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Culture and Power: Possibilities and Responsibilities for the World-Society

Abstract: From Znaniecki's point of view, and alluding to present-day conclusions about the so-called reflexivity of modernity, one would have to say that it is a problematic reflexivity, as long as knowledge about the principles of cultural becoming will be minimal.

Znaniecki did not deny the justification of sociological studies that start out from naturalist premises. However, he rightly believed that the dependence of cultural order on natural order is not only shrinking, but the reverse is in fact happening—there is an increasing influence of cultural order on natural order, and the rising complexity of cultural phenomena renders the naturalist approach scientifically less productive. The development of sociology as a cultural science led, according to Znaniecki, to displaying the possibility of a world-society as a society founded on culture, while the development of cultural sciences would be an expression of global responsibility for the world-culture society.

Keywords: Florian Znaniecki, culture, power, culturalism, cultural sciences, global society

Introduction: How Should the Legacy of Florian Znaniecki Be Suitably Portrayed Today?

There is no lack of supporters of the extreme standpoint that almost all theoretical projects of 20th century sociology, which used to strive against each other, are dead today and that entirely new research enterprises should appear on the deserted battlefield (Turner 2001; Fuchs 2001). This is because the contending theories have become outdated, as the social world has changed too fast for its conceptual frames to keep up (Bauman 2000). The state of sociology at the beginning of the 21st century seems far away from that attractivity which the new discipline used to have when it enticed great intellects a hundred years earlier, and its practitioners today, as compared to practitioners around the middle of the 20th century, show a lack of determination to fulfill the modernist promises which sociology used to carry. Postmodernist doubt if the possibility of objective cognition also strikes sociology, where a politically correct answer to the question which side the researcher—she or he—is taking is supposed to restore

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its ultimate legitimacy—emancipation from the dominating powers permeating the orders of thought and social relations.

More and more often, the place of sociology and social sciences is being taken by “research” and “studies” of various kinds unspecified with regard to their subject-matter and methodology. Thus, the question comes to mind—what can we still learn, what sort of knowledge can we acquire from Florian Znaniecki (1882–1958),¹ a researcher and thinker belonging to the generation whose creative years spanned the period before the First World War, between the wars, the Second World War and the Cold War—in other words, a period of high modernity, determined by military powers. The question is further justified by the fact that in the face of war crises, Znaniecki persisted in proposing a seemingly too subtle cultural perspective. Actually—as I aim to demonstrate—it is precisely the way of justifying importance and the very idea of pursuing cultural science in a perspective of global changes which retain their value and relevance today.

In order to bring the forgotten author back to attention, his precursorship² in respect to currently renowned theories is often pointed out. The status of a precursor, however, is ambiguous in that it might lead us to believe this precursor’s work suffered from shortcomings since, after all, he is more or less unappreciated. The recent cultural turn in sociology and the brief post-Parsonian tradition attached to it (Alexander, Smith 2001) give us a good occasion to address more essential issues regarding Florian Znaniecki’s legacy, as well as ask what has happened to sociology since the middle of the 20th century and whether it is still realistic to expect that, as this scholar believed, sociology can become as fundamental for the cultural sciences as physics is for natural sciences.

Sociologists have always given thought to culture, but never, except for the classics of the first generation—Durkheim, Weber, Simmel—has analysis of social phenomena based on cultural premises occupied a position of prime importance (Boudon and Bourricaud 1982), and precisely this is what Florian Znaniecki proposed. In relatively recent times, some contemporary American sociologists (Jeffrey Alexander, Robert Wuthnow, Philip Smith) have tried to bring cultural sociology out into the limelight, to some avail. They assume a certain autonomy of culture in regard to social phenomena, postulating the *Verstehen* method introduced by Dilthey (Brown 2005), or a hermeneutical adequacy of analyses and a pragmatic rule of researching human actions during their course.³ Znaniecki’s theory lacks none of these dimensions. Thus, today, the time is especially ripe for Florian Znaniecki’s culturalistic theory to meet again with due interest,⁴ and maybe even give new vigor to a discipline which appears to be going through a phase of change and dissipation, as mentioned in passing by George Ritzer and al. who encourage to revisiting Znaniecki’s action theory (Ritzer,

¹ As regards Znaniecki’s figure as a scholar, see (Bierstedt 1968; Hałas 2005).

² For example, it can be shown that he was the founder of the theory of symbolic interactionism (Hałas 1986).

³ On the influence of Dilthey’s hermeneutic on American interpretive sociology, also *via* Znaniecki’s work see (Brown 2005: 203).

⁴ For details about Znaniecki’s influence on shaping the interest of American sociologists in the cultural perspective, see Hałas 2006.

Zhao, Murphy 2001: 126). Znaniecki seems to have anticipated this coming danger of the breakup, as shown by his presidential address on the basic problems of sociology as a science (Znaniecki 1954).

We are speaking about the significant achievements of a scholar both Polish and American, with a connection to such important centers of sociology as the University of Chicago and Columbia University, and whose thought also later bore fruit when he was a professor at the University of Illinois, which became to some degree symbolically confirmed by his election for president of the American Sociological Association. Znaniecki's intellectual legacy and message, which remain valid nowadays, are conveyed by his last two books, published by the University of Illinois Press in 1952: *Cultural Sciences. Their Origin and Development* and *Modern Nationalities. A Sociological Study*. The most important points of this message, associated with the duality of culture and power, will be outlined here.

The Meaning of Culturalism

In order to be fully understood, Znaniecki's conceptions require disproving many thinking habits, among them differentiation between the categories of culture, society and personality made popular by Talcott Parsons.⁵ Znaniecki expounded his own conception of culturalism in English in *Cultural Reality* (1919) and introduced it to the masterpiece *The Polish Peasant in Europa and America* co-authored with William I. Thomas, and the innovation was immediately perceived (Fairchild 1921–1922). To him, culture was the most general notion in the terms of symbolically transformed cultural reality, that is, human world in general—or the world experienced through the prism of culture (Znaniecki 1919: 16). This conception is based on an assumption of the historical relativity of all human values:

The image of the world which we construct is a historical value, relative like all others, and a different one will take its place in the future, even as it has itself taken the place of another image (1919: 15).

Culturalism, in the meaning which Znaniecki gave it, is thus far distanced from the meanings one attaches to views based on a differentiating notion of culture; in other words, opinions that proclaim the multiplicity of cultures too varied for compatibility. Human culture as a whole interested Znaniecki both in its historical past and its present development—in terms of politics, economy, morality, art, language, religion, knowledge (1919: 8) as well as its more universal constitution. In a time when realist and naturalist views on the ontology of society still prevailed, Znaniecki argued that the problems of culture are going to move into a position of central importance; or more precisely, as he put it, the “problems of cultural construction” (1919: 11). His stance far preceded similar articulations that give prominence to signification processes and symbolic representations now spread by poststructuralist standpoints.

⁵ Parsons took over these theory elements from Pitirim A. Sorokin. Unlike those two Harvard scholars, Znaniecki rejected these conceptual hypostases, as well as metaphysics and the absolute and final values that steer social life.

This is because Znaniecki's view on culture, or rather—on cultural reality expressed in terms of cultural systems, is a variant of the constructionist approach (Znaniecki 1934: 68–69; Searle 1995: 183).

The construction of the system of values is a real dynamic occurrence which involves a definite series of facts and goes on in empirical cultural reality (Znaniecki 1934: 69).

It is a reality constructed via action processes that create systems of meaningful and axiologically significant values—what was articulated as the reality with the humanistic coefficient.

To perform this task he (*the cultural scientist—E.H.*) takes every empirical datum which he investigates with what we have called its *humanistic coefficient*, i.e., as it appears to those human individuals who experience it and use it (Znaniecki 1952b: 132).

The existence of a cultural system as a system of values is based on series of actions, with the help of which the system is constructed. Their “duration in time and extension in space are with humanistic coefficient” (Znaniecki 1934: 70); in other words, the cultural system is what it is thanks to human experience and “since the basis of its reality is its actual construction, the fact that may be simultaneously constructed by many human agents must have a bearing on its objective existence in the cultural world” (75). As long as the cultural system exists, the process of its constructing continues according to Znaniecki's elaboration of Bergson's thesis on the creative revolution.

For culture is not a mere agglomeration of 'facts of consciousness' with their material accompaniment and results. It is constituted by numerous *systems*, greater or smaller, more or less coherent, durable and changing, but all with a specific objectivity and an intrinsic order of their own: systems like the Erechtheion and the Ionic style in architecture, the Beata Beatrix and English Pre-Raphaelitism, the philosophy of Aristotle and modern mathematics, the bank of Morgan and American capitalism, the Buddhist, Mohammedan, or Catholic religion, the Roman Empire or the Third French Republic, a department store or an automobile factory. Though human activities construct and maintain such systems, these activities are not what they appear in introspective analysis: what matters about them is not their 'subjective', 'psychological' aspect, but how they manifest themselves in this objective cultural world, where they contribute something to the existing systematic order, and must on the other hand comply with this order (1936: 5–6).

There has been no lack of mistaken interpretations of Znaniecki's theory, which link his stance to subjectivism.⁶ In order to understand Znaniecki's culturalism, it is essential to follow his criticism of the conception of the individual subject, which offers an answer to the question where and how exist the phenomena of culture, or the order that depends on conscious human factors—the order with a humanistic coefficient.

These are neither psychological facts nor some sort of collective consciousness, although culture is often viewed as contained within society. Of crucial importance is the conception of the duration and extension of cultural data, where many cultural data

⁶ For example, the following statement by Lewis A Coser is false: “Znaniecki's major contribution to the methodology of the social sciences lies in his insistence that sociology, as a science of human action, must focus on the subjective meaning that actors give to the situation in which they find themselves” (Coser 1986: XI).

emerge, but also fade, “lose content and meaning,” and disappear definitively from the horizon of human experience (Znanięcki 1952b: 137). The conceptions of time and space in culture, so with the humanistic coefficient as well, differ from the natural or physical conceptions of time and space. As Znanięcki writes, unlike in nature, time in the historical sense—or the duration of some cultural fact in comparison to the duration of other cultural data—is primary, while the spatial localization is secondary. A literary work, a custom, an economic institution—any cultural data—are constructed in the process of their experiencing and using, for as long as they continue to exist (139).

Similarly, individuals themselves are also constructed cultural data—creations of culture in their own experience as well as other people’s, and also human communities as entities of a sort, the existence of which requires symbolization. The conceptions of communities, clans, tribes, secret societies, nations etc. are all cultural products similar to the image of a mythical hero (149) constructed in narrations and rituals—stated Znanięcki long before the ethnosymbolic orientation emerged (Smith 1999: 3). Nation being a result of such processes of making meanings and values—the national culture society—Znanięcki saw as a primary question and consequently a possibility of a wider solidarity of the world-society. Znanięcki was interested in the cultural logic and historical processes of constructing collective identities as ideational formations, generating loyalty and solidarity on one hand, and on the other, being a breeding ground for antagonisms and drives to destroy a hostile country, obliterate a nation or wipe out heretics.

Znanięcki linked the scientific “discovery” of culture with the transition from researching cultural values as data (i.e. state, nation, religion), primary facts contained in human experience to comparative research of human actions in which these values were created and expressed. As relatively advanced cultural sciences, the following were recognized by Znanięcki: political economy, dealing with actions (production, consumption, exchange) through which economical values are created, as well as linguistics, which deals with the use of language, and religiology, which goes from describing various beliefs to researching similarities in religious acts. He saw the development of sociology dependent on the comparative research of social actions, or those directed at human individuals and collectivities as values which possess meaning and axiological significance, and which awaken social sentiments. Social actions lie at the fundament of emergent interactional systems, which Znanięcki was one of the first sociologists to present: interactions, normatively regulated social relations, social roles and social groups (Znanięcki 1934) that constitute larger complexes—political societies, national societies, ecclesiastical societies and many manifested possibilities for the world-society. Any contemporary reckonings with the current state and intellectual identity of sociology must rely on these analytical distinctions of various levels of social reality—micro, meso, macro and the global one (Smelser 1997: 2f).

The problems of sociology refer to the issue of social order in terms of a certain class of problems, not to the question of one, holistic, integrated system. We are speaking about the order of relations—also those associated with conflict—between actions as dynamic systems, the elements of which—either the object, the method or the instrument—Znanięcki described in categories of values (Znanięcki 1994:

85–86). Thus, the category of performance of an action and its regularity, which Znaniecki introduced, deserves emphasis. If opinions can be heard that culture, as opposed to social structure (Archer 1996: 1), hasn't been sufficiently worked over with advanced analytical categories, note that Znaniecki introduced such an elaborate theory, starting out from the conception of cultural values and human actions. This is a starting point similar in many ways to the stance of the pragmatists, with whom he strongly identified himself; he didn't, however, agree with the notion that the category of habit should be raised to a fundamental rank in analysis of cultural and social phenomena. He distinguished creative actions, intended imitatory actions and habitual actions, which are not problematized. The difference lies in what he called shaping the purpose, which in the case of creative actions (i.e. writing a poem or reciting it) develops up to the point of the action's ending, whereas habitual actions are made unique by a purpose that is entirely molded (1936: 366n).

The theory of social action was introduced by Znaniecki in English as early as 1934 in *The Method of Sociology* along with a broader theory of social systems, and next in 1936 when, a year before Parsons, he published *Social Actions*. It is based on the broader theory of human actions in general. According to Znaniecki, in order to fulfill its promises in respect to cognizance of the human world as cultural reality, this theory has to abandon psychological premises in all their variants, because systems of cultural actions and values belong neither to the individual psyche nor to a collective mental life, which is well illustrated by communicative, economical and religious actions as performances.

On the other hand, although cultural systems aren't contained within any kind of social entreties—communities, groups—they are all, beginning with the simplest interpersonal relations, constructed on the fundament of cultural values experienced by human beings. It seems that Znaniecki gave deep thought to the following question: how does it happen that something which isn't in its essence social in cultural reality, still becomes the material of societalization, and in consequence undergoes particularization. A good example here are—as he put it—national culture societies, preceded by tribal and ethnic cultural communities, but also churches and all other groups that construct their solidarity and collective identity with cultural differences at the core. Znaniecki cast aside metaphysical absolutism, but his culturalism is far from accepting as normal that which is manifested in the phenomena of antagonisms between culturally differing groups (Znaniecki 1952a: 112n). He saw the source of those differences and antagonisms in the dynamics of social interactions, not in culture as such. His project comprised sociological research on both cooperation and conflict, on coercion and persuasion as methods of social action, in order to seek possibilities for peaceful cooperation on a global scale and for creative development of cultural systems.

Znaniecki's culturalism is not only antinaturalism, where one abandons attempts at understanding the phenomena of human reality as objects and processes in the natural space and time, but also—an issue of crucial importance—antipsychologism. The theory of action mentioned here is not a theory about the actions of biopsychical individuals and their motivation based on subjective experiences, but a theory of

performance, the individual and collective agents of which are themselves cultural constructions. Hence, it is crucial to define the humanistic coefficient as that feature of every human cultural action which arises from the experience “of the agent himself, supplemented by the experience of those who react to this action, reproduce it or participate in it” (1936: 11). It is the experience of cultural action patterns that define the conditions, methods and results of actions, and do not preclude the action’s creativity: “if the agent is to perform an action in accordance with the pattern, he must find or create all the conditions required by it and produce the result that it demands in a prescribed way” (1936: 40).

As we can see, Znaniecki perceived cultural change in categories of creativity, which doesn’t preclude that an order can be discovered. Thus, it isn’t true that analysis of creative work belongs to the separate, philosophical, and not to the sociological part of his interests. Creativity of action, to quote the term used by Hans Joas (Joas 1996), is at the center of the sociological interests of Znaniecki, who wrote:

At the other extreme we find the romantic conception which views the origin of each new cultural pattern in the course of history as a unique fact of human creation which can be neither generalized nor explained. Nomological science must stop before creative innovation.

This is an expression of that radical historicism which has been one of the main obstacles in the way of modern sociology; but trying to overcome it by rejecting the very concept of human creation would be a still worse mistake. For, strictly defined, this concept means simply that innovation in the cultural world is a result of actions performed by conscious human agents. In this sense all cultural life, including social life, is “creative,” for every human action solves a new problem and produces something new. And yet, as we have seen, this does not prevent human actions from fitting into a definite order as elements of a system; even actions by which a system is changed follow a definite pattern which can be generalized into a law of change” (1994: 103).

A burning question consequently emerges: how, on the foundation of culturalistic premises, should we comprehend destructive activities—ethnic conflicts, present-day wars, terrorism—which do not create new values, but aim at destroying values that already exist. Of help here will be the conception of negative values, or those perceived as hostile, unclean, or dangerous. Znaniecki shows that destructive activities only appear easier than creative activities. Destruction, in fact is also based on the development of a conscious purpose. “It is thus impossible to explain or to predict the action of killing without making an investigation of these values and of the origin of the agent’s belief in a connection between them and the other man; for there are many different problems for which homicide seems to individual agents to offer a complete or partial solution.” (Znaniecki 1952b: 214) In researching the history of development and dynamics of change of cultural systems, Znaniecki looked for sources and patterns responsible for shaping intentions of killing enemies and destroying their cultural creations, seeking also in history of culture the foundations for sociological research on peace.

Problems of Cultural Order

“Culture” is a general term, applied by Znaniecki to all those facts which comprise data of social sciences and humanities in the traditional sense, such as: economy,

politics, technology, social organization, language, literature, art, religion, but also referring to the natural sciences as a cultural fact. Thus, culture encompasses all those actions which people learn from others to perform, as well as the products of those actions (Znaniecki 1952a: 2). Znaniecki was of the opinion that from methodologically undisciplined studies on culture it will be possible to proceed to scientific research and the development of cultural sciences, among them—sociology founded on cultural bases. The realization of such a project is possible only after assuming that, in an analogy to the regularity and fixed courses that characterize natural processes, a cultural order can be shown to exist, understood as all those regularities which depend on the connections between human activities (Znaniecki 1952b: 10).⁷ Such a notion of order differs from the everyday meaning of this term and, as Znaniecki thought, the troubles with shaping a neutral conception explain the slow and late development of the scientific view on culture, which has difficulty in emancipating itself from doctrinal and normative formulations. It is worthwhile to notice then, that this point of view faces a strong counter-tendency as carried by contemporary cultural studies. The everyday idea that arises from practical activity refers order to the ties introduced by people between the objects of their activity—as can be seen on the simple example of furnishing a room. Order in the everyday sense is an evaluating notion, as opposed to disorder. The popularization of the term “culture” since the 18th century was associated not only with such an evaluating, but also with a hierarchical conception of order—to a higher or lesser degree—including also moral order, the sources of which would ultimately be derived from religious transcendence. Such an order, perceived in an everyday fashion, is an intended product of conscious agents which guard it, and a legal order in particular serves to unmask the dimension of power associated with it. However, all this relates not only to moral and legal conceptions, but to all the elements of cultural order with the humanistic coefficient, or seen from the point of view of people who believe that they understand that order and are actively interested in it. The humanistic coefficient, in other words, is a certain norm of thinking which “imposes upon the conscious agent who recognizes it a distinctive selection and organization of some data of his experience” (Znaniecki 1986: 8).

In contrast to common, practical views, the theoretical conception of order proposed by Znaniecki doesn't, on the other hand, have an evaluating character, since the principle of applying the humanistic coefficient leads to the relativization of those various “truths” of people's active experience. One might say that in the history of culture, or rather in the history of the images of cultural order, Znaniecki sought certain prototypes, among them—prototypes associated with political order. The sacral image of order that has its source in holy powers still shapes even the most secularized images of order in human communities as well as the symbolic power of its creators and guardians. A king as a guardian of order remains the prototype of the political hero.

⁷ The scientific conception of order comprises order of the consistence of activities with cultural models and norms, order of the functional co-dependence of axionormatively organized systems of activity, causal order between changes in those systems of activity and the outside influences on them, genetic order of the emergence of new systems of activity (Znaniecki 1952b: 372).

As Znaniecki wrote, the conception of world order formed in the course of the history of culture in various parts of the world, but has been developed to its fullest in the West, “and reached culmination in our own time.” (Znaniecki 1952b: 33). Already Polibius described Rome around 200 B.C. as a rising world empire and himself as the first chronicler of universal history. The emperor or Caesar was the symbol of an order perfected in the long fight against forces of chaos both inside and outside the empire but it has to be noted that the individual hailed by supporters as the creator of order may at the same time be hated by adversaries for destroying another order, and the good and evil attributed to him may be equally powerful. Znaniecki critically studied the images of order and models of a political hero who becomes a creator of world order, which are deeply ingrained in the history of culture and which were put to use by Hitler’s German nazism and Stalin’s bolshevist communism. In a similar way as Norbert Elias later, he uncovered the antinomies of a hierarchical and elitistic understanding of culture,⁸ stated *expressis verbis* in *Mein Kampf*.

It can be seen that cultural order based upon knowledge about the desired actions and a conviction about moral rightness is characteristic for absolutist thinking, but also for patriarchy, both of which exclude the possibility of comparing various kinds of orders (Znaniecki 1952b: 56). At the foundations of cultural order lies common-sense knowledge.

This is common-sense knowledge which concerns the supposed foundations of the existing cultural order and as such is obviously certain. For every explicit or implicit generalization which it contains is connected with some rule of cultural conduct (Znaniecki 1986: 65).

Znaniecki is far from accepting the assumption of a so-called natural attitude, according to the term used by Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz. The principle of the humanistic coefficient shows that there is no single “natural attitude.”

Cultural order is founded upon classifications, among which the most basic are classifications based on age and sex.⁹ Similarly, classifications of clans and families, castes, strata and classes as well as outsiders are equally meaningful, evaluating and regulative in the sense of imposing a ruling order. Much attention has been devoted to errors which in the analysis of culture stemmed from an assumption of the myth of cultural integration (Archer 1996: 2n), in other words, a simple assumption of congruence between the orders of meanings and values, and the orders of institutional actions. However, Znaniecki clearly drew a line between ideological integration and social integration (Znaniecki 1952b: 286). The first one refers to logical connections between meanings and evaluating conceptions of objects as well as normative conceptions of action. This is the so-called ideological system of conceptions and norms.

⁸ For more about the general, hierarchical and differentiating conception of culture, see also (Bauman 1999: 1–46).

⁹ Znaniecki refers to an example that appeals to feminists:

Take, for instance, the age-old common-sense “truth” that women are inferior to men. This “truth” cannot be doubted in any society in which subordination of women to men is a normatively regulated part of the social order, for to doubt it would mean to question the validity to all the patterns of social relations between the sexes (Znaniecki 1986: 66).

Social and ideological integration are not the same thing (286); moreover, the first one requires social control.

Znaniecki analysed the consolidation of ideological systems in the form of dogmas, as well as repressive forms of enforcing order. He searched for principles of creative reorganization of cultural systems as systems of actions and values (353n). Znaniecki saw sociology as a science that deals with a specific type of order—the order of social actions. His theory is *par excellence* interactional. As he wrote, the aim here is researching the symbolic interactions of people who intend to influence one another (401). This pattern is not only an axionormative order in the evaluating sense, because this would mean that social phenomena which don't conform to set examples and norms belong to the realm of chaos, have no regularity whatsoever. To Znaniecki, social order has a non-evaluating meaning, so one can't direct the same accusations against him as were formulated against the sociology of *status quo* and consensus.

National cultures are a good example of the dependence of cultural integration on social organization (399). To Znaniecki, national culture is a secular written culture which becomes the basis of social solidarity, differing from political, economic and religious ties.¹⁰ Noting the existence of a basic pattern of the subordination of a weaker group to a stronger one, or the voluntary uniting of groups, Znaniecki formulated the crucial question: by what means shall world-wide unity be reached—through surrender to the domination of one powerful group or through voluntary unification. Already around the middle of the 20th century he saw the arising, basic dilemma: either a world-ruling empire or, as he put it, a dynamic, world-wide federation of functionally co-dependent and cooperating societies (417–418). According to Znaniecki thus, the main motive for the further development of sociology should be the search after conditions for the creative development of world culture as a precondition for a world-society.

Znaniecki as a Culturologist

In Znaniecki's biography as a scholar, two phases are often distinguished: practising philosophy and, after he began cooperation with William I. Thomas, sociology. Such a view does not allow proper comprehension of Znaniecki's design and research program, which reaches far beyond the boundaries of both philosophy (practically abandoning it, in fact) in its traditional meaning and sociology narrowly understood as a specialized science. He criticized the presence of metaphysical premises in contemporary thinking about culture—both materialistic and idealistic ones, in other words, references to the ontological essence of the human being, either in the material or in the spiritual sense. Znaniecki should be viewed as a promotor of the cultural sciences, a culturologist. He did argue that it is difficult to deal with culture in general, however, there is much to show that on a distant horizon he foresaw the need for developing a general theory of culture, which he sketched out already in *Cultural*

¹⁰ In addition to national societies, Znaniecki distinguished political and ecclesial societies, but also mentioned economic societies and was a precursor of the theory of the world-society.

Reality. The coherent theoretical system in sociology which he created is also part of the way of realizing this design and should be comprehended through referring to other cultural sciences.¹¹ Unlike the German school, which placed the so-called *Geisteswissenschaften* in opposition to natural sciences, Znaniecki didn't exclude cultural sciences from general methodological rules and didn't bring cultural sciences down to hermeneutics—to the problem of comprehension and interpretation. Thus, Znaniecki's legacy should be viewed as an important novum, the essence of which lies in abandoning the traditional problems of epistemology in favor of a new way of dealing with the science of knowledge as a field of culture.

He pointed out two weaknesses of research on culture—a lack of knowledge about the laws of cultural becoming and a lack of objective standards of evaluation of cultural values. He postulated:

Appreciation of cultural values which would permit us to organize the aims of our constructive activities so as to avoid wasting our energies in useless fights and destroying almost as much as we create (1919: 12).

He is without a doubt an important fundator of the sociology of knowledge, which has been noticed, among others, by Robert K. Merton (Merton 1983) and David Bloor (Bloor 1991: 7). Znaniecki worked on uncovering the cultural formations of knowledge and shaping scientific disciplines. After his own fashion, he pursued history of culture, but very different from an ordinary historiographic tale. *Cultural Sciences* are absolutely not, as some critics thought, a substitute of the intended treatise on general sociology which he had been working on.¹² *Cultural Sciences* is a logical supplement to the work *Cultural Reality*. In both books, social systems founded upon interactions and symbolism as well as the sociology which deals with them are, respectively, a part of cultural reality and one of the cultural sciences.

Znaniecki's writings are strikingly logical and clear; these characteristics are not necessarily a feature of scholarly work in the humanities. A cornerstone of Znaniecki's scientific constructions is the conception of the humanistic coefficient. Reference to the active experience of participants in culture gives this theory a plenitude of humanistic insight without the risks of intuitionism, subjectivism, ideologism and other hindrances that the humanities are never free from. It wouldn't be hard to prove that the cultural-historical analyses of the uncumulative development of knowledge performed by Znaniecki preceded Thomas Kuhn's conception of scientific revolutions. Similarly, it is no exaggeration to state that this project carries the hallmarks of a scientific revolution by the name of culturalism and as a new paradigm was proposed by him.

A very interesting and productive dimension of Znaniecki's conceptions is, as one might put it, interaction between various systems of culture, which formed during the historical process, gaining autonomy. Znaniecki is far distanced both from the sociologism of Durkheim's school, which he got to know well during his studies at the Sorbonne, and from looking for society or economy—like the Marxists did—within

¹¹ The reminiscences of this idea, may be traced in literature, for example (Connor 1997).

¹² Helena Znaniecka-Lopata published fragments of it later as *Social Relations and Social Roles* (Znaniecki 1962).

religion, art or science, be it even as abstract as physics or mathematics. He never questioned a special place among various cultural activities and values occupied by economic organization of production, exchange and consumption, based upon the principles of personal ownership and upon money, but pointed (1936: 628) out the growing subordination of social activities to economic activities, and in consequence the frequent assuming by sociology of an accessory role in order to solve problems posed by economy (problems of management, conflict between capital and work, unemployment, mass consumption, living standards etc.). This trend has to become more and more dominant. As he wrote foreseeingly,

but it would be very desirable if these scientists were fully aware that, while working in such fields, they are acting as economists, using for economic questions some of the theoretic results of sociology, but not as sociologists who by their investigations are adding new theoretic results to the body of sociological knowledge (1936: 628–629).

As opposed to sociology, Znaniecki limited himself to researching the social organization of creating and disseminating other cultural systems, an example of which is research on the social roles of men of knowledge. Taking into account his conception of the interaction of various cultural systems of actions and values—economic, legal, religious, scientific—with the social systems is necessary when one speaks of the culturalism of his theory, which includes culturalism of sociological theory. It is here that I would see the source of the originality, novelty and actuality of this theory that could contribute to the development of contemporary cultural sociology with that thoroughness and versatility which Znaniecki exhibited in his theory of cultural activities and cultural values (Hałas 1991).

The question arises, to what degree was Znaniecki an heir of the Enlightenment idea of progress and the self-salvation of humanity through reason. The desirable vision of a future shaped by cultural sciences is a vision that brings to mind an image of the Garden of Eden, made possible again—this time through cognizance of good and evil, or rather the cognizance of the construction of altruistic activities and hateful activities, which Znaniecki considered pure types of social activities (Znaniecki 1936: 625). Znaniecki was independent from any religious institutions, but, as he noted in his autobiographic statements, in his younger years he saw himself in a prophetic role. No wonder there is a trace of such beneficial utopia in his theory, which apart from that is entirely rational and stimulates the development of knowledge about human activities, values and group sentiments.¹³

Conclusion: Actuality of the Question About the Future of Sociology

In the March issue of the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1945, when general attention was focused on problems of the post-war order, which was to be founded

¹³ Long before the formation of the sociology of emotions he presented studies of that kind, remaining sceptical as to the typology of activities introduced by Weber, which distinguished rational, traditional and emotional actions (Hałas 2000).

upon the old pattern of polarization and antagonisms on a global scale, Znaniecki assessed with scepticism the role for sociologists that would be limited to technically assisting planists and to competing for social leadership with politicians and moralists. He wondered about the possibilities of freeing sociology from doctrinal terms (1945: 515) and of a better definition of sociology as a science.¹⁴ Alluding to present-day conclusions about the reflexivity of modernity caused by the development of knowledge which in turn influences known social processes, one would have to say that it is a problematic reflexivity, as long as—according to Znaniecki—knowledge about the principles of cultural becoming will be minimal. He foresaw the problems of a growing disintegration of sociology, but as he rightly stated, “any tentative prediction of the future of sociology must be based on the assumption that this future depends directly on sociologists themselves” (1945: 514).

Contrary to simplified interpretations, Znaniecki didn't deny the justification of sociological studies that start out from naturalist premises, which to him meant also taking as an object of research societies understood as certain entities defined in terms of populations that cover defined spatial areas, having continuity in time, and possessing organic needs fulfilled with the help of various material techniques. However, he rightly believed that the dependence of cultural order on natural order is not only shrinking, but the reverse is in fact happening—there is an increasing influence of cultural order on natural order, and the rising complexity of cultural phenomena renders the naturalist approach scientifically less productive. Znaniecki critically viewed the—as he wrote—building of sociological knowledge that resembles oceanography (1945: 520). On the other hand, he associated a promising future with studying interactional social systems upon which the maintaining and development of all other cultural systems depends. Sociology as a cultural science led, according to Znaniecki, to displaying the possibility of a world-society as a society with bonds constructed upon the growing active experience of common world culture. The development of cultural sciences would be an expression of global responsibility for the world culture society (1952a: 178n).

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¹⁴ This did not always meet with due understanding, as Theodore Abel noted in his diary in 1942. “MacIver and I had a discussion with him raising serious objections to his attempt to lay down the problems of sociology for the next generation (Abel 2001: 308).”

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