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Classical Cultural Sociology

Florian Znaniecki's Impact in a New Light

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ABSTRACT It is argued that a renewed reception of the works of the Polish and American scholar Florian Znaniecki should be carried out by any so-called 'cultural turn' in sociology. If the new cultural sociology is to obtain firm and broader theoretical grounds, it needs to transcend its mere reaction against structural-functional normativism in search of classic studies of cultural dynamics such as those of Florian Znaniecki. The reasons behind the blurring of Znaniecki's influence upon 20th-century sociologists, including Talcott Parsons and Alfred Schutz, are investigated through a general examination of the reception contexts of his work. An overview of Znaniecki's general theoretical contribution to cultural sociology is simultaneously presented.

KEYWORDS Chicago School, cultural sociology, social action theory, social systems, symbolic interactionism, Znaniecki

New and Classical Cultural Sociology

Half a century ago Robert K. Merton (1950) reverently described Znaniecki as the Dean of the world's sociologists. Recently, Zygmunt Bauman (2000: 71) has noted Znaniecki's permanent, but now barely recognizable presence in contemporary sociology. An attempt will be made in the following to elucidate some of the circumstances surrounding this unnoticed absorption of Znaniecki's concepts into sociology which has been accompanied by a blurring of the eminent scholar's image (Hałas, 2005). Some arguments will be presented to encourage a re-reading of Znaniecki's works, since many of his other ideas are still not yet sociologists' daily bread. One might expect that such a renewed reception would be promoted by the contemporary 'cultural turn' (Alexander and Smith, 2001) in sociology as it returns to themes inherent in the very perspective Znaniecki laid

out for researching the dynamics of culture, including culture's relative autonomy from social systems, the primacy of meanings, and their emergence through interactions. However, such expectations are faced with disappointment as the propagators of this new cultural sociology do not reach further back than the normative-functional sociology of Talcott Parsons, which they subject to criticism (P. Smith, 1998: 3). Parsons's theory still casts a shadow, which is not to be confused with an eclipse, over classical cultural sociology, including the accomplishments of Znaniecki, who showed a great mastery in forming the culturalistic orientation.

With the new cultural sociology still reacting to the shortcomings of Parsons's theory which discouraged sociologists from culturalistic thinking, it may be suggested that a return to the ideas of Znaniecki, who did not hide his critical distance from Parsons, may be more fruitful. In considering the new American cultural sociology, it is certainly justified to ask: What may be called the 'old cultural sociology'? To provide an answer, some forgotten classics of the interwar period need to be recalled. Both Znaniecki and Pitirim Sorokin declared that social sciences are cultural sciences. Now largely forgotten Robert M. MacIver also founded sociology on culturalistic premises (Hałas, 2001a). Culturalism in mid-20th-century American sociology was also quite visibly represented by Howard Becker, who in his Preface to *Through Values to Social Interpretation* praisingly stated: 'To Florian Znaniecki, who, although he did not know it, has been a perpetual source of stimulation to me' (1950: xv).

From the perspective of cultural sociology, the issue concerning the reception of Znaniecki's work is not to be merely limited to correcting the accuracy of any historical account, or to further drawing out new intellectual parallels (Vaitkus, 1993). Culture for Znaniecki is neither in its content ultimately social, as Émile Durkheim maintained, nor does it need social forms to exist, as investigated by Georg Simmel (Hałas, 1993: 85). All of Znaniecki's precursory contributions that may be pointed to by using the rubrics of contemporary sub-disciplines of sociology such as the sociology of emotions, social self-construction, multiculturalism, world society and civilizational processes are rooted in an innovative approach to culture understood as dynamic systems of actions and values. It is this perspective that makes Znaniecki's theory not merely a particular variant of action theory, symbolic interactionism, social systems theory or interpretative sociology. For some time, culturalism was not articulated as an independent paradigm equal to structuralism or functionalism (Boudon and Bourricaud, 1982: 133; Duncan and Schnore, 1971: 70). However, it even constitutes a standard for methodological rules, many of which Znaniecki formulated (1934a), including in particular what he called the 'humanistic coefficient' of cultural data, which is related to the construction of cultural reality within the active experiences of participants. These rules are one of Znaniecki's most insightful contributions, deserving much more explicit attention than merely the vague use of sentimental references to his theory in discussing problems of the

biographical method, case study and analytic induction. Znaniecki cautiously viewed that unrestrained development of sociology which was resulting, after Franklin Giddings's suggestion, in the creation of 'particular sociologies', which is to say, he was already concerned with the danger of diffusion which is today so plaguing our discipline (J.H. Turner, 2001: 13). Nevertheless, if we remain within this development of captivating conventions, it is possible easily to indicate those fields towards whose development Znaniecki remarkably contributed. These include the sociology of knowledge, the sociology of science, the sociology of education and the sociology of nation, as well as the inception of the sociology of global society.

In general, Znaniecki paid particular attention in his cultural theory to distinguishing analytically the social systems of social actions, social relations, social roles and social groups. He elaborated them in culturalistic terms of actively experienced meanings, values and sentiments. A proper understanding of these theoretical realms emphasized by Znaniecki needs to include a grasp of the profound motive behind their formation, which involved a concern with questions about the character and direction of change in dramatic modernity as it was experienced in the 20th century. This is the fundamental reason for Znaniecki's continual analyses of actions, social relations, roles and groups for it is they which were to become pivotal for the development of what he called the civilization of the future. In Znaniecki's view, the cultural sciences were also to become a key cofactor in that transformation.

Turning Points in Znaniecki's Intellectual Biography

Znaniecki was intellectually active in the realm of cultural sciences for over fifty years. In his first work, 'Etyka filozoficzna i nauka o wartościach moralnych' ('Philosophical Ethics and the Science of Moral Values') (1909), one already finds indications of his culturalistic concept of social values. In his first article in English, 'The Principle of Relativity and Philosophical Absolutism' (1915), published in the USA, he examined the problem of a universal relativity of values. In a critical and unorthodox way, he joined the pragmatic movement, about which he stated: 'I am inclined to consider myself almost a disciple' (Znaniecki, 1919: xiii–xiv). However, he worked out his philosophical standpoint, while reflecting on problems related to sociological and historical aspects of reality (1919: x). Thus, his imminent conversion to sociology represents more of a consolidation than a radical change of interests. In any case, the change occurred while he was carrying out cooperative work with the American sociologist William I. Thomas whom he met in Poland, while serving as the director of the Office of the Society for the Protection of Emigrants.¹

Now, the analysis of Znaniecki's pragmatic views could be the subject of an extensive study in itself. His cohesive, elaborated theoretical system, presented in

the language of his own notions, could be outlined here, but only at the expense of neglecting the social historical context in which Znaniecki's discourse with other scholars was developing. Since I am concerned with attempting to explain the enigma of why Znaniecki's ideas have faded away from the main current of contemporary sociological discussions, I will attempt to combine an immanent analysis of his theory with a reconstruction of the intellectual discussions which took place half a century ago or even earlier, such as during the interwar period. Here, I will be further looking to draw out the most fundamental inspirations of a culturalistic sociology which could lead contemporary manifestations of cultural sociology to once again recognize needed classical formulations, so as to regain a full vitality.

A global migration of ideas is inscribed in Znaniecki's scholarly biography. His personal experience of the urban intellectual spaces of Paris, Geneva, Cracow, Warsaw, Chicago, New York and Poznań inspired him to develop the idea of a 'cosmopolitan community of scholars' (Znaniecka Lopata, 2000) even before 1953, when, as a professor at the University of Illinois, he was elected President of the American Sociological Association.

The ideas of Znaniecki (1882–1958), shaped over almost half a century, developed in creative evolution (Znaniecka Lopata, 1978) and their initial culturalistic assumptions already alluded to were never questioned by the author. Their harmony was not disturbed by various intellectual environments and by his at least three, if not four, developing scholarly lives. First, there was the wandering and not yet established scholar, who already after his doctoral dissertation at Jagiellonian University in 1910 showed the potential for a very promising life as a philosopher. After his studies at the Sorbonne, in Geneva and at Jagiellonian University, he seemed at times during his first stay in the US to come close to joining the Chicago pragmatists, but eventually left Chicago with Thomas. Their intellectual cooperation marked the beginning of his life as a sociologist and brought about that classical work of the first Chicago School, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918–20). Znaniecki's return to an independent Poland in 1920 opened up two decades of scholarly activity which provided an unprecedented impulse to the development of sociology in Poland, including its institutionalization (Dulczewski, 1992: 140–72) and the formation of a younger generation of scholars which includes Jan Szczepański and Józef Chałasiński. Although at a distance, Znaniecki indeed continued to participate in the development of American sociology through publishing in English and cooperating with the pre-Mertonian intellectual circle at Columbia University which was focused around MacIver and Znaniecki's student from Poznań, Theodore Abel (Abel, 2001; Hałas, 2001a). Forced to remain in the US owing to the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, Znaniecki reactivated his career as an American sociologist and was to remain working there until his death. In communist Poland, he became an object of merciless criticism² and only with the gradual liberalization during the 1970s did his ideas begin to be

absorbed again, although some of his most important works written in English remain untranslated to this day.³

In general, Znaniecki's intellectual biography (Znaniecka Lopata, 1965) was shaped on both sides of the Atlantic, resulting in a sociological theory in which European and American themes involving phenomenology (Grathoff, 1994) and pragmatism intermingle (Hałas, 1991a). Robert A. Nisbet's statement regarding Znaniecki's sociological work turned out to be particularly sagacious: 'One need but look at some of the strongest of still-emerging tendencies in contemporary sociological writing to realize the profoundly anticipatory character of much of his work' (Nisbet, 1970: 39–40). This remark could be said aptly to reflect the current situation of cultural sociology. Znaniecki formulated a theory of cultural systems of actions and values with a humanistic coefficient which relates to the active experience of meaning and the axiological significance of cultural data. His systematic sociological theory was aimed at the understanding and explanation of the social dynamics of culture, change and creativity, all to be investigated in interactional terms.

The distinctiveness of Znaniecki's theory in relationship to other interpretative theories springs from the very assumptions of culturalism which render it possible to avoid the subjective micro-sociological bias which plagues many variants of interpretative theories. Interactional social systems and emergent axionormative cultural orders are intertwined. Furthermore, the constructionism in his conception of a creative evolution of reality, as well as his considering the historical changeability of world views through creating meanings and values in interactions, overcome the dualistic oppositions of thought and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, and, consequently, the still widely persistent neo-Kantian opposition between nature and culture.

Znaniecki created a comprehensive theoretical system of cultural sociology which implies an ontology of cultural values and which focuses upon the meaningful and axiological dimensions of reality. The analytical conception of social systems as a subject matter within a cluster of other cultural systems of actions and values also encourages a cross-disciplinary approach. He promoted new ways of thinking about culture and the cultural sciences that led to the abandonment of the dogmas of naturalism, formal rationalism and idealism which prevailed during the 20th century, despite their inability to grasp either the creative evolution of meanings and values or the specific objectivity and duration of culture. The need to research the effects of cultural differences within the dynamics of conflict and social change in order to understand and control them was further emphasized by Znaniecki, who believed in the possibility of preparing people for creative leadership and peaceful cooperation. It might be interpreted as a 'project of cultural hermeneutics' (Hałas, 2005).

Znaniecki's rich scholarly output can be perhaps best presented as developing between the two works *Cultural Reality* (1919) and *Cultural Sciences* (1952a). It would be a misunderstanding to treat him as a predominantly Polish

scholar. For a long time these two major works, as well as many of his other contributions, have not been available in Polish. Rather, one could claim that Znaniecki was an American sociologist. He became an American citizen in 1942, although during his first stay in America he viewed that country with a deep curiosity somewhat resembling that of Alexis de Tocqueville (Znaniecki, 1920). However, as Merton (1983) pointed out in his short reminiscence, American scientists themselves could not develop a comprehensive view of Znaniecki's innovative ideas, because many of his other works, such as the pioneering 'Przedmiot i zadania nauki o wiedzy' ('The Subject and Tasks of the Science of Knowledge') (1925a) were only published in Polish. From time to time, Znaniecki also published in German and French. His works were indeed translated into other languages, such as Spanish, Italian, Japanese, and so forth, which provides an idea of his influence upon the development of world sociology, all of which itself requires a separate study. In sum, it seems clear that Znaniecki's contribution cannot be framed within the boundaries of national sociologies, although he himself studied the role of intellectuals and scholars in shaping national cultures.

In the last phase of his professional life, Znaniecki was affiliated with the University of Illinois; however, his scholarly activities should be further considered against the background of two extremely important centres for the development of sociology, namely the University of Chicago and Columbia University (Hałas, 2001b). Although Herbert Blumer refers to Znaniecki in writing about the origins of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969: 1), this latter perspective never fully promoted Znaniecki's theory (Hałas, 1983, 1986). Znaniecki is indeed considered to be one of the classical authors of the Chicago School. However, this work, which has made and will continue to make it difficult to ever completely forget his name, became unfortunately a mere 'label' and, perhaps, even a stigma, rendering it difficult to arrive at any complete recognition of his individual scholarly identity. The *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* is an object of study in itself (Orbach, 1993) and, therefore, it is difficult to devote any detailed attention to it here. However, the controversies surrounding the issue of which concepts were contributed by whom, Znaniecki or Thomas, should be briefly mentioned.

There is plenty of evidence supporting the claim that Znaniecki's theoretical and methodological input was fundamental (Wiley, 1986), and it is a fact that he was responsible for the comprehensive process of editing the work. Nevertheless, it is surprising to find that sometimes only Thomas is mentioned as the author of *The Polish Peasant* (Shils, 1948: 26).⁴ As an exception, George Simpson called Znaniecki the author of the monumental study and Thomas only a co-worker whom Znaniecki was mistakenly passed for (Simpson, 1964: 54). Even the 'definition of the situation' included in Thomas's famous theorem 'If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' has its counterpart in Znaniecki's earlier works, for example, in *Cultural Reality* (1919: 180), among

others. Znaniecki was also occasionally perceived as a functionalist (Martindale, 1970: 467–71), but the inspiration he drew from the works of Herbert Spencer led him in a different direction than Parsons and Merton. It is important to remember that Znaniecki belonged to the Columbia circle before Merton and Lazarsfeld gave it a new image. In sum, what is not to be forgotten is Znaniecki's own individual identity as an original scholar who was inspired in his cultural pragmatism by the concepts of both Simmel and Durkheim, as well as Henri Bergson.

The very intriguing signs of Znaniecki's influence upon other creative scientists serve as a basis for further future interesting investigations. I mean, for example, such references as those made by David Bloor (1991: 7) pointing to Znaniecki as an animator of the strong programme of a sociology of knowledge; by C. Wright Mills (1940), who refers to Znaniecki in relationship to his concept of vocabularies of motives; by Victor Turner (1974: 24, 32–3) calling Znaniecki an inspirer of symbolic and processual anthropology; and last, but not least, by Merton. It is, however, just as important, if not more so, to follow out even those sparse traces of influence which Znaniecki had on Parsons and Alfred Schutz, who were very key figures in the development of sociology in the second half of the 20th century.

There is a general incompatibility between the portrait of sociology reflecting the period between the First World War and the 1950s that emerges from publications and archival records documenting scholarly life, and the portrait which is painted in prevalent descriptions of the history of sociology, as well as in sociological theory compendiums of the late 20th century. In that recursive intellectual movement from the present to the past – where the developing past image influences the future development of scholarly thought only for the latter itself to become the present perspective for a new interpretation of the past – there occurs a play of knowledge and power which can perhaps be better understood if we pay more attention to the sociology of sociology. Contrary to the textbooks and historical studies from a quarter of a century ago, Znaniecki's name and his theoretical concepts are now mentioned less and less frequently. There is some irony in the fact that the revival of a sociology practised on the grounds of cultural assumptions echoes the very strong arguments Znaniecki once raised in debates concerning the future of sociology.

A Series of Creative Works and Their Resonance

In further taking up this cultural theme from a historical perspective, it is interesting to trace out the reception of Znaniecki's works in the USA. The importance and breadth of their influence was later confirmed by the election of Znaniecki, an immigrant, to President of the American Sociological Association. Znaniecki published his first books, *Zagadnienie wartości w filozofii* (*The Problem of Value in Philosophy*) (1910) and *Humanizm i poznanie* (*Humanism and Knowledge*) (1912), in Polish, and their significance should be considered in

relation to Polish philosophical thought, including, on the hand, the incipient Polish phenomenological movement and, on the other hand, the Polish analytical movement of the so-called 'Lvov-Warsaw School' (Kijania-Placek and Woleński, 1998). It is Znaniecki's pragmatic inclination which distinguishes him from both of these movements. Two of Znaniecki's other books published in Polish during his lifetime, *Wstęp do socjologii (Introduction to Sociology)* (1922) and *Socjologia wychowania (Sociology of Education)* (1928–30),⁵ introduced innovative ideas⁶ concerning a humanistic coefficient and social action as a dynamic system of social values, thereby marking out an epistemology of cultural sciences, including that of sociology.

A strong chord resounded when the first of Znaniecki's books in English, *Cultural Reality* (1919), was published. 'We shall wait with interest for the sequel' (Boodin, 1919–20: 277)⁷ wrote a reviewer, after becoming acquainted with Znaniecki's cultural interpretation of reality and his notion of 'concrete reality', the experience of which is essential for constructing physical, psychological and sociological orders, as well as the ideal order of reality.⁸ *Cultural Reality* was reviewed not only in philosophical journals, but also in the leading *American Journal of Sociology*.

Next, the publication of *The Polish Peasant*, which included the *Methodological Note*, was received as a breakthrough in American sociology. As expressed in a review by Henry P. Fairchild in a leading sociological journal, 'Taken as a whole, this work is unique. As far as the present reviewer's knowledge goes, there is nothing like it in American literature' (1921–2: 521–4). The status of that monumental work as a classic has never been questioned and a renowned debate organized by the Social Science Research Council, despite or due to criticisms of qualitative methodology, ultimately sealed this status. Over the course of time, as another reviewer of the new abbreviated two-volume edition of *The Polish Peasant* noticed, the question concerning Thomas and Znaniecki's input became a subject of controversy and he wrote the following:

. . . it is evident to the reviewer that Znaniecki has the greater share in the achievement. And as far as the theoretical aspects of the treatise are concerned, Znaniecki's recent publications indicate clearly that his influence in their formulation also was dominating.

(Abel, 1928: 666)

The following three of Znaniecki's books were also published in English by American publishers, although at the time he worked outside of the US. Their title pages, however, informed the reader that they had been written in the Polish Sociological Institute founded by Znaniecki. All of the books were intensely reviewed.⁹ *The Laws of Social Psychology* (1925b) is today the most forgotten of Znaniecki's books, although it places him on an equal footing with the founders of social psychology as it introduces issues concerning the 'social individual' and

the 'cultural person'. Znaniecki's incomparable cultural orientation was noticed in a review of the book by Ellsworth Faris, who stressed the originality of Znaniecki's notion of the 'axiological object' (Faris, 1925–6: 533). Although Znaniecki presented the concept of human action and its phases in a way similar in some aspects and quite different in others to George Herbert Mead, it is above all his concept of the 'axiological other' which is fundamentally different, being proposed in a much more comprehensive way as a social value than Mead's 'significant other'.¹⁰

The Method of Sociology (1934a) in turn presents with the utmost precision and clarity the field of sociology, that is, its theoretical order based on culturalistic assumptions that allow us to separate the social from the psychological and ideal orders of cultural reality. Since the notions of social action, social relations, social roles and social groups have become everyday currency in sociological thinking, their original value can be unveiled only by stressing that for Znaniecki they are dynamic cultural systems of active experiences of social values or, in short, systems given with the humanistic coefficient. For Znaniecki, social processes occur at a subsequent and the most complex level in the construction of cultural reality, since they develop within processes of interaction based upon the experience of cultural values. They are a specific class of more complex cultural data.

Some authors, in attempting to return Znaniecki to his proper place as a founder of the modern theory of social action, point out that he published *Social Actions* (1936)¹¹ a year earlier than Parsons's *The Structure of Social Action*. In light of what has been said so far, it is clear that his theory had been formulated and presented much earlier in both the English and Polish languages. In his review of *Social Actions*, Floyd N. House appealed to an audience already acquainted with Znaniecki's ideas: 'Readers who are familiar with the earlier works will recognize the terms "social action", "social object", "axiological" and "humanistic coefficient" ' (House, 1936–7: 423). In *Social Actions*, in an unprecedentedly clear way, Znaniecki criticized psychologism upon the basis of culturalist assumptions, and presented the constitution of social action as a system of values which cannot be limited to a teleological schema of means and goals, because any purpose is shaped only through the process of defining the situation of both real and ideational actions. One of Znaniecki's followers, Theodore Abel, drew attention in his review of *Social Actions* to Znaniecki's schema of analysis involving the structure and contents of social action. For Znaniecki, the subject of action and its object were viewed as primary social values, while the method of action, its instruments and the result were viewed as secondary social values. Abel went on to emphasize the conceptual precision of Znaniecki's distinctions (Abel, 1937: 286). Writing in *The American Journal of Sociology*, House also left no shadow of a doubt in this regard by stating that *Social Actions* marked a much fuller theoretical explanation of social actions, including their development and differentiation, than could be found in *The Polish Peasant* (House, 1936–7: 423).

The importance of these publications by Znaniecki as well as his eminent scholarly position, which were objectivized to some degree in the book reviews quoted earlier, was concisely expressed by Merton. At the time, he was a young sociologist at Tulane and not yet at Columbia University, where Znaniecki had just published his prestigious Julius Beer Foundation Lectures entitled *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* (1940).¹² Merton wrote,

Florian Znaniecki is in many respects the most distinguished exponent of sociology as a special rather than an encyclopedic social science. In a remarkable series of books, he has for some twenty years consistently demonstrated the special contributions of sociology to the analysis of human interaction and culture.

(1941: 111)¹³

Considering the fact that in 1940 Znaniecki was just restarting his scholarly activity in America after almost twenty years of only 'indirect presence' (excepting the years 1932–3), the words of Albert Salomon, a prominent sociologist from the New School for Social Research, take on an even stronger sense. In reviewing *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge*, he wrote:

During the last decades few persons have contributed more than Professor Znaniecki to the progress of sociological theory and method in this country. Thus it is highly important that he has, in this volume, expressed his ideas on the controversial issue of the sociology of knowledge. His contribution is to be distinguished from Mannheim's sociologism.

(1942: 560, my emphasis)

The originality of Znaniecki's approach, which, it has been continually stressed, arises from his culturalistic premises, is to be understood as distinguishing various categories of cultural phenomena and, thereby, differentiating between knowledge understood in cultural terms and social phenomena as a specific class of cultural data, and, where both knowledge and social phenomena remain in mutual relations, without lapsing into sociological determinism. As Znaniecki maintained, the assumptions of culturalism, along with the humanistic coefficient, should also be applied to knowledge, which is to be researched in the way it is experienced and assessed by its participants. 'Knowledge in the cultural sense covers every kind of more or less coherent system of ideas which those thinkers who share it believe to be true' (Znaniecki, 1951: 249). He stressed that 'the term knowledge, however defined by epistemologists, can also be used to denote a distinct category of cultural phenomena, accessible to objective scientific investigation' (1951: 248).

Completely alien to Znaniecki's theory and research was the opposition between micro-sociology and macro-sociology that was to torment sociology

until the 1980s, when it was sentenced to disposal, but, thus far, without bringing back the perspective of a systematic sociology so characteristic of Znaniecki's thought. Although many of Znaniecki's accomplishments have to do with a theory of social action and a theory of the social self, his was never a shortsighted research for he always viewed with equal importance processes of social change from the perspective of a history of culture. He often revealed that the thought of Polish scholars, for example Edward J. Abramowski, Zygmunt Bałucki and Ludwik Gumplowicz, was of importance for his intellectual formation. In relationship to this intellectual and historical context, one can better understand his dedication to the study of the nation, and also national conflicts, the tragic results of which he luckily evaded as during both world wars he was academically working in the United States. The originality of Znaniecki's approach to these problems once again has its source in culturalism as the nation is conceptualized in terms of a 'national culture society'. As Arnold M. Rose put it in his review of *Modern Nationalities: The Sociological Study* (1952b):¹⁴

The book is brief, but in it Znaniecki tries to accomplish the following: trace the origins of national culture societies, list the factors in their solidarity, indicate sources of conflict between them, and suggest how conflict between them can be reduced so that a world culture can come into existence.

(Rose, 1941: 341)

Modern Nationalities has all the makings of a classical sociological work, whereby the contemporary ethnosymbolic (A.D. Smith, 1999) and constructionist (Anderson, 1983) theories could be interpreted as improvisations on a major theme once introduced by Znaniecki over half a century ago. As another reviewer put it in the *American Journal of Sociology*, 'The main themes are the cult of heroes, the myth of common descent, the attachment to the native land, and the appeal for defense against a common enemy' (Strong, 1953: 170). Znaniecki was also one of the first thinkers analysing the 'emerging world society', and Roland Robertson is right when he states that in approaching the problem of globalization we still have a lot to discover in the works of the classics (1991: 52).

The last of Znaniecki's great works,¹⁵ his magnum opus, is *Cultural Sciences: Their Origin and Development* (1952a). It also had the highest number of reviews.¹⁶ Timasheff (1957: 250) later rightly pointed out that the most general category Znaniecki used in this work was the concept of axionormative order. However, it is important to understand that this concept of order was interactionist and pragmatic, and free from any normativism. As one reviewer noted, 'Cultural order in general is an order of relationships among all kinds of human actions' (M.J.V., 1952-3: 134). Otis D. Duncan and Leo F. Schnore, characterizing the classic cultural sociology which according to them originated in William G. Sumner's work, compared *Cultural Sciences* and Alfred Kroeber's *The*

Nature of Culture (1952). They came to the conclusion that Znaniecki's work refers to the European concepts of culture 'and stands somewhat outside the main stream of cultural sociology in this country' (Duncan and Schnore, 1971: 71). They also proclaimed that a 'splendid statement that is of great relevance to developments within American sociology is given in the collection of Kroeber's papers, *The Nature of Culture*' (1971: 71). Interestingly enough, Howard Becker had suggested in his review of *Cultural Sciences* that ethnocentrism could have been the reason 'for the somewhat belated recognition of Florian Znaniecki' (1952-3: 289). Of course, comparing the concepts of Znaniecki and Kroeber would certainly be intellectually rewarding. In particular, it would help to answer the question whether Znaniecki's concept of cultural reality constituted by actions and values provides a better or worse theoretical basis for cultural sociology in comparison to Kroeber's differentiation between a 'culture of reality' and a 'culture of values'. In any case, they both knew one another's concepts and, as Abel testifies in his *Journal*, discussed them personally (2001: 49).

To Be or Not to Be in Encyclopedias

There is a striking contrast between the creativity of Znaniecki's works and their impact during his scholarly lifetime and the current relatively small number of studies on them even in Poland (Dulczewski, 1992; Hałas, 1991b; Szacki, 1986). Znaniecki's weaker than deserved status in world sociology has been explained as resulting from the fact that quite a lot of his works were published in Polish or because of his return to Poland in 1920, which undermined his career. By contrast, Bronisław Malinowski made a different choice and stayed abroad, and achieved an unquestionable classical ranking among anthropologists, just as Józef Korzeniowski, known as Joseph Conrad, did in literature.

Social scientific encyclopedias can be regarded as a reflection of scholarly development and the development of self-consciousness among practitioners. Of course, this is said with some reservation, since they also unavoidably testify to power relations and social forces active in the field. In the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Znaniecki's name appears among important scholars under the entry 'Sociology' (MacIver, 1934: 240). The emergence of sociology is presented against a wide background of attempts to comprehend society since antiquity. Thus, even the short mention he receives implies an acknowledgement of the great significance of his accomplishments. Unfortunately, in the future Znaniecki's name will be repeated in other works only rather ritualistically in connection with his study with Thomas on the peasant migrant community in America, while there is a vanishing trace of his great effort to shape sociology as a cultural science.

In the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, edited by David Sills, there is an extensive entry entitled 'Znaniecki, Florian' written by Robert Bierstedt (1968). For the sociologist and historian of science, 'The Field', a part of the entry entitled 'Sociology' by Albert J. Reiss (1968), is of particular interest.

Here, the field of sociology is already seen to be dominated by the leaders of the younger generation of scholars such as Parsons and Merton (Reiss, 1968: 2). However, within a discerning characterization of the developments in American sociology before 1940, one finds very interesting statements which, albeit indirectly, still point to Znaniecki's unusually far-reaching influence with respect to culturalizing American sociology. Even without submitting very detailed proof or minutely distinguishing between Znaniecki and Thomas's contributions to their monumental work, it is maintained that there is little question that it was Znaniecki who coined the concept of values. The author of the entry honestly and accurately states that in American sociology, in contrast to European sociology, problems of value were totally neglected, including the issue of how values are institutionalized and how they are organized in American and other societies (Reiss, 1968: 4).

The entry contains yet another extremely important comment on an issue that would gradually disappear from subsequent similar studies,¹⁷ namely the pre-war methodological debate over sociology as a science. Although it is said that the question concerning sociology as a science actually became almost 'obsessive' (Reiss, 1968: 10), the commentator presents the situation somewhat mildly, stating that 'there soon developed a polarization of positions and of persons' (1968: 10). In fact, the circumstances surrounding the paradigmatic changes and the system of social relations in scientific milieus of this period have not yet been adequately researched (Hałas, 2001a, 2001b). Nevertheless, and even though in the encyclopedic entry the debate is presented rather superficially,¹⁸ it is mentioned that 'On one side the principal spokesmen were the European-trained sociologists Pitirim Sorokin and Florian Znaniecki' (Reiss, 1968: 10). The third sociologist trained in Europe, Robert MacIver, should also be included here. Robert A. Nisbet was more shrewd when he said that Znaniecki was one of three sociologists born outside of America who attained a great part of their scholarly achievement in America. In referring to Znaniecki, Sorokin and MacIver, Nisbet wrote that 'all three had considerable influence in introducing Americans to the wealth of sociological perspectives and insights contained in the European tradition' (1970: 40).

Znaniecki's *The Method of Sociology*, published in 1934 after his second two-year stay in the US, should be interpreted in the context of this debate. Not without reason, some regard this work as the best presentation of his major concepts and one where sociology is most clearly put forth as a cultural science involving a humanistic coefficient related to socially constructed cultural meanings and values. It should therefore be once again stressed that in regard to classic cultural American sociology *The Method of Sociology* is just as important as *Cultural Sciences*, published in 1952 and reprinted in 1980, at the beginning of the decade in the middle of which Jeffrey Alexander and Philip Smith (2001: 135) find the signs of a cultural turn in American sociology, although without reference

to Znaniecki. The veil obscuring this founder of cultural sociology, if removed, would reveal many detailed well-organized and stimulating conceptualizations.

Besides Alvin Boskoff (1969), it is Bierstedt who has done the most for the consolidation and further continual influence of Znaniecki's ideas upon American sociology. It is he who edited the thus far only selection of Znaniecki's writings (Znaniecki, 1969). In these times of the mass consumption of knowledge, readers and textbooks are indispensable vehicles. Unfortunately, Znaniecki's concepts are not to be found in today's general accounts of modern sociological theories (Ritzer, 2000; J.H. Turner, 1998). They are also relatively uncommon in earlier presentations of 20th-century sociology. The most comprehensive and careful accounts of Znaniecki's work were provided by Bierstedt in *American Sociological Theory: A Critical History* (1981) and Boskoff in *Theory in American Sociology. Major Sources and Applications* (1969).¹⁹ Good perspectives enlivening expectations on the further reception of Znaniecki's ideas were put forth in three other important works on sociological theory, namely those by Nicholas S. Timasheff (1957), Don Martindale (1970) and Jerzy Szacki (1979), the latter of which contains an especially detailed account of his concepts.²⁰

Over the years, traces of Znaniecki's sociological presence become less and less frequent, particularly in textbooks. There have been exceptions. Indeed, his ideas were inscribed in the monumental work of Harry E. Barnes and Howard Becker, *Social Thought from Lore to Science* (1938). Furthermore, a critical but thorough analysis of *Cultural Sciences* was presented by Sorokin in *Sociological Theories of Today* (1966). Finally, Znaniecki's theoretical achievements were also summarized by Abel (1970), who praised the importance of the social system as a theoretical construction formulated after Vilfredo Pareto and before Parsons. In sum, however, it can be said that the efforts to broaden and deepen the reception of Znaniecki's work were not widespread and were undertaken mostly by scholars from his closest intellectual circle.

Most of the authors undertaking the task of spreading Znaniecki's ideas were successful. Nevertheless, the concept of the humanistic coefficient properly elaborated was somehow pushed out of the interpretative paradigm, and not by necessarily more accurate formulations. Anthony Giddens in *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976) searched for the foundations of interpretative sociology, but disregarded Znaniecki's *The Method of Sociology*.²¹ *The Method of Sociology* deals not only with logic or the methodology of sociology and the social sciences, as the title may suggest and as it was sometimes described (House, 1936: 301). As already stressed above, the importance of that work resides in the concept of cultural sociology. Today Znaniecki has survived mainly as the co-author of *The Polish Peasant*, but he is indeed further mentioned as a classic of qualitative methods, including the biographical method, although even here, according to Kenneth Plummer, he must be seen as 'a neglected classic' (1983: 34, 44). The great revival of qualitative methodology which has been supported by Norman K. Denzin, a symbolic interactionist from the University of Illinois, has, however, led

to a closer interest in Znaniecki's concepts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 57, 511, 648). Strictly speaking, the methodological aspects of Znaniecki's work has always been cultivated to some degree, although the method of analytic induction which he advocated has been somewhat pushed aside by the so-called 'grounded theory' of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967). A renewed interest in the formal, non-quantitative, method of causal explanation presented in *The Method of Sociology* is again noticeable, however (Ryan and Bernard, 2000: 786–7).²²

Some Recollections of Znaniecki's Ideas

In this last section, it might be helpful, in further presenting and recollecting Znaniecki's cultural sociology, to examine the works of Parsons and Schutz for any signs of their reception of Znaniecki's concepts. In 'The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology', Schutz (1976: 92) mentions Znaniecki among other outstanding American writers like William G. Sumner, Thomas, Robert E. Park and H.A. Miller, while in 'The Social World and Theory of Social Action' (1976: 12) he mentions Znaniecki alongside William James, George Herbert Mead, Gordon Allport and Talcott Parsons. In both of these contexts, Znaniecki appears as a theoretician of the 'social personality'; however, in the latter opening study on social theory, Schutz comments upon Znaniecki's theory as a whole. Without any reservation, in this text written in 1940 and planned as a contribution to the ongoing discussion among social scientists in the US, Schutz praises 'the fundamental importance of the formula of Professor Znaniecki' (1976: 7). He has in mind four classes of social systems distinguished by Znaniecki and involving the humanistic coefficient. Schutz interpreted these systems – social action, social relations, social personality and social groups – as four different points of view, or four schemes of reference for social phenomena, which in general belong to two categories. Action and personality belong to the 'subjective' and relations and groups to the 'objective'. Schutz does not follow the constructionist logic contained in Znaniecki's model, where the more complex systems are built upon the elementary system of social action, and returns to the subjective–objective opposition overcome by Znaniecki. Schutz, however, had no doubts about Znaniecki's fundamental contribution to the theory of social action, despite his different interpretation. Remembering all the differences between Znaniecki's culturalism and the social phenomenology of Schutz, some crucial affinities may still be detected, particularly in formulations revolving around issues of the humanistic coefficient. Znaniecki's starting point was the humanistic coefficient of cultural data, or values as elements of culture. He writes,

The humanistic coefficient concerns both the composition and the structure of cultural systems. Every element which enters into the composition of a cultural system is what it appears to be in the experience of those

people who are actively dealing with it, and the student cannot know what it is unless he ascertains how it appears to them.

(1934a: 39)

Schutz similarly states, 'As a convenient starting-point we shall investigate how the cultural pattern of group life presents itself to the common sense of a man who lives his everyday life within the group among his fellow-men' (1976: 92).

Schutz, in exploring epistemological problems of the social sciences, is talking about 'natural things' as opposed to 'social things', which is a different way of dealing with the problem than the one undertaken by Znaniecki, who distinguished between 'things' and 'values'. However, their common option involving a humanistic coefficient is comparable. Schutz writes that,

As the social world under any aspect whatsoever remains a very complicated cosmos of human activities, we can always go back to the 'forgotten man' of the social sciences, to the actor in the social world whose doing and feeling lies at the bottom of the whole system.

(1976: 6-7)

In regard to Parsons, it seems that in his 1937 *The Structure of Social Action* he could in no way leave Znaniecki's works²³ out of account, although, in taking conceptual parallels into consideration, he mentions Znaniecki only marginally.²⁴ In any case, Parsons appreciated Znaniecki's theory of social systems involving the humanistic coefficient, as did Schutz not long afterwards. Parsons wrote:

It is a great service of Professor Znaniecki to have pointed out that essentially the same facts about 'man in society' may be stated in any one of four different schemata of this character, which he calls 'social action,' 'social relationships,' 'social groups' and 'social personality.' As far as the present interest goes the terms are practically self-explanatory. It may be noted though that the schema of social personality relates not to 'psychology' but to the concrete individual, as a member of society, belonging to groups and in social relationships to others. *The primary basis in this study will be the schema of action*, with concrete individuals thought of as adapting means to ends.

(1968 [1937]: 30, my emphasis)

Parsons, however, did not clearly acknowledge whether Znaniecki's analyses of social systems and social actions inspired his own study of the structure of social action.²⁵ Charles Camic, in relying upon the basis of documented sources, does, however, report the following about Parsons: 'During his early Harvard years, he read some of the works of Robert MacIver and Florian Znaniecki'

(1991: xxxix). According to Bierstedt, before Parsons, sociologists honestly referred to their contemporaries and predecessors. He claims that ‘The first break in this tradition occurs in Parsons’ (Bierstedt, 1981: 493ff.). Faris expressed a similar opinion in his 1953 review of Parsons’s *The Social System* (1951). Bierstedt also mentions Faris in this regard, while claiming that in *The Structure of Social Action* the continuity of the sociological tradition was already disturbed. Bierstedt is particularly concerned with the limited reception of the work of Znaniecki. In regard to *The Structure of Social Action*, he writes that ‘It is true that Parsons mentions Znaniecki in the latter work because Znaniecki preceded him as an action theorist and thought of action as the central concept in sociology. But the discussion is brief’ (Bierstedt, 1981: 494).

While Schutz and Parsons still acknowledged the importance of Znaniecki’s theory, paradigmatic turning-point opinions began to arise during the postwar period diminishing the significance of Znaniecki’s work, for example that by Edward Shils (1948: 56). However, the vanishing of Znaniecki’s theory as a primary focus of attention required more time.²⁶ Alvin W. Gouldner pointed out the full bloom of systematic sociology in postwar America, and highlighted the similarities between Znaniecki’s theory and Parsons’s work on the structure of social action. He went on to point out the defects in Parsons’s model, which is based upon the schema of means and goals, and which does not allow for the examination of a ‘process of action’ in which values are shaped and modified according to the principle of the humanistic coefficient (Gouldner, 1956: 36).

In the late 1950s, publications still appeared which indicated the influence of European thought on modern American sociological theory and in which Znaniecki was portrayed right next to Max Weber (Becker and Boskoff, 1957: 85), while simultaneously pointing out that his theory had not been given appropriate attention. Howard W. Odum claimed that the European influence on sociology was greater than on American culture in general (1951: 36). In the gallery of Europeans whose ‘work is commonly accepted as basic’ (1951: 38) for the theoretical foundation of sociology and following Harry Elmer Barnes, Odum mentioned Znaniecki alongside Max and Alfred Weber, Edward Westermarck, Leopold von Wiese and Wilhelm Wundt (1951: 38).

However, the ideology of American exceptionalism (Ross, 1991: 22) gradually took over sociology and influenced the image of its past. Shmuel Eisenstadt and M. Curelaru describe the period before the Second World War as particularly vital for sociological activity with the participation of numerous sociological communities and rich patterns of international communication (Eisenstadt and Curelaru, 1976: 137). Alexander rightly states that Parsons dominated sociology in the postwar period (1982: xiii),²⁷ but the opinion that Parsons was ‘the only true peer of the classical tradition’ (1982: xv) is more than an exaggeration. The claim that ‘During the interwar period, the discipline lay relatively dormant’ (1982: xiii) is unsubstantiated.

Conclusion

The new American cultural sociology and the strong programme of cultural sociology provide a first basis for a return to the classics and a settling of the debt to Znaniecki. Above all, in the selective histories of science and memory, it is sociology itself that wins or loses. Without a doubt, Znaniecki formulated a consistent theory of sociology as a cultural science. His cultural sociology was profoundly justified with the aid of a philosophy of culturalism. Following Becker (1950: 6), one could conclude that those interested in the human reality of action, communication and valuation could still learn much from Znaniecki's *Cultural Reality* and *Cultural Sciences*. Znaniecki proposed a constructionist view where human reality is the culture or, as he said, 'cultural reality'; where cultural reality is primary; and where the active experience of meanings and values is prior to their social organization. For Znaniecki, the concept of culture is fundamentally neither a hierarchical concept (that is, lower to higher culture) nor a differentiating one (that is, various cultures), but rather is a 'general concept' (Bauman, 1999: 1–46) applied to reality in general, and understood relativistically and dynamically. It is a process taking place between the poles of subjectivization and objectivization. It is rather Znaniecki's 'prism of culturalism' that has been generally acknowledged by the interpreters of his work (Bierstedt, 1981: 238; Boskoff, 1969: 69). Znaniecki demonstrated cultural reality's specific objectivity and its complexity constituted by actions directed at values, among which social actions and social values, as a specific class of cultural actions and values, occupy a prominent position. It is a theory of the duality of cultural reality. Its more elaborated construction manifests itself in social systems: actions, relations, roles and social groups that are the most complex cultural systems.

Initially, Znaniecki intended to subtitle *Cultural Sciences* 'An Introduction to the Future of Sociology' (Bram, 1953: 122). In regard to a future cultural sociology, this remains the fundamental status of his works to the present day.

Notes

1. For political reasons he could not get an academic position in partitioned Poland.
2. As early as 1921 he presented an analysis of Bolshevism in *Upadek cywilizacji zachodniej* (*The Fall of Western Civilization*).
3. I am not concerned here with problems of the reception of Znaniecki's work in pre-war Poland, perturbations of the communist period and the gradual, yet partial, adoption in his native country. In this respect much has been done by the Florian Znaniecki Foundation and Florian Znaniecki Scientific Society in Poznań.
4. The way Dorothy Ross presents the methodological discussion concerning *The Polish Peasant* suggests that the work had only one author, William I. Thomas (Ross, 1991: 432–5).
5. Related publications in English as well as reports from 'Education and Social Change' project can be found in Znaniecki (1998).

6. It is not my intention to diminish the importance of his other works, such as *Miasto w świadomości jego obywateli* (*The City in the Consciousness of Its Citizens*) (1931), and above all his civilizational reflections contained in *Upadek cywilizacji zachodniej* (*The Fall of Western Civilization*) (1921) and *Ludzie terażniejsi a cywilizacja przyszłości* (*Contemporary People and the Civilization of the Future*) (1934b).
7. The book was also reviewed in philosophical journals: *Mind* 28 (1919): 488; and *Philosophical Review* 29 (1920): 191.
8. It is worthwhile to notice the parallels and differences with Karl R. Popper's later concept of the three worlds.
9. *The Method of Sociology* was the only one not reviewed in *The American Journal of Sociology*. The reviews appeared in *American Sociological Review* 1 (1936): 817–19; *Ethics* 45 (1935): 373; *Journal of Social Casework* 16 (1935): 159; and *Sociology and Social Research* 19 (1934–5): 183.
10. Those intriguing similarities and differences did not go unnoticed by the editor of the 1983 reprint of *Cultural Reality* (Jaco, 1983: viii). On similarities and differences between the concepts of Mead and Znaniecki, see Hałas (1983, 1986).
11. Reviewed in *The American Journal of Sociology* 42 (1936–7): 423–4; *American Sociological Review* 2 (1937): 283–6; and *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 197 (1938): 257.
12. It was reviewed in *The American Journal of Sociology* 47 (1941–2): 215–16; *American Sociological Review* 6 (1941): 111–15; *Canadian Forum* 20 (1940): 353; *Philosophical Review* 51 (1942): 622; *Philosophy* 16 (1941): 445; *Social Research* 9 (1942): 560–2; and *Sociology and Social Research* 25 (1941): 477.
13. Merton's review, which, typically for this scholar, is a very discerning reading with an inclination to building classification schemas, meticulously presents the types of social roles of the men of knowledge. The influence of Znaniecki's concept of a social role on Merton's later formulations – particularly the concept of the role-set – is easy to show, although in Merton's structural-functional elaboration it is no longer a dynamic social system.
14. *Modern Nationalities* was reviewed in *The American Journal of Sociology* 59 (1953): 169–71; *American Sociological Review* 18 (1953): 341; *Jewish Social Studies* 16 (1954): 285; *Political Science Quarterly* 68 (1953): 126; *Slavic Review* 12 (1953): 401; and *Sociology and Social Research* 37 (1953): 209.
15. After Znaniecki's death Helena Znaniecka Lopata edited a selection of his late writings: *Social Relations and Social Roles: The Unfinished Systematic Sociology* (1965).
16. It was reviewed in: *The American Journal of Sociology* 58 (1952–3): 529–30; *American Sociological Review* 17 (1952): 626–8; *Jewish Social Studies* 16 (1954): 190; *Queens Quarterly* 59 (1952): 557; *Rural Sociology* 17 (1952): 377; *Social Forces* 31 (1953): 289–92; *Social Science* 28 (1953): 122–3; *Sociological Analysis* 13 (1952): 259; and *Sociology and Social Research* 37 (1952–3): 134–5.
17. For example from *The Impossible Science* by Stephen P. Turner and Jonathan H. Turner (1990).
18. Those controversies became particularly evident among the sociologists at Columbia University, where not only Paul Lazarsfeld, who was for the monopoly of quantification and statistics, but

also Robert S. Lynd were adversaries of Robert M. Maclver, who continued the tradition of understanding sociology.

19. Alvin Boskoff did not manage to free Znaniecki from being associated with Thomas. The pertinent chapter in the book is entitled 'Thomas and Znaniecki: Subjective Elements in Social Action' (1969: 61–80).
20. Lewis A. Coser presents Znaniecki's ideas in *Masters of Sociological Thought* (1971: 511–59), but again the reception framework is limited by the association with Thomas in the same chapter.
21. Znaniecki had also studied the problem of agency and structure long before Giddens, as pointed out by Bierstedt when Giddens's book was published (Bierstedt, 1981: 240).
22. Znaniecki's concept of the analytic induction was modified by Lindesmith and Donald R. Cressey. Also see the discussion in *American Sociological Review* 16 (1951), 17 (1952) and 19 (1954) initiated by the article by W.S. Robinson (1951: 812–18).
23. Also, Parsons (1950) couldn't refrain from joining in the large and distinguished group of scholars who expressed their recognition of Znaniecki's output: 'Please convey greetings to Professor Znaniecki on occasion of testimonial dinner. We all appreciate his distinguished contributions as co-Author of the *Polish Peasant*, as methodologist and as theorist.'
24. In the bibliography, which is not – as he admits – complete, though it includes more sources than are cited in the text, he entered Znaniecki's: *The Method of Sociology, The Laws of Social Psychology and Social Actions*.
25. In reference to Znaniecki, Parsons – similarly to Schutz – does not use the notion of a system used by Znaniecki. While Schutz justifiably takes into account Znaniecki's analysis of common thinking patterns, which he will later replace with the category of typifications, Parsons is not accurate since he will take up the concepts of a social system.
26. Social and political factors influencing the direction of sociology's development in America were described by Nicholas C. Mullins. He pointed out the isolation of prominent sociologists of the older generation who – no longer influencing flocks of students – lost their influence in shaping sociology (Mullins, 1973: 45).
27. Stephen P. Turner and Jonathan H. Turner rightly state that the postwar situation of sociology was influenced by the peculiar academic demography. As a matter of fact, at the end of the war Parsons and other young sociologists developed their activity when the 'earlier generation of "leaders" were at or near retirement age' (1990: 85).

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