stemmed from any necessity. Egyptian priests used to dabble in science a great deal; mathematics flourished in India; India and China saw a lot of philosophising around (...), and everyone knows of that high standing science enjoyed in Arab civilisation. So, the present situation stems from no 'rule', but is a deviation, essentially an unnatural state of things.

As for autotelicity, Koneczny talks of the "disinterested" nature of scientific cognition:

Studies of discoveries are naturally disinterested exercises – they suffice by themselves. Let us now again ask this question – this disinterested exercise, in whose name? The answer is found in a further question, a derivative one: what is the view of science of those involved who work around scientific discoveries? They – they precisely – are those we should be asking: what, then, is science? None is going to tell you anything save that science is the striving for Truth. (...) Science, accordingly, was born without cause. This makes us all the more wanting to know its end. No end is in sight except study itself – to find out the state of things in any given matter. To get to know, to see for oneself – in a word: to learn! For, a true scientist (candid, disinterested, as they are) has one true passion only: which is, to learn (teaching no longer being anyone's lure). To what end should one seek to learn things with no interest thereto? We find no answer beyond this trite one: to get to know the truth.

On the question of universality of scientific truths, Koneczny has this to say:

In our deliberations we cannot dodge the hitch whether a scientist is not 'relative vis-à-vis Truth, whether or not he succumbs to tradition, his milieu, the habits of his mind? Certainly so. You heard it a hundred times, that science is cosmopolitan in nature, that science knows no Homeland. Pasteur cut the question short saying that science indeed has no Homeland, but the scientist does. So as he enters his study he brings with him all qualities, merits and faults of the huge association he feels he is part of.

Koneczny further discussed the question of growth of scientific knowledge. Let us therefore quote his words, as he articulates what can be called dialectic continuation in scientific cognition:

Such exactly opposed views are indeed desirable, as they reflect what usually are other vantage-points; this is certainly going to find a solution one day, at least for a time, and science is going to get through its 'quantum'. Interrupted, yet explosive, movement is apparently part of the history of science. Nowhere will you find greater friction, or worse loss of energy, we are told. As a rule, if anything transfers to the science of the following generation, then it is just a tiny bit from the previous one. (...) As progress in science is essentially the asking of new questions, doubt is the introduction to progress. At times, doubts linger, unanswered, for a long time. (...) We even witnessed an assault on Newton! The storm calmed down, and it turned out there should have talked not of toppling Newton, but of supplementing him, owing to the progress of science. That occasion opened new vistas for us, and so nourished fresh doubts.

In science, a) you apply the test of empirical experience and the test of coherence; b) you perform analytic cognitive actions and synthesising cognitive actions; c) and you combine creative actions with actions involving the gathering/checking of facts. The "theatre of scientific life" sees many actors playing different roles. The "game for scientific truth" is a kind of "intentional cooperation" of participants playing roles of different meaning or importance to the enrichment of scientific knowledge with new and important cognitive values.

*Many years back, Jan Łukasiewicz, questioned the idea that the end of science is truth, arguing that 'synthesised judgements alone' are science proper. For, 'collections of facts make no science yet. A true scientist is able to put facts together into syntheses. The recognition of facts is not enough for that purpose; what you need beyond that is creative thinking.' Surely he does have a point there, yet before anything else first you must have that 'collection of facts', and what is the purpose of collecting them? We must distinguish scientists making discoveries and knowing how to 'act out their minds', *sua mente vivere*, from ruminants munching someone else's ideas, and from 'contributors', those bricklayer helpers in science; yet those boys are nonetheless members of the builders guild as well. Sure enough, 'the end of science is to build syntheses satisfying overall human intellectual wants', but then, syntheses have no other purpose than to discover the truth. Its is absolutely true that synthesis is the end of science, analysis being just its means, but then, how can one get rid of it from science?*

Koneczny draws a distinction between cognition proper to formal science and cognition specific for empirical science (natural and human). As for mathematics, it is more like *belles lettres* than physics or history. "For mathematics by itself, being merely the science of forms, provides no knowledge; it helps sciences, but not all of them, only some." On the question of philosophy,

Koneczny refers himself to the tradition of Aristotle in the Thomistic approach:

More and more naturalists tend to think that their findings should be turned over, as raw material, for further processing to philosophy. Vocal calls are being heard that physics tends to develop towards mathematics and that is where the answer to it should be sought. As this tendency keeps growing, it is increasingly felt that a time of great synthesis is at the doors. A new summa seems to be in the offing, to merge the findings of natural science and the humanities. In anticipation of the common thought we are, once more, waiting in the anteroom of eternal Truth. The way to modern synthesis is often paved by old, medieval, synthesis. More often than not, you see scholarly scaffoldings being erected, based on Aquinas' logic. Essence is carefully distinguished from existence, substance from incidence; we recognise that, beyond God, any being is complex, as variable and liable to lose or acquire certain things, and action is, precisely, to invoke variation, and to use it. We are stepping on that scaffolding of scientific thinking, which comprises all science, yet how many new truths can we posit and fix thereon, truths Thomas Aquinas never even dreamt of! We in this world today are trying to scale more rungs up Jacob's ladder. The ladder is still the same one, yet from the higher-up rungs new and new worlds can be seen. As science, which is no sacred thing in our civilisation, at the top rungs is seeking the same kind of meekness before the Lord it did centuries back, the justification of the meekness is even more persuasive now. More and more signs of a new synthesis being born are seen, of a synthesis of natural science with human science, an integrated body of knowledge. We are on a road towards a new settlement and deployment of it, and it is already seen to be stepping along the newly discovered paths in the old way, to God.

Koneczny is aware of immanent dialectics within the interdisciplinary structure of science. He points out that inside that structure, simultaneously and all the time, process are under way of "integrating" scientific knowledge side by side with "differentiating" scientific knowledge. Certain disciplines of science integrate, other ones disintegrate, what used to be integrated or merged up to then. That is to do with polyphony and pluralism in science. Yet also with the circumstance that the continuation and development of science in its identity is its continuation and development as "unity in diversity".

Science proper is an order of knowledge and cognition which depends for scientists' ethics for its continuation and development. Latin civilisation is a favourable ecological condition, yet it does not warrant that the "game for scientific truth" is going to be played strictly by the rules of the *eidōs* of a "scientific world perspective". This, in turn, depends on the ethos of science, that is, on an ethos of professional scientists such that does respect that *eidōs*

in its commandments and principles. We did write on “disinterested” and “universalist” principles of continuation and development of science. We did acknowledge a striving for truth as the supreme value. Now let us remark that under their proper ethos scientists have a duty to defend the “sovereignty of thinking”.

Any interference, by any supremacist authority whatever, Koneczny points out, hazards to pervert the identity of science:

More often than not, they used to invoke science, especially anthropology. Science may be erring, and its progress is for it to mend its errors incessantly. It develops, and discovers the truth, as long as you do not disturb its internal life; it falls when you mean to run it from outside. Science, alas, can be manipulated – which is what happened in Germany. There, they treated science to the most perfidious lies, namely by spreading half-truths, while hiding the whole truth. This is the most dangerous type of lie, and the most vicious fraud. Germany fell victim to its own evil, not least involving that profanation of science. They pushed science down to the role of tool of war, a servant of ‘current’ ends. What was popularised of science, was handpicked from it as the ‘Führer’s’ whim. Nobody seemed to have had qualms popularising things outdated, things science had discarded long before, and the general public had their minds held captive by false antiscientific notions.

Science’s identity means the survival of conditions of scientific development, or three forms of social practice – three types of systems of actions performed by specialist scientists. “Progress of science is composed of three sections: research, critique, and popularisation, or education.” What Koneczny had to say on education, in particular the historical role of the university as a hatching place of culture, is interesting enough to deserve special mention:

Education is no standalone artefact; quite simply it is science, only in dilution. As sciences decline, the sources of education dry up, as the life-giving water of science no longer feeds them. A dilettante will hold that education leads up to science, yet it is exactly the other way round. Universities arose before elementary schools appeared, and the condition of education in any country depends on the condition of its universities. The damage that has been wrought on universities is going to do even worse havoc in common schools. Once you destroy your universities, education is soon going to deal in outdated knowledge, drowning in apathy, and then on in common ignorance.

Progress of science, in Koneczny’s view, is more than the improvement of methods of research and study, or of forms of presentation of findings. It is also a moral issue. “As progress of science benefits ethics, then if we seek moral progress we may want science to progress as well; moralists, therefore, should also probe this topic, undeterred by the broad vista of the new field opening up before them.”

Looking at science against the backdrop of civilisation (which, incidentally, is a variant of the ethical perspective in the science of man, society, and culture) Koneczny studies the status and function of science as an order of knowledge and cognition. He writes,

The study of science as such is incomplete as long as it does not involve the study (...) of scientists.

One issue that does deserve the research effort of specialists in the study of civilisation, science, or morality, is “scientists’ attitude towards science, which happens to differ widely”. That takes Koneczny to the question of the ethos of men of science:

Undoubtedly, whether sciences progresses or stalls depends a lot on the people practising it. The level of ethical education among scientists, and their dedication to truth, turn out to be supremely important things. Modest great scientists have so much thereof in them that they make good for the deficiencies of inflated fools, thanks to which science continues to progress even despite the scientific community, who tread around, locked in quarrels. In the history book on the progress of science and the progress of morality, this is a chapter of no little importance.

*

Says Koneczny, “Scientific notions do affect the pattern of collective life. (...) An idea born in a scientist’s lab sometimes becomes a current of public life. This is an instance of the rule of mind (*nousarchia*)”. However, such ideas, notions, doctrines or theories are usually getting a wrong reception, because “governors as a rule lag behind the progress of science and keep practising what science is already beginning to question”. This is the case where, and when, “the governors have little if any education in science”. That is when things tend to go wrong, because “governments have to be too backward-minded”, which is the case “when they are composed of individuals who are satisfied with getting their education from popular leaflets”; such “government is bound to be a dilettante government, groping around in futile experimenting”.

The lag mentioned here is a feature in particular of governments that combine authoritarian rule with apriori world outlooks:

Science always says things that differ from what earlier scientific concepts presented as their final word. Reformist tyrants are also somewhat backward in their nousarchic framework; they used to speak out in the name of scientific notions of yesterday, applying them to the tomorrow. This is the whole secret of revolutionary systems, which always feed on anachronisms of science.

Radicalism and dogmatism are immanent qualities of revolutionaries (as pretenders and decision-makers), who invoke science as the foundation of

their efforts to put in place a “brave new world”. The radicalism is matched, in what is typical of utopian minds, who seek to change all and everyone, by decrees and instructions churned out continuously and in large quantities. Totalitarianism, deriving from revolution, is an anti-scientific practice. “Bureaucracy” and “politicking” go along together hand in hand. They are guided by “apriorism” as a model of thinking that lays down rules for a way of life. The right attitude towards science (the adequate conception of scientific knowledge, and putting it to the right uses) is, to a wide extent, a question of “intellectual culture” of the enlightened and leading circles:

Nor can one be effectively a patriot without an adequate intellectual culture. Since this culture depends decisively on the sciences, so it is perfectly legitimate to say that there are no ideals without science (or without its popularisation). (...) This is why the most dangerous social development is when a gulf begins to separate those in charge of intellectual life and those in charge of politics, which is indicative of a gulf between intellectual and political creativity in the nation, and is another instance of nousarchy derailed. Then, then worst of all threats arises: a culture gap, which sets in inescapably if the gulf between scientists and governors holds on for too long. A culture gap, and the ensuing fall of culture, are a danger always when Ethos diverges from Logos. In times such as those, those that get to power easiest are individuals that excel in common sense or in imaginative power, yet who lack a synthesis of these two components of the mind.

*

“No one can be civilised in two ways.” To scientists, this means that the continuation and development of science in its identity is inseparable from its structural linkage to Latin civilisation. The development of science proper contributes to boosting the prosperity and moral standards of those sharing in Latin civilisation. However, human thinking and action is affected not only by cognitive values generated in science that is cultivated in the right way but also science cultivated in a wrong way. Science’s epistemic identity is then inseparable from science’s ethical identity.

For the civilisational identity of science and for the civilisational identity of scientists, the following threats obtain: a) gregariousness, b) apriorism, c) gnosticism, d) talmudism, e) utopianism, f) totalism, g) revolutionary radicalism, h) bureaucracy, i) technocracy, j) specialisation without complementary synthesis or generalisation. Developing other “perspectives on the world” is necessary for science to develop. Not just any perspectives, though, but only those that are complementary vis-à-vis science.

Koneczny’s views on the character of civilisation (the “methods of arranging collective life”) are, essentially, views of a theoretician of knowledge

with a sociologist's perspective. Since, looking at different types of knowledge, he attributes special importance to science, in our opinion the sociological theory of knowledge he expounds in his theory of civilisations is a sociological theory of science as well.

