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REVISIONISTS IN MARXISM

edited by BARBARA TUCHAŃSKA
and MARCIN M. BOGUSŁAWSKI

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INTRODUCTION: POLISH PHILOSOPHICAL REVISIONISTS IN MARXISM

The term 'philosophical revisionism in Marxism' has several meanings and applications. In our opinion there are good reasons to restrict it to certain philosophical conceptions in the countries in which Marxism or Marxism-Leninism was/is the official ideology and the "state philosophy."¹ In the case of the Soviet Bloc countries the broader term 'revisionism' is applied to complex political, ideological, and intellectual phenomena that came into being after the death of Stalin in 1953². His death marked the beginning of a new era in these countries, although it became evident only in 1956, when Nikita Khrushchev started the process of de-Stalinization with his Secret Speech delivered at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in which he denounced Stalin's repressive politics. In three Communist countries, in Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Poland, philosophical movements revising Marxism happened as a part of this process of de-Stalinization.

In Yugoslavia, the Praxis school was a philosophical movement formed in the 1960s and 1970s by Gajo Petrović, Milan Kangrga and Mihailo Marković³. The members of the school emphasized the necessity for a return to the *real* Marx distorted by Lenin, Stalin, and

¹ At least in philosophy revisionism should not be identified with any creative modification of an existing theory but restricted to the alterations and corrections of a doctrine, i.e., a philosophical conception or its orthodox version that is guarded ideologically and politically.

² There were, of course, earlier modifications of Marxism, starting with the views of Eduard Bernstein and Jean Jaures, Leon Trotsky, and later Titoists. However, Polish revisionists didn't relate to these predecessors.

³ The Yugoslavian edition of their journal *Praxis* was published between 1964 and 1974, the international edition between 1965 and 1973.

Tito. They tended to refer to the works of young Marx and underlined the creative and practical nature of human beings; they opposed apologetic nature of Leninism and Stalinism and saw philosophy as a radical critique.

In Hungary it was the Budapest School, which emerged in the 1960s after the Hungarian Revolution. Its center was the Sociological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Science and its members were students and colleagues of György Lukács, among others Ágnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, and György Márkus. At the beginning they were developing Lukács's works on social ontology and aesthetics, and can be described as revisionists to the extent Lukács's views were revisions of Marxism. Later they abandoned Marxism completely.

In Poland, unlike in Yugoslavia and Hungary, Marxist revisionism was never a social phenomenon based on the communal activity of cooperating individuals who were concentrated around one academic institution, a journal, or a summer school. It was always individualist and based on informal relations among scholars and men of letters living mainly in Warsaw and working mostly at the University of Warsaw (see: Mikołajczyk 2013, p. 40-56). They were philosophers, social and economical scientists, journalists, as well as novelists. This is why we prefer to talk about revisionists instead of revisionism.

What we are interested in here are the revisions of Marxism elaborated by Polish philosophers and usually triggered by ideological and political motives. There were—in a sense—two waves of Polish revisionism in Marxism and two generations of revisionists. The first wave took place in the 1950s and 1960s when “the term «revisionism» was used by the party authorities and official ideologists in Communist countries to stigmatize those who, while remaining party members or Marxists, attacked various Communist dogmas” (Kolakowski 1978, p. 456). The term 'revisionist' was then an invective used by the followers of the orthodox ideology and approved by party authorities but it was also used—somehow perversely, rebelliously, and proudly—by revisionists themselves. At the end of the 1960s its political use almost disappeared and it remained a stigmatizing term only within academic discussions. The second wave came about—quite surprisingly—in the 1970's and 1980's when Marxism was subject to some new and interesting revisions. We deal briefly with the questions of how and why all this happened in the next two parts of this introduction.

Which historical, social and political circumstances made Polish philosophical revisionism possible?

The years 1956 and 1957 were in Poland the time of a political thaw. Not only Stalin's death and Khrushchev denunciation of Stalinism but also the mysterious death of Bolesław Bierut, a Polish communist leader, and the workers protest in 1956 caused significant changes in Polish politics. The Polish Communist party decided to break with the Stalinist legacy in favor of a more reformist and more democratic but also very nationalistic politics. Under the new leadership of Władysław Gomułka the negotiations with the Soviets brought small gains: a limited national autonomy, the abandonment of the collectivization of agriculture, the liberalization of the policy towards the Roman Catholic Church, and the improvement of economical situation.

De-Stalinization also enabled little room for ideological discussions. Since the Stalinist errors and distortions had been condemned critical and creative thinkers, usually party members, began discussing ideological issues. They did not yet reject Marxism as a philosophical and ideological foundation for the socialist project of the socio-economical progress nor did they distance themselves from political activity. Rather, their aim was to separate real Marxism from its Leninist and Stalinist distortions and to develop it creatively in order to adjust it to current conditions.

Alas, it soon turned out that the opening for ideological discussions was very narrow, superficial, and short-lasting. Nationalism and ideological dogmatism prevailed, and within the next ten years the political thaw was replaced with a much more rigid political system. "In 1956 Poland was, relatively speaking, a country of free speech and free criticism" but soon "the party machine regained its lost positions step by step," cultural freedom became restricted, and the economic reform was slowed down (Kolakowski 1978, p. 454). The Communist party still needed ideologists and the ideological justification of its policy but intellectuals (philosophers, sociologists, economists etc.) were less and less eager to deliver it. In the middle of the 1960s anti-intellectual and anti-Semitic tendencies in the Communist party grew stronger and stronger, and intellectuals were rapidly becoming more and more disillusioned.

The crucial moment of the process of eliminating the revisionist

movement from Polish reality happened in 1968. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the anti-Jewish attitude in the Polish Communist party had grown so strong that it became one of the triggers of the Polish 1968 political crisis. Students' and intellectuals' protests were followed by purges within the Communist party and the expulsion from Poland of thousands of people of Jewish ancestry. Four of the thinkers whose views we discuss in this volume as revisionist, namely Zygmunt Bauman, Bronisław Baczko, Leszek Kołakowski, and Krzysztof Pomian, were not only expelled from the University of Warsaw but also forced to emigrate, and they left Poland in the period between 1968 and 1972.

The crisis within the Communist party and the deterioration of the conditions of life brought about social protests in 1970, and the leadership of the party was taken over by Edward Gierek. The need for ideological justification of the socialist system and politics disappeared ultimately and utterly because under his leadership the Polish Communist party began appealing to purely consumptionist ideology and to the idea of social progress arising from the technological modernization of the country. In this way the era of politically and ideologically motivated revisions of Marxism was over. Well, almost. Marxism might not have been guarded and dogmatically protected daily by the Communist party but it remained its official ideology and continued to be a frame of reference for many philosophers. When philosophers problematized its core concepts and infused it with new ideas they were revisionists, only if it was other philosophers who bothered to notice it. What is more, after 1968 the epithet 'a revisionist' lost its political stigmatizing power, as almost no revisionists were left in Poland. The ideological connotation of the term quickly faded away and it remained—at best—an invective used in academic discussions.

Who and how revised Marxism in Poland?

The simple answer is that it was done by young intellectuals seeing themselves as obligated to social and political activity, eager to participate in the process of the constitution of a new postwar Communist society. Marxism was for them a philosophical world-view and a political program rising hopes for a better socio-economic reality. Revisionists were committed Communists and their attitude toward Marxism was almost religious. Marxism, Promethean and scientific at the same time, was supposed to replace religion, for which the radically

secular revisionists saw no place in the new society. (See: Mikołajczyk 2013, p. 44-48) After the shock of 1956 they stuck by the slogan: 'socialism–yes, distortions–no,' they thought that "Marxist socialism was possible without Leninist political forms, that Communism might be attacked within «the framework of Marxism»,” and they “believed for some time ... that Stalinism was curable in the sense that Communism could be restored or «democratized» without questioning its foundations” (Kolakowski 1978, p. 461).

They saw themselves in an elitist way, i.e., as true and devoted Marxists fighting with dogmas, orthodoxy, myths, and unfounded faith both within Marxism-Leninism and outside it. They were willing to accept the position of sectarians, heretics, or apostates. Their political and ideological involvement forced them to attack pre-war but still active Polish philosophers of the Lvov-Warsaw School and other non-Marxist thinkers (Roman Ingarden, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Stanisław Ossowski), who were classified as “bourgeois thinkers” unable to understand and assimilate Marxism.

This does not mean that we are dealing with Marxists who restricted themselves to studying Marx or to the laborious extracting of the one and only one correct and obligatory version of Marx's philosophy. They studied Marx because they were academic philosophers but they were also actively involved in the building of socialist ideology and this is why they wanted to “return to «authentic» Marxism” in order to find in it arguments against both: religious views and nationalist ideas in Communist ideology (Kolakowski 1978, p. 460; Mikołajczyk 2013, pp. 56-59). As supporters of science and students of the history of philosophy, they rejected the Stalinist and Leninist additions to Marx's philosophy, e.g., Stalin's theory of language or Lenin's theory of reflection. They abandoned Engels' natural philosophy in favor of the world-view of the natural sciences. Finally, as creative and politically involved thinkers, they wanted to offer new ideas, to develop Marx's philosophy, and to adjust it to the contemporary world of real socialism.

There were two sources of inspiration for the new vista. The Polish translations of Marx's *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (in 1958) and Gramsci's *The Prison Notebooks* (in 1950) became a revelation for the first generation of revisionists. The second source was the works of Jean-Paul Sartre, György Lukács, of other

western socialist thinkers, and even of analytic philosophers. This new vista was a humanistically oriented form of Marxist philosophy, so very different from the philosophical picture present in Marx's *Capital* or even in the *Manifesto* (see: Kolakowski 1978, p. 463).

One can say that these readings allowed revisionists to realize that they opted for a humanist version of socialism and not for a socialist version of humanism, which—it seems—they had promoted before they became revisionists⁴. They wanted a socialist system with a human face that would be rational and protected from religious faith or ideological dogmas by following scientific rules of argumentation and testing theories. They searched for a philosophy and ideology more anthropocentric than dialectical, and more historical than materialist. All this shows in Kolakowski's description of revisionism present in Eastern Europe as “an attempt to reform Communist systems in order to graft on to them respect for truth and logical arguments, for commonsense, democratic values, civil rights, economic efficiency, and other honorable things, in such a way that would leave the core of the system untouched” (Kolakowski 1989, pp. 207-208). He provides this picture, written much later, in 1988, with a critical comment stating that Marxist revisionism was internally inconsistent because the real core of the communist system was the permanent turning of all those “honourable things” into ruin. He adds that nonetheless this internal inconsistency was somehow effective in destroying and dismantling parts of the official Marxist-Leninist ideology (Kolakowski 1989, p. 208).

The core of this new revisionist, non-dogmatic, humanist Marxism became the issues of human nature that self-constitutes itself in the process of social practice; of the role of an individual in history; of civil rights to freedom, criticism, and individual opinions; the nature of human cognition and its world; of alienation in the socialist society; as well as the problem of the possibility of ethics and morality without an absolute foundation and the need to separate ethics both from religion and politics.

The work on answers to these questions showed revisionists

⁴ It seems that the distinction wasn't quite clear for them. The collection of Kolakowski's essays published in 1968 was titled: *Toward a Marxist Humanism* (New York: Grove Press).

more and more clearly that intellectually honest and convincing answers cannot be put in concert together with Marxism.

The revisionist corrections of Marx's philosophy had to decline because revisionists began to see the utopian, dogmatic, and irremovably oppressive character of Marxism and Communist systems, which had not been clearly visible at the beginning of the revisionists' intellectual journey. Initially they idealized Marxist political program. Yet, living under Stalin and making "devastating comparison between socialist reality and the values and promises to be found in the «classics»" were the reasons for their disenchantment and turning against Marxism (Kolakowski 1978, p. 457). In the 1960s revisionists' intellectual criticism and creativity contributed inevitably to the recognition of the restrictive and—in the case of many issues—oversimplified, schematic, ossified, and non-scientific nature of Marxism (Kolakowski 1978, p. 461). Instead of looking for a legitimization of the Communist state and party policy, which would be theoretically better and more convincing, revisionists started to question the very idea of legitimization (Kolakowski 1978, p. 461). Instead of looking for "authentic Marx" and a better version of Communist ideology they started a non-Marxian criticism of both Marxist doctrine and socialist reality.

Leszek Kołakowski (1927-2009)

Undoubtedly Kołakowski was the most famous and influential Polish philosopher deeply involved in revising Marxism. His revisionist phase started in the middle of the 1950s and was terminated in 1968 when long lasting persecutions, e.g., interventions of censorship into his texts and ultimately the ban on publishing, surveillance, and banishment from the Communist party were topped with the accusation that he—like Socrates—was spoiling students' minds. This accusation eventually resulted in the ban of teaching. For a creative philosopher, a passionate commentator of political reality, and a charismatic teacher that was the last straw, so Kołakowski left Poland and cast away his own revisionist Marxist position becoming—according to his own declaration—conservative, liberal, and socialist (Kolakowski 1990).

Commenting on his political or ideological essays Kołakowski characterizes his position in the 1950s and 1960s as revisionist. He summarizes his own critical texts written during that period as a

“compendium of a «revisionist spirit»” with a value limited to the situation in that time. He saw his “attempts at the regeneration of Marxism” as ambiguous efforts to criticize the Leninist-Stalinist version of Marxism that was “strikingly loutish and vulgar.” He wanted to revise, rejuvenate, and improve Marxism as—in Kołakowski’s own words—an “effective instrument for the analysis of contemporary world” (Kołakowski 1989, p. 208). Yet, the real significance of these attempts was the demonstration that Marx’s thought was as useless for understanding and criticizing the present society as would be Descartes’ works in the role of a handbook of contemporary physics, though both remain important elements of the intellectual history of Europe (Kolakowski 1989, p. 209).

It seems, however, that he is far too modest. Zbigniew Mentzel very perceptively describes the philosophical significance of Kołakowski’s texts written in the 1950s and 60’s. Their significance does not reduce to the fact that their content was subversive towards political power. Far more important—especially from the philosophical point of view—was the fact that Kolakowski’s papers contained original thinking that stimulated his contemporaries and other people later to undertake their own critical thinking (Mentzel 1989, p. v).

One of the best examples of Kołakowski’s creativity is the monumental *Main Currents of Marxism*, published in Polish in 1976 but based on lectures given by Kołakowski earlier at the University of Warsaw. In the paper *Regarding Marxism* presented in this volume, Ryszard Panasiuk emphasizes that the book was planned by Kołakowski as a textbook and that his plan has been fulfilled. But *Main Currents* is much more than just a textbook. Kołakowski looks at Marx’s philosophy and Marxism from his own, revisionist, philosophical and ethical perspective and evaluates both. As Panasiuk points out, for Kołakowski Marxism is not a scientific theory of society and history but a strictly philosophical project, based on a certain conception of the human being and on an axiology, both of which have a long philosophical pre-history. Kołakowski finds prophetic elements in Marx’s philosophy and sees similarities between it and the millenarians’ dream of a paradise on Earth. Panasiuk also emphasizes Kołakowski’s criticism of Marx’s conception of man that is based on assumptions, which cannot be maintained in the face of the results of practical realization of Marx’s program.

In the present volume Kołakowski's philosophy is also analyzed by Adam Olczyk in his paper *Marxist Trait of Revisionism: Leszek Kołakowski's Consistent Transition to Inconsistent Philosophy*. Olczyk describes motives for Kołakowski's shift from an orthodox Marxist into a main revisionary figure. Kołakowski firmly believed that Marxism, like any other philosophical system, was not a finite doctrine but a theory subject to modifications; that the process of its modification "will never cease"; that being a philosopher does not mean to theorize but also to practice philosophy; and that the obligation of a philosopher is to turn against "all the falsehood present in the world" and object to "any kind of fallacy." Olczyk argues that what awakened Kołakowski from his dogmatic slumber was the focus on ethical issues and understanding "that philosophical issues are the ones that relate to our moral attitude" (Olczyk, p. 29).

Bronisław Baczko (1924-2016)

Neither original thinking nor revisionism can exist without the art of asking questions and problematizing both answers and questions. Baczko was a thinker praised for his ability to problematize every philosophical system. (See: Pomian, 1989, pp. 13-14) He was a professor at the University of Warsaw until 1968 and an important leader of the intellectual community. He was one of the founders of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas and his seminars at the University of Warsaw and the Polish Academy of Science, offering the possibility of open discussion, brought together many academics from different disciplines and crowds of students.

In his philosophical works Baczko was strongly influenced by his friends, who were historians. He wanted to modify historical studies of philosophy by explaining philosophical ideas against the background of their historical context, particularly the context constituted by communal ideas, images, and visions of the world, as well as fears, hopes, and obsessions circulating in the society of a given period. According to Helder Mendes Baiao, for Baczko there were no exceptions, even "Marx needed to be historicized" (Baiao, p. 44). Baiao deals in his paper *On History and Liberty: the «Revisionism» of Bronisław Baczko* with the philosophical assumptions of the Warsaw School of the

History of Ideas⁵ and with Baczko's contributions to the research perspective elaborated by the School. A specificity of its approach to historical ideas was "to look for the values" or for "humanist content in ideas." This is why young Marx was interesting for Baczko: "he studied religion from an anthropological point of view" (Baiao, p. 43).

Baczko's early works, e.g., his book on Rousseau, were not only (hi)stories of ideas. They had also a general philosophical topic of perennial significance, namely the problem of the relation between the intellectual and social institutions and the ethical aspect of their relation (Pomian 1989). Baiao is interested in ethical principles followed by Baczko in his historical research. A historian has the obligation to pursue truth and avoid ideological manipulation of the past forced by political pressure. Baiao emphasizes that the core of Baczko's influence was located in his way of philosophizing: in his methodology and in the views that underlie it, namely individualism and historical relativism. These assumptions were evidently in conflict with Marxist emphasis on the priority of a society over individual and on teleologically mobilized historical necessities. The reconstruction presented in the text allows Baiao to claim that during his whole scientific career Baczko remained committed to „his vision of an «open» conception of History” (Baiao, p. 57).

Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017)

Our choice of Bauman as a revisionist philosopher is somehow controversial because in the 1950s and 1960s he was a sociologist, not a philosopher. As Dariusz Brzeziński reminds us in his *Human Praxis, Alternative Thinking and Heterogeneous Culture: Zygmunt Bauman's Revisionist Thought* the academic career of Bauman started in 1953. At that time Bauman was a loyal member of the Communist Party “and a follower of the Marxist-Leninist ideology” (Brzeziński, p. 64)

He wrote his first revisionist paper relatively soon after October

⁵ Contrary to Baiao and César R. Fernandes, to whom he refers, we think that the translation of 'Warszawska szkoła historii idei' into 'the Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History' is not a correct one in one important aspect: it characterizes the nature of historical studies done by its members whereas the Polish name characterizes the object of their studies. *Intellectual* history can refer to anything, whereas the topic of the studies of the Warsaw School were *ideas* and their history was more socio-cultural, i.e., showing the cultural context of studied ideas, than intellectual.

1956. He criticized the members of the Communist party and “expressed his hope that significant changes will take place in Poland.” He also claimed that the “mechanist”—as he described it later—version of Marxism cannot be the foundation of social research and improvements. In his revisionist phase, before leaving Poland, Bauman moved gradually toward philosophy since his inspiration for criticizing the official Marxist doctrine were—typically for revisionists—the works of young Marx. He turned towards a praxist interpretation of Marx.

Brzeziński emphasizes that revisionist ideas, elaborated by Bauman in papers written after 1956, did not vanish after 1968, when Bauman was expelled from the University of Warsaw and left Poland. Revisionist ideas are the basis of Bauman’s conception of utopia, his critique of modernity, his focus on human *praxis*, and the belief in the “heterogeneity of culture” (Brzeziński, p. 63). Also the idea that intellectuals are obliged to critical thinking and to opposing rigid schemes and patterns became a guidepost for his future intellectual journey.

Adam Schaff (1913-2006)

The choice of Schaff as a Marxist revisionist is equally controversial, though for a different reason. He was seen as an official party philosopher and ideologist, not as a revisionist moving away from Marxism. Schaff, a devoted Communist, even a Stalinist, and the member of the Central Committee of the Communist party for many years, distanced himself from revisionists, and never abandoned Marxist alliance. Yet, even he earned the epithet of a revisionist.

Studying the reality of socialist society was common to Schaff and Bauman. Both saw the need to introduce into Marxism changes motivated by its confrontation with the socialist reality. In *Marxism and the Human Individual*, published in 1965, Schaff argued, in concert with Bauman, that socialist societies are not free from alienation. This idea, as well as his understanding of class struggle, were clearly revisionist for party authorities. In 1968 Schaff was expelled from the Central Committee and lost his influence on Polish philosophy. Krzysztof Świrek in his paper ‘*Getting Hands Dirty: on Adam Schaff’s Political Writings*’ is right in stating that classifying Schaff as a revisionist did not have its source in a substantial change of his philosophical or political

views but in the very restrictive nature of Marxism in the 1960s as well as in “tactical and personal games within the Party” (Świrek, p. 84). Świrek tracks the paradoxical nature of Schaff’s attitude that earned him a label of an orthodox revisionist. On the one hand Schaff wanted to keep a “critical distance towards the political practice of existing socialism,” on the other hand, he wanted to „stay faithful to what he understood as strategic interests of socialist countries” (Świrek, p. 102). He believed that the “theory of the author of *Capital* provides the key to understanding the present and future tendencies of developed societies” but simultaneously he tried to develop Marxist theory in the light of problems unknown to the Classics (Świrek, p. 92).

Krzysztof Pomian (1934-)

In the case of Pomian, a decade younger than Kołakowski and Baczko, in fact, their student, the revisionist phase of philosophical journey was very short. He was active in revisionists’ circles, shared their attitudes and the need for being actively involved in the socialist reality of Poland and yet he quickly realized that what interested him was not ethics and discussion on values or history of philosophy but historiography. In his more general historiographic considerations he accepted the general view of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas that ideas could not be explained by oversimplified reference to class background of their authors or followers.

Marcin Leszczyński in *Historiography after Revisionism: Remarks on Pomian’s Idea of Writing History* analyses Pomian’s revisionism against the background of Polish revisionism in general. He aptly points out that historiographical revisionism is simply a reinterpretation of the past. In this sense it is “a typical condition of history as discipline” (Leszczyński, p. 104). However, revisionism—as it was understood in Poland—was more than that. It had philosophical, political, and ethical aspects. Leszczyński shows that Pomian’s theoretical propositions in historiography originated from his critical attitude towards Marxism-Leninism, and towards historical materialism in particular. Pomian advocated historical pluralism and presentism, neither of which was in agreement with the orthodox version of historical materialism.

Jerzy Kmita (1931-2012)

Historical materialism was the main frame of reference also for two

thinkers of the second generation of Polish modifiers of Marxism: Jerzy Kmita and Leszek Nowak. Both were working at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and established the Poznań Methodological School⁶.

Whereas the first generation of Polish revisionists modified Marxism for ideological reasons, the intention of the second generation was simply to revise it for theoretical purposes. Kmita and Nowak considered Marx's approach inspiring, but were convinced that without methodologically driven changes Marx's legacy will be lost and his social theory could not be successfully applied to describe and explain reality. Both approached Marx initially from a perspective of the philosophy of science, both reconstructed Marx's scientific method, both were inspired by Marx's way of thinking.

In the paper entitled *Jerzy Kmita's Methodological Interpretation of Karl Marx's Philosophy: from Ideology to Methodological Concepts* Anna Pałubicka emphasizes the contribution of the Poznań Methodological School to Polish Marxist theory. As the title of the paper suggests, she focuses on Kmita's methodological reinterpretation of Marx, done from the perspective of the methodology of the humanities. Kmita was more interested in Marx's way of thinking and his methodology than in the "content" of his philosophy. Regardless of the changes Kmita introduced into historical materialism, Pałubicka believes that there are no reasons to classify Kmita's proposition as revisionist. She reminds us that even though Kmita himself saw that he was correcting Marx, he still declared that he stood true to Marx.

However, we think that Kmita's crucial conceptions are revisionist. The methodological perspective allowed Kmita to claim that the most important legacy of Marx is cultural or historical relativism and the biggest weakness of Marx's methodology is the fact that Marx applied the approach of natural sciences to social and human sciences. Both these statements could be considered revisionist not only in reference to the Marxism of the 1950s but also in the late 1960s and 1970s, in spite of the fact that Marx's methodology was not under the protection of the ideological guardians of Marxism. Also two other conceptions of Kmita, namely his conception of a humanist interpretation and the functional-genetic model of explanation were

⁶ Together with Jerzy Topolski.

revisionist. It is true that in the 1970s an activist (praxist) approach was already sufficiently fortified in the Polish academic Marxism to allow philosophers to consider an individual as actively constituting itself in socio-historical environment and not simply as a passive intersection of social relations. However, in historical materialism the concept of self-constitution ought to be balanced by the concept of being constituted by social forces. Kmita's formal idea of a rational agent acting in the way described by the humanist interpretation was—according to orthodox critics—as far away from historical materialism as was the model of functional-genetic explanation, based on the rejection of the causal explanation of cultural phenomena.

Leszek Nowak (1943-2009)

Even less orthodox were the ideas developed by Nowak in his conception of (socialist) social-economic reality. Krzysztof Brzechczyn traces changes in Nowak's and his followers' attitude towards Marxism in his paper *From interpretation to refutation of Marxism: On Leszek Nowak's non-Marxian historical materialism*. One of Nowak's first ideas referring to social reality, the adaptive explanation of the relationships among elements constituting socio-economic formations, elaborated in the 1970s, was revisionist. It could have been politically condemned as a possible instrument of "an unacceptable political critique of real socialism" if not "a very sophisticated hermetical terminology and logical apparatus" which made Nowak's theory difficult to understand outside the academia (Brzechczyn, p. 170). By contrast, a non-Marxian historical materialism, proposed by Nowak in the 1980s as a theory of a socialist system, was less hermetic and "definitely went very far beyond the borders set by Party authorities" (Brzechczyn, p. 170). Nowak's theory of triple class power, belonging to the non-Marxian historical materialism, caps the categorial interpretation of Marxist dialectics and the adaptive interpretation of socio-historical dependencies. The non-Marxian historical materialism became unacceptable for the Communist party particularly when Nowak engaged himself and his ideas in the Solidarity movement. As a consequence, he not only had to face academic criticism but also imprisonment and dismissal from the university. There is no exaggeration in the statement that he was the last victim of the battle against revisionism in Polish Marxism. And so be it.

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REGARDING MARXISM¹

Expelled with several of his colleagues from the University of Warsaw in the memorable year of 1968, and thus having some spare time, Kołakowski makes an effort to analyse his persecutors' worldview. These are the external circumstances of the work's initiation. His book, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origin, Growth, and Dissolution*, occupies a special position among numerous publications on Marxism, publications written before both by apologists of Marxism and its critics, as well as by analysts and historians of different methodological persuasions. His book is exceptional both in terms of its size and the profoundness of philosophical insights, as well as due to the sophisticated techniques of applied by Kołakowski.

Kołakowski's intention was, as he admits, to write a textbook. How modest and peculiar an intention it is in view of the circumstances of its coming into existence! However, this work shows that coping with such a concept was not easy at all. It was necessary to review a lot of material. Moreover, it was necessary to familiarize oneself not only with the works of the founders of, as Kołakowski says, "the biggest fantasy of our century", but also with the works of their followers and epigones, and finally with at least more valuable publications concerning the subject literature. The comprehensive and global character of the doctrine initiated by Karl Marx requires from its researcher competence not only in the field of philosophy but also in the broadly defined social thought, political economy, and sociology. What is more,

¹ English translation of the essay originally published in: Zofia Gromiec (ed.), *Honoris Causa. Księga pamiątkowa ku czci Leszka Kołakowskiego*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1994.

it is also required to possess knowledge of the socio-historical realities wherein the said doctrine was born and started its expansion. Ultimately, what is needed is a profound insight into the realities and trends of the present, both in its intellectual and political aspects. Writing a pamphlet would demand far less trouble!

As a textbook on the history of Marxism Kołakowski's book plays its role perfectly, because it gives a total and exhaustive account of problems referring to its broadly defined subject of research; all the most important adherents of Marx's thought, who worked as politicians, revolutionists, or as intellectuals and theoreticians parade in front of reader's eyes.

Readers of *The Main Currents of Marxism* will not need to analyse it thoroughly to easily notice that they face a peculiar textbook. They quickly learn that they deal with a work whose author obeys the rigors of honesty in presenting the subject matter. At the same time Kołakowski can be seen as the voice in the dialogue with Marx's project, as the thinker who tries to understand the other author's reasons as thoroughly as possible – so as to, needless to say, evaluate it from his point of view.

Kołakowski is known in the philosophical community as an experienced researcher of the 17th century West European philosophical and religious thought. His work dedicated to this thought is unparalleled in the subject literature. At the same time he was engaged in the most pressing problems of the present. It is thus clear that when he turned to projects of reforming the world and humanity inspired by the philosophical ideas of Karl Marx after the research on Dutch, French, and German religious reformers, and considering his enormous experience as the history of ideas analyst, he could not and would not practice the cold stare of a historian, who looks at his subjects from a few centuries afar. This time the doctrine he was interested in affected a great many people, simultaneously being the ideological foundation of socio-political institutions in many countries.

Thus he took up the live and pressing issue, conscious of the fact that even the simplest and elementary information on the doctrine he was interested in must have implicated him in numerous controversies, interpretive and ideological. Being aware of the complex entanglements in said controversies, the author did not want to limit his polemics with Marxism to some external arbitrary point of view. It was because he

wanted, above all, to reveal the dramatic process that made up the essential part of the modern era, in which the giant effort of realizing the project of liberation and auto-affirmation of mankind has brought about, as everybody knows, monstrous crimes and horrendous suffering of a great many people. It is understandable that the author, as a philosopher and a moralist, would wish the mankind to learn from this monstrous experience. Let us note, incidentally, that his warning message of the moralist-philosopher is very distinctive in numerous essays, where he warns of all the versions of ideas of the immediate and total redemption or liberation of mankind. Here, in “the textbook”, where there is room for exhausting and meticulous analyses of historical material and detailed analyses of Marx’s theoretical theses, the author does not want to explain the story of “embodiment of the idea in life” in a simplified way. Besides, he is aware that from the standpoint of a historian of ideas it is impossible to fully explain the transformation of Marx’s idea of reforming the social system into the monstrous architecture of totalitarian regime. He knows very well that the major role is played by the circumstances that are not ideological, but are rooted in realities that refer to the past and also to the present of nations and peoples who were unlucky to find themselves in the force field of Marx’s formula for creating the happiness of mankind. He is aware of the otherwise obvious fact that the initial project was subjected to different modifications and transformations during the process of its realization. Its assumptions are simplified and trivialized (in the intellectual sense), so the realization of the theoretical program most often involves the loss of original values.

However, this—not very often observed in the history—process of “the embodiment of an idea into life” is for a historian of ideas especially interesting and deserves a careful study because one can trace here a complex mechanism in which certain, so far hidden, features of the original project come to light. It is, so to speak, an exam for an idea, one that may reveal the idea’s secret, but can also as easily bury it. This is exactly what happened to Marxism as an intellectual proposition and it took place—one can read about it in many works of the author of *Main Currents of Marxism*—before the fall of “the first country of workers and peasants”.

As befits an experienced researcher of religious and philosophical thought, Kołakowski is careful and in no way does he

state that Stalinism with all its monstrosities stems directly from the assumptions of Marx's doctrine. According to Kołakowski, it is one of the possibilities, which, unfortunately for mankind, has achieved its historical fulfilment, partly due to coincidences and social mechanisms that were not ideological. But from this follows that the initial doctrine cannot be thought of as completely innocent in this regard.

He touches here upon the problem that is delicate and not easy to resolve (although it is not the proper subject of his considerations), namely, to what extent the authors of different philosophical conceptions are responsible for the use that their future adherents and followers make of these conceptions. As a historian of philosophy, who analysed many metaphysical ideas, he knows very well that in the history of thought there are no doctrines free of ambiguity, that basically all of them *in nuce* involve different and even mutually exclusive interpretations. He is aware of the fact that this or that theme in the doctrine, which is mobilized by politicians or social activists or, especially, reformers to legitimize their activity, will be extracted and accepted by them without taking into account other themes, does not have its source in the doctrine itself, but in the circumstances of the activity of these politicians, reformers, or their parties.

The historical fate of Marx's doctrine is puzzling mostly because what its author had in mind was human happiness, i.e., the liberation of mankind from the chains of alienation and repressive social forms. Marx projected such a form of social life, in which people would be free to realize their capabilities and callings, and yet all the known efforts of realizing his ideas had the opposite, negative effect. Prometheus, who by his own efforts was supposed to create the world of freedom, revealed the face of Gregor Samsa, as Kołakowski sadly states. Why did it happen? Did it have to happen?

There are no definitive answers to these questions, and the author is not capable of giving them, for they would require a groundless assumption that historical events are subjected to some fixed necessities. But the fact that it was exactly what happened makes the historian inclined to take a closer look at the fundamental assumptions and theses of the initial project. That is exactly what Kołakowski does in his honest work as an historian of ideas. But at this point the standards of the textbook narration are transgressed and the textbook is made into a philosophical treatise in which Marx's doctrine

of mankind and the program of its liberation are critically analysed and reinterpreted.

Kołakowski thinks that Marxism is by no means, as its adherents proclaim, a scientific theory of mankind and ways of its transformation that move towards a classless form of society, but it is the philosophical project *par excellence* with certain axiology embedded. The core of this conception is the idea of man, his nature, and his calling. It is based on the belief that real existence of humans is not identical with their essence. This belief, dating far back to the structures of mythological thinking, and distinctly emphasized in the Platonic tradition, as well as in some currents of the Christian thought, expresses an acute awareness of the contingency of a human being, its imperfections and randomness, which are the starting point of reflection on human lot. At the same time, it includes the postulate of making an effort to overcome this contingency, i.e., to find permanent support in the necessary and unconditional being, or even a complete union with it. Thus the broadly defined prehistory of Marxism—as showed in the first chapter of the book—reaches back to Plotinus' *Ennead* and Johannes Scotus Eriugena's *De divisione naturae*, to speculations that pertain to the dialectical connection of man with the absolute by Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa, finally to Jacob Boehme and Hegel. The essence of all these conceptions, despite their various expressions, consists in a dynamic depiction of the absolute that realizes itself, i.e., becomes compatible with its own nature as a result of its own transformations. Man participates in this dialectical process of the realization of the absolute, and thereby merges with it in the final stage of this movement, which is equally theo- and anthropogenesis.

This conception, however clearly present in the Christian thought, is not compatible with the orthodoxy, for the latter emphasizes the fixed distinction between the finiteness of man and the infinity of God, to whom a man can only come near, not by the power of its own effort, but by God's grace given in God's arbitrary act.

Thus, by the reference to a rich and historically substantial context of the Western tradition of thought Marxism receives a kind of legitimization: the author of *Capital* takes up in his own way themes that are persistent in the Western culture, and gives them a form and expression compatible with the spirit of his own time. Simultaneously Marxism becomes situated in this tradition perhaps not as much as

heresy is in relation to orthodoxy within Christianity, but more like the unusual dialectical Gnosticism that places itself on the Christian antipodes, inasmuch as it not only holds the claim of overcoming the gap between the contingent being and the absolute, but also raises this contingent being—the human being—to the level of the absolute. Due to cognition and labour, the mankind is supposed to become a sort of self-reflexive and autonomous being, completely free and in control of its forms of existence, freely affirming itself through the complete realization of its potentials. In this sense Marxism is a kind of Prometheism, which proclaims the glory and endless power of man who, by his own effort, is establishing himself as the fullness of existence. The rejection of the possibility of the existence of transcendence—as a consequence of this deification of man—constitutes another characteristic of this doctrine, and qualifies it as not reconcilable with the Christian orthodoxy.

In his view of Marxism as a kind of Promethean Gnosticism or even secularized quasi-religion, Kołakowski continues interpretations which appeared in Poland and elsewhere in the 1950's after the "discovery" of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. For this reason, he rejected all the interpretations of Marxism that consisted in emphasizing the caesura between the "young" and "mature" Marx and in denying the continuity of his thought. In spite of the absence of the prophetic tone, so typical of the *Manuscripts of 1844*, in the later writings, they in fact realize the same project that expresses the striving for the liberation of man from the shackles of alienation and for control over means of his existence as a precondition of his autonomy. From this perspective Kołakowski interpreted Karl Marx's economy: his theory of value, labour as a source of values, surplus value etc. According to Kołakowski, Marx intended to present capitalism as a social form, in which people are controlled and enslaved by man-made objective and impersonal arrangements, and to look for, in the next step, a way of overcoming this enslavement through a radical shift in social relations.

Kołakowski stressed—not only in this treatise—the radical and global character of Marx's project. Time and again he emphasized that it was not Marx's intention to overcome the impoverishment of the worker, to lighten the lot of the working man, but to abolish all forms of alienation and to liberate all the people from the limits and boundaries

stemming from the reification of their previous productive effort. Kołakowski reminds us that the author of “scientific socialism” wished to sharply separate the future state of the realization of the ideal from the previous course of history, to make the impetuous leap from “the kingdom of necessity into the kingdom of freedom”.

Perhaps it is important to notice that this interpretation of Marx’s conception succours, so to speak, a philosopher who enters into a dispute with Marx’s program of the liberation of man. This dispute, consisting in revealing limits, deficiencies, and even possible threats potentially deductible from Marx’s theory, could not have earned the intellectual importance it has in Kołakowski’s work if it hadn’t been preceded by the solid analysis of the content of Marx’s theory.

It seems that in his interpretation of Marxism, which we tried to briefly present above, Kołakowski aims especially to take a position on two fundamental issues that are essentially connected not only with a certain understanding of Marx’s doctrine, but also with the appraisal of its historical role. Firstly, as we already noticed, he wishes to indicate that Marxism cannot be treated as a scientific theory in the rigorous sense. Secondly—and this is the most important to him—he tries to prove that the contemporary conception of man, which forms the foundations of Marxist doctrine, and which, to some extent, puts man in Gods’ place, is based on an intellectual abuse. In other words, it is based on accepting certain assumptions that do not hold water or on ignoring other doubtful ones. Developing his program of liberation of man, Marx thinks that the radical shift in the social relations (abolishment of the private property, etc.) will become a sufficient condition to abolish all the restrictions that have been holding down the emancipatory possibilities of the human subject. He presupposes that all the evil that oppressed man had its root not in man and his condition but in the defective social arrangements and institutions. In an attempt to express this thesis, Marx is forced to ignore all the limits carried by the physical existence of humans, i.e., the diversity of sexes, age, intelligence, being subjected to natural disabilities and diseases, etc. Kołakowski suggests that in Marx’s theory a social utopia is connected with an existential utopia, which is easy to show especially in his early works.

Naturally, he notices the deficiencies of the Marxist idea of radical change of the human existence in many other aspects. After all there are difficulties in organising the production and distribution of

manufactured goods, which lead to the impossibility of reconciling the totally spontaneous form of life in a classless society with the rigors of central planning, etc. This disability, fundamental according to Kołakowski, cannot be overcome in human life. This is why in every attempt at realizing this utopian design the promise of its overcoming can only lead to dangerous results. Therefore, an existential utopia, i.e., the conception that the final condition of the humanity is possible, that it is possible to build a community, in which all the limitations and conflicts will disappear, that evil, which has bothered people for so long, will be completely and finally eradicated, must lead to the annihilation of the cultural forms of human existence, to the total collapse that takes a form of absolute tyranny precluding any spontaneous manifestation of the personalities of people making up this monstrous community of individuals. The idea of the final stage, of the reconciliation of everything with everything, of the final fulfilment, if it is not some border ideal that one knows is impossible to realize, can only bring death and destruction.

In the European tradition of thought Kołakowski seems to see, on the one hand, a tendency to radicalism, to the final resolution of eternal problems of human existence in all its dimensions, the tendency that is never ending but only changing its historical forms, and, on the other hand, the constantly renewed effort of balancing the terms of insuperable opposition or tension between finite beings and the ideal, the fulfilment, or the absolute, understood in one way or the other. His attitude of a philosopher or a wise man shows itself in a resolute objection to the final and definite solutions, since he is aware of their unreality and the dangers connected to them. He opts for an infinitistic view on human destiny, which treats man as doomed to the contingency of life and yet, at the same time, compelled to struggle with life's discomforts. In this struggle—the reason teaches us—a final victory will never happen and yet this struggle cannot be waged without the irrational hope for a victory. Without this constant struggle—of which the fate of Sisyphus is not a symbolic figure—it would not be possible for man to raise upon the natural determinants of his being and, therefore, his humanity, non-derivable from nature, wouldn't be possible.

According to Kołakowski, Marxism, as a contemporary form of millenarianism, broke a subtle and unstable balance, which conditions

the possibility of beginning and continuing the existence of man as a moral being, manifesting himself in the culture. In the world full of tensions, poverty, universal evil, and in the face of helplessness of the struggle against it, Marxism could easily tempt the masses with the alluring promise of an earthly paradise. This promise is but an old dream disguised in contemporary clothes, a dream that appears every time when conditions of the human existence become unbearable, and the possibilities of amelioration are diminished or absent altogether. It appears when the hope of a radical transformation of life conditions and change of fortune expresses nothing but helplessness and growing frustration.

Consequently, following Kołakowski's train of thought referring to the monstrous experiences of our era connected with the efforts to realize Marx's (and not only Marx's) project of bringing about the happiness of mankind — expressed not only in the treatise on the history of Marxism but also in numerous essays —we can conclude with a moral that is important for earthlings: Man has never lived in a paradise, but, nevertheless, he perceives himself as banished thereof; and he will never enter a paradise, although supposedly he could not live without the faith that this is somehow possible. Therefore, what he should do is to have a minimum of common sense and skepticism related to it, for they would protect him against the traps laid by the promises of false prophets, repeatedly asserting him that they know the means to construct this paradise today or at least tomorrow.

translated by Ewa Modrakowska

ABSTRACT

REGARDING MARXISM

My paper refers to Leszek Kołakowski's *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origin, Growth, and Dissolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1987). Kołakowski's intention was to write a textbook on the history of Marxism based on his lectures but his book is much more than that. It is a philosophical treatise in which Marx's doctrine of mankind and the program of its liberation are critically analysed and reinterpreted. The core of Marx's philosophy is the idea of man and the belief that the real existence of humans is not identical with their essence. Kołakowski shows that this belief is rooted in mythological thinking, the Platonic tradition, and in the Christian thought. A moral that follows from Kołakowski's critical analysis of Marx's doctrine is that man has never lived in a paradise and yet he perceives himself as banished thereof; that he will never enter a paradise and yet he cannot live without the faith that this is somehow possible. Therefore, what he should do is to have a minimum of common sense and skepticism related to it, for they would protect him against the traps laid by false prophets repeatedly asserting that they know the means to construct the paradise today or at least tomorrow.

KEYWORDS: Marxism, Leszek Kołakowski, critical analysis, liberation of man

WOBEC MARKSIZMU

Artykuł traktuje o Leszka Kołakowskiego *Głównych nurtach marksizmu* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1987). Zamiarem Kołakowskiego było napisanie podręcznika z historii marksizmu na podstawie prowadzonych przez niego wykładów, ale jego książka jest czymś więcej. Jest to traktat filozoficzny, w którym marksowska doktryna człowieka i program jego wyzwolenia poddane są krytycznej analizie i reinterpretacji. Sednem filozofii Marksa jest idea człowieka i przekonanie, że rzeczywista egzystencja ludzi nie jest tożsama z ich istotą. Kołakowski pokazuje, że źródłem tego przekonania jest myślenie mitologiczne, tradycja platońska i myśl chrześcijańska. Morał, który wynika z Kołakowskiego analizy doktryny Marksa jest taki, że człowiek nigdy nie żył w raju, a jednak uważa, że został z niego wygnany; że nigdy nie znajdzie się w raju, a jednak nie może żyć bez wiary, że w jakiś

sposób jest to możliwe. Powinien zatem zachować odrobinę zdrowego rozsądku i związanego z nim sceptycyzmu, co zabezpieczałoby go przed popadnięciem w sidła łatwych obietnic fałszywych proroków, niezmiennie zapewniających, iż znają skuteczne środki osiągnięcia owego raju już dziś, a najpewniej jutro.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: marksizm, Leszek Kołakowski, analiza krytyczna, wyzwolenie człowieka



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MARXIST TRAIT OF REVISIONISM: LESZEK KOŁAKOWSKI'S CONSISTENT TRANSITION TO INCONSISTENT PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

Leszek Kołakowski belongs to philosophers in the case of whom comments on their works almost every time contain some references to biographical facts. One of the circumstances of his biography that particularly attracts people's attention and causes moral judgments is Kołakowski's ideological conversion, especially his youthful Marxist involvement. For example, recently there was a significant political argument in Radom, the city he comes from, about putting a monument of Kołakowski on the city's square because of his early communist past (Ciepielak, 2016).

In this article I intend to describe theoretical reasons that stood behind Kołakowski's transition from being an orthodox Marxist to becoming an actual leader of the Polish revisionist movement. This issue was elaborated before, however, always in the context of the change that the young author had undergone, while my intention is to concentrate on the aspects of his thought that did not change, the ideas that were common to the young author of *Sketches of Catholic Philosophy*¹ and to the creator of an opposition between a priest and a jester. For I assume there are some noticeable joint threads of these two phases of his creativity, motifs that so far have not been interpreted in this way, some ideas that Kołakowski constantly approved of and that remained valuable for him also after his transformation in the 1950s.

¹ The titles of Kołakowski's works published before 1955 are translated by the author, the next ones, from the period 1955-1957 – by George L. Kline (Kline, 1971, p. 239-250); all remaining – by the authors of particular translations.

I also try, as far as it is possible, to pass over Kołakowski's biography (understood as a set of life events). I want to avoid all the attempts to value his actions, I skip all psychologizing efforts to explain the reasons of his stepping into Marxism and, consequently, abandoning it. The aim of this paper, then, is to show that the revisionist thaw was not only contrary to a soulless system (as it is usually presented), but also was the consequence of the development of Kołakowski's thought that genuinely, in some important part, stood unchanged. There is something that may be called the core of his philosophy.

I am aware that such attempt may be interpreted as some kind of absolution of Kołakowski's early writings, because the ideas I link with him do have rather positive associations. Answering to that I can just say that basically people choose (consciously or not) righteous ideas to lead them through their lives. The circumstance that someone proclaims and follows noble slogans is morally irrelevant as long as they are generally described and considered regardless of practice. And this is the way I want to present three basic traits of Kołakowski's early papers.

Inability of completability

First of the major features of whole Kołakowski's thought can be briefly described as 'anti-code'. The basis of this idea was clarified in the article from 1962 titled *Ethics without a Moral Code* (Kołakowski, 1971), but, as a matter of fact, objections against the notion that it is possible to create such a theoretical concept that solves all philosophical problems and leaves people without inconvenient doubts were presented by Kołakowski since the beginning of his scientific and public activity. He never stopped being against all philosophical stagnancy broadly defined. In the Marxist stage he preferably applied his objections to science, that is he opposed something that may be called 'completability', that is, a finiteness of science. Later, at the revisionist phase, his recommendation of inconsistency concentrated on the moral part of life (the article mentioned above, *Ethics without a Moral Code*, refers only to moral issues), however the core of his considerations remained the same, i.e., the rejection of all types of monism.

And so, in 1949 in one of his first articles Kołakowski – a 22-year-old Polish socialist – pointed out the advantages of Marxism,

adjudged by him as a 'philosophy of common sense' (Kołakowski, 1949b, p. 4). He already announced that this philosophy did not sanctify prevalent tradition and basically was a fight against mental comfort and opportunism. Besides, it could lead to the rejection of the most ingrained convictions. At the end of the paper Kołakowski concluded: "There is nothing in the work of Marxist classics that Marxism would not rule out immediately, if scientific studies prove it is a lie" (Kołakowski, 1949b, p. 5)².

Marxism was never interpreted by Kołakowski as a finite system, even when he basically focused on its criticism. Moreover, one of the primary objections he formulated in *Main Currents of Marxism* referred to the ambiguity of this philosophy, to the fact that Leninism and Stalinism could have been derived from the works of Marx without distorting his thought (Kołakowski, 1978, p. 526). Evidently, young Kołakowski was not a follower of a statement that various types of philosophizing are equal (in point of fact he never made such judgment), furthermore, he was a supporter of coercing people to Marxism, as he said once, he did not see himself as a democrat (Kłoczowski, 1994, p. 21). Crucial thing is that what attracted him to Marxism was its flexibility, a contrary to the sanctified tradition. What was important for the young author and what he used to underline, was that Marxism was not an epiphany (Baczko, Kołakowski, 1954, p. 84). Kołakowski claimed it was based on science, that it took into account scientific achievements, and that, like in the case of science, its principle was the capacity of autotransgression.

It all sounds maybe a little bit naive and obvious for people living in the 21st century. Firstly, we all know how the disseminating of Marx's theory went in practice. Secondly, the requirement to include scientific discoveries seems to be natural and necessary in every respectable modern philosophical theory. It seems that nowadays all philosophical outlooks must maintain some correspondence to advances in science and technology, at least if their adherents intend to keep an elementary connection with prevalent fundamental worldview intuitions. However, things looked differently in the 1950s Poland.

Kołakowski's works from that time were basically focused on a fight with Catholic Church, especially with neo-Thomism. Considering

² Translated by the author.

the relationship between science and religion he concluded that the creed of the Church reminded a smokescreen. In line with scholastic reasoning, both of them, science and religion, are the sources of truth, but they differ in the method of argumentation (Kołakowski, 1955a, p. 18-20). They have something in common: some divine truths can be proved rationally. That is how, in Kołakowski's opinion, the Church affirms science and confirms its unparalleled achievements: by announcing that there is no contradiction between a statement based on knowledge and a statement based on faith. But in a clash, the second one must always be approved as a determining criterion (details of this notion were presented in the article *Neo-Thomism in Conflict with the Progress of the Sciences and the Rights of Man* (Kołakowski, 1955a)). For young Kołakowski it was one of the ways to show how the Church tried to preserve its impact and how it basically subjugated science.

Therefore, Marxism is a philosophy based on emancipation (Baczko, Kołakowski, 1954, p. 84). It is free from mystifications and distortions caused by class struggle and religious notions. It is more a negativity than an actual statement, and the task of Marxism is to create conditions for unrestricted development of philosophical thought (Baczko, Kołakowski, 1954, p. 84). Furthermore, in 1954 at the Polish-German Conference concerning the methodology of the history of philosophy Kołakowski, in concord with Bronisław Baczko, pointed out two crucial dangers of the prevalent stage of ideological battle. The first of them was the *a priori* rejection of the achievements of philosophical doctrines that cannot be defined as materialistic (Baczko, Kołakowski, 1954, p. 84-85).

Kołakowski did not change his view on this point even when his works began to fit into the revisionist movement. When in 1957 he summarized the International Philosophical Meeting in Warsaw he said that Marxism was not any more a homogeneous doctrine and it assumed the possibility of accepting incompatible statements based on Marxist tradition. Moreover, the inflexible division into Marxists and non-Marxists lost its meaning and could be kept only from the point of view of dogmatic orthodoxy, and that the phrase 'borders of Marxism' became unreasonable and useless (Kołakowski, 1957a, p. 224). Kołakowski made similar remarks in *The Permanent vs. Transitory Aspects of Marxism*, where he qualified all the disputes, in which

participants aimed to practice 'real' Marxism and monopolized for themselves an honorable title of 'consistent Marxists', as sterile verbalism (Kołakowski, 1968b, p. 183). As he noticed in this essay, there was no such a thing as one and only truly Marxist interpretation of any kind of philosophy and that the use of the same general rules of Marxist historical methodology could lead to various conclusions. Similar reasoning was presented in his other works from that period. For example, in *Intellectuals and the Communist Movement* Kołakowski pointed out that the fetishization of Marxism turned it into a toxin of intellectual life, instead of its blood – by that he meant that a theoretical work cannot be useful for a revolutionary movement if it was bound by anything else than an aspiration to get some authentic knowledge and a scientific rigor (Kołakowski, 1968a, p. 172). In *What do Philosophers Live on?* he stated that materialism in science is rather a scientific attitude than a doctrine (Kołakowski, 1957d, p. 19). What is noteworthy, in that time Kołakowski also started to limit the use of a communist terminology. He replaced it with such terms like 'rationalism' (*Irrationality of Rationalism*), 'consequence' – as a contrary to inconsistency (*In Praise of Inconsistency*), or 'a philosophy of an absolute' (*The Priest and the Jester*). It was a clear advancement, a move from a follower of a doctrine to a free thinker, not restricted by any dogma.

This feature characterized all Kołakowski's future works. Since the abandonment of Marxism he has never been seduced by any worldview, although he did not discredit at all an attachment to philosophical concepts that intended to say something total and overall about being. His mature philosophy is somewhere in between. However, Kołakowski remained dissatisfied for the rest of his days because a third option, an everlasting non-completion constantly troubled him and stimulated his metaphysical and ethical inquires. There are three significant works on that matter: *The Presence of Myth* (1972), *Religion: If There Is No God* (1982), *Metaphysical Horror* (1988). In the preface to the first of them Kołakowski quoted William Blake. Those words may be used as a conclusive summary of Kołakowski's biggest trouble: 'Less than All cannot satisfy Man' (Kołakowski, 1989, p. XII).

Involvement

Kołakowski not only interiorized the Marxist requirement not to limit philosophy only to theorizing but also practice it, but he also discussed this idea in his works. In other words, he did not only factually practice Marxism by his political involvement, but also was writing about the importance of engagement. The necessity of taking some actions, connected with intensively felt responsibility, is inherent in whole Kołakowski's thought. Sometimes it is mentioned evidently, sometimes its presence is indirect. Although the findings of Kołakowski's later works are faraway from hopefulness and may be summarized by the word *horror* (Kołakowski, 1988, p. 21), Polish philosopher does not take giving up as an option. His philosophy frequently does not openly oppose passiveness – such an attitude is just passed over, it is ignored because of its obvious barrenness. Therefore, statements about the nihilist reasons of Kołakowski's accession to communism, presented by Jan Tokarski in *The Presence of Evil*, should be considered as correct (Tokarski, 2016, p. 35-41). Tokarski – using partly Kołakowski's method of philosophizing (in the aspect of showing schizophrenic feature of human wishes (Kołakowski, 1986, p. 13) – points out that Marxism offered a collective nihilism, which differs from other versions of nihilism because the act of rejecting the existing world lets people keep the faith that it is possible to thoroughly fix the reality (Tokarski, 2016, p. 36).

In *Ethics without a Moral Code* Kołakowski binds the idea of responsibility for worldly debts with an act of not committing suicide (Kołakowski, 1971, p. 154-155). And yet, the refusal of repayment is vividly present and it takes two ideological forms: the nihilism of the adolescent and the conservatism of the old man (Kołakowski, 1971, p. 156). The pragmatic mettle in the first stage of Kołakowski's intellectual growth was the cause of his concentration on the second form. Nihilists are not a real threat as long as they do not grow in number. Besides, their attitude basically rules them out of public involvement. Therefore, Kołakowski's main intellectual opponent became the Catholic Church and the outlooks connected with it, i.e., neo-Thomism and Christian personalism in particular.

Kołakowski used to raise many objections against Catholic philosophy. One of the major one aimed at the passive attitude

contained in a religious message. Kołakowski amalgamated Christian ideas with the recommendation to accept habitual passiveness. In his opinion all religious ideologies make a promise that some earthly sacrifices will be paid out in the other world, but at the same time these doctrines demand to relinquish all corporeal claims (Kołakowski, 1955a, p. 31). Thomism therefore extends beyond this rule because it basically sanctifies the hierarchical rules of society, thus it particularly establishes itself as an ideological instrument of the monopolistic capital.

The issue of hierarchy founded in the Thomistic philosophy dared and provoked Kołakowski in those years. Young philosopher referred to it in his major works, such as: *On So-called Thomist Realism*, *"The Rights of the Person" versus the Rights of Man: The Essential Meaning of "Christian Personalism"* or *The Labour Question in Vatican Political Doctrine: On the Pope's So-called "Social Encyclicals"*, gathered, among others, in a book titled *Sketches of Catholic Philosophy* (Kołakowski, 1955c), published in 1955 (however, it includes works written in the years 1950-1955). The core of this idea, originated in Aristotle (Kołakowski, 1955b, p. 147), is that God predicted proper space for each being in the universe. Man is not only not allowed to change it, he is essentially unable to make such modifications. At the same time God's will sanctifies schemes necessarily connected with such values like prevailing class system or private property (Kołakowski, 1955b, p. 188-193). Therefore, all attempts to change the social order are considered not only as cases of offense against human, temporary law, they must be treated as sins, outrages of the natural or even eternal law. Kołakowski's reasoning in this case frequently was not sophisticated. For instance, he suggested that the meaning of Thomism is better understood if we replaced the word 'God' by the term 'Church' (it is a reference to Holbach (Kołakowski, 1955a, p. 13)). After such an operation all of Christian efforts to protect its traditional values, the conservative mettle, are nothing more than bourgeois and reprehensible tries to keep the domination of capitalists and they cannot be seen as something different from the desperate acts of delaying the social revolution.

Kołakowski binds in this way the Catholic philosophy with a call to passivity. The only alterations that Thomism affirms refer to the

changes of inward qualities. They happen in a spiritual dimension but do not effect a society as a collective. Marxism – as a pragmatic social philosophy – is in this view an actual antithesis to religion, the best antidote to the tremendous disease caused by this widespread opium. A historian of philosophy should not be a chronicler, the history of philosophy is not a remembrance of the past – it is an experience which should be used in an effective fight for ideological transformations (Baczko, Kołakowski, 1954, p. 78). Communism is presented, therefore, as a successor of the noblest aspirations of human kind, all the people's dreams about happiness and freedom and also – what is most important – it breaks off with the domain of wishes that always ended up in disappointment (Kołakowski, 1950, p. 291-292). All of what used to be a dream may finally be achieved. Kołakowski used a biblical metaphor: the word may ultimately become flesh (Kołakowski, 1950, p. 292).

In 1957 Kołakowski published *World-View and Everyday Life*, a set of dissertations written in 1955-1956 (Kołakowski, 1957c). The title of this book properly summarizes the pivotal tension of included articles; they basically refer to the relationship between philosophical outlooks and daily life. Kołakowski's answers are clearly presented from the revisionist point of view. In the opening essay Kołakowski asks what do philosophers do for a living. He specifies that he means the social function of philosophy as some knowledge about the world, i.e., its practical power (Kołakowski, 1957d, p. 8). His answer depends on matters that philosophers deal with. Trying to find out what is the real determinant of philosophical problems Kołakowski says that it is a reference to the formation of the social and moral attitudes of human (Kołakowski, 1957d, p. 15). Philosophical knowledge is anthropocentric accordingly. Every fact may be a subject of philosophical reflection but it actually happens only when a practical and human meaning of a fact is discovered (Kołakowski, 1957d, p. 24). In other words, a distinguishing feature of philosophical thinking is the fact that its axis is marked by social practice of humans acting as moral subjects (Kołakowski, 1957d, p. 23).

The practical aspect of Kołakowski's works created at the revisionist and the next stages of his life is easy to spot. Since the revisionist phase one of the major issue of his philosophy has been the

problem of the lack of connection between ideological conviction and daily life practice. Kołakowski paid attention to the fact that a conversion from being a Christian to being a Marxist did not necessarily lead to the change of a moral attitude (Kołakowski, 1957b, p. 34). The other problem is that even if any desirable attitude was commonly present, a sin would still not be removed from the world. People may actually know (not only suspect or believe) that it is forbidden to lie but they still may avoid telling the truth. Adam and Eve are an example: they had certainty no man ever had, God himself told them what is good and what is evil, and yet, they still did not listen to his command and committed the original sin. The final answer Kołakowski submitted was that only religion outlook made a complete offer, whereas what people know about the world actually made an effect on their behavior (Kołakowski, 1982, p. 174-178). This statement, naturally, only deals with the first problem, the one referring to moral attitude. The impossibility of avoiding the evil and getting rid of everything that is wrong seemed obvious to Kołakowski, at least since he had noticed the utopian attributes of Marxism, which happened more or less in the early 1950s.

Kołakowski repeatedly pointed out that knowing that it is impossible to completely achieve most valuable ideas is not a sufficient reason to claim that the difference between following or not following them is meaningless (Kołakowski, 1975, p. 81). Even if people have never reached perfect democracy there still is a qualitative distinction between modern liberal democracies and historical totalitarian states. People have an intuition of deficiency when they hear that the difference between earnings of Rockefeller and a dustman is only quantitative. According to political philosophy, the impossibility of achieving utopia does not mean that our tries to change current conditions are worthless and morally irrelevant.

Taking this into account, the majority of his revisionist papers focuses on pragmatic advices that are ethically formed. Kołakowski did not only write and present philosophical considerations – he gave homilies, trying not only to convince, but also to heat people's hearts. And so, in *Intellectuals and the Communist Movement* (1956) Polish philosopher makes an appeal to intellectuals, he calls them to fight: firstly, for the secularization of thinking, secondly, against pseudo-

Marxist mythology and bigotry, thirdly, against religious and magic practices, fourthly, fight for rebuilding respect for unrestrained secular reason (Kołakowski, 1968a, p. 165). In *Responsibility and History* (1957) Kołakowski tries to find some way out from two attitudes: a revolutionary and a clerkish one, telling that the recommended pose is to make efforts leading to ideological renaissance of the revolutionary Left (Kołakowski, 1968c, p. 97), specifying what does it precisely mean, and what actions does it need. And yet, the best summary of the practical intentions of Kołakowski's revisionist articles is given in his own words at the end of the famous essay written in 1958: 'So much for praise of inconsistency. The rest cannot be verbalized. The rest must be done' (Kołakowski, 1964, p. 209).

It is noteworthy that the basis of Kołakowski's intentions to influence people's morality by convincing them that both social and internal (necessarily bound with the social) modifications are not only possible but also desirable did not change. He tried to adapt his thought to alterations (aberrations) of the communist system. It shows in his attempt to tell apart two senses of Marxism: the formal one and the intellectual one. In *Permanent vs. Transitory Aspects of Marxism* (1957) Kołakowski clearly expressed that the institutional way of understanding Marxism, which the communist party used to impose, threatened the meaning that was philosophically valuable (Kołakowski, 1968b, p. 187). Someone, who treated teachings of Marx seriously (especially in his youth), must not allow ossification of his philosophy; must constantly reject all the efforts to ensure existential calm (Kołakowski 1971, p. 164); should not be a priest but a jester. As Kołakowski told us about a jester: "[he] must stand outside good society and observe it from the sidelines in order to unveil the nonobvious behind the obvious, the nonfinal behind the final; yet he must frequent society so as to know what it holds sacred and to have the opportunity to address it impertinently" (Kołakowski, 1968e, p. 34). Kołakowski's vision of Marxism remained the same; he just had to reply to the interpretation that the Polish People's Republic imposed on Marxism in those years.

Philosophy of disagreement

The last issue, the distinction between a priest and a jester, effects another constant feature of Kołakowski's thought—its antithetic attitude. This notion shows up in any attempt to synthesize his work, to give it a frame, a label, and summarize it, for the author of *In Praise of Inconsistency* never intended to create something that could be called a philosophical system, a complete theory. He was, as Barbara Skarga once joked, a kind of a skeptical metaphysician, or rather—a metaphysical skeptic (Skarga, 2002). His philosophy—if we agree that it is possible to speak about Kołakowski's philosophy at all – was by definition, inconsistent. Nonetheless, there are quite a few efforts that expose main currents of his works, and they do it successfully.

One of the cores of Kołakowski's papers should be defined as an intense feeling of disagreement with the existing, prevalent conditions. If there is something that Kołakowski owes to Marxism it is a method of combining two seemingly opposing options and showing his annoyances connected with both of them. As his thought is anti-monistic, he does not intend to find some synthesis, so in this respect he opposed dialectical tradition. And yet, his assumption that most philosophical worries can be enclosed within two extremes is a genuinely derivative of dialectical materialism. Kołakowski usually stands against both extremes.

There is a popular citation from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that philosophy begins in wonder. Traditionally this excerpt is understood as an expression of delight of the world that surrounds us. This enchantment is a source of investigations that tend to cognize the mystery, magnificence and complexity of reality. The works of Kołakowski do not contain such affection. The foundation of his philosophical activity is a sense of disagreement, a feeling that there is something genuinely iniquitous in our perception of the world. Moreover, Kołakowski's philosophy is more diagnostic than therapeutic. He tells people about their diseases, furthermore, he points out the causes but is incapable to indicate a solution, and at most he teaches how to avoid a growth of disorders.

Hereby Kołakowski usually is presented as a historian of ideas (he even is commonly included into a group of Polish historians of ideas called Warsaw School of the History of Ideas (Walicki, 1984)), a skeptic,

and a critic. He is a jester, so he needs a good society that he may undermine and laugh at. Kołakowski is also a moralizer, he wakes people up from a blissful state of certainty, pointing out that in the case of moral issues man must never lose vigilance. In his opinion the purpose of ethics is to generate sinners that are aware of their wickedness, and not to produce saints who are certain of their own saintliness (Kołakowski, 1971, p. 175).

This description is appropriate in reference to Kołakowski's books and articles written after revisionist stage, but the indicated features occurred as well in Kołakowski's first works. In some descriptions of the beginnings of philosophy in Poland after World War II it is noticed that professional writers specialized in attacking particular concepts and their authors. For example: Adam Schaff intended to criticize the philosophy of Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, Bronisław Baczko fought especially against Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Henryk Holland against Kazimierz Twardowski and his school, Tadeusz Kroński against Roman Ingarden and Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Robert Zimand against Stanisław Ossowski (Chudy, 1990, p. 132). Kołakowski's target was widely settled: apart from assaulting Ajdukiewicz, Tatarkiewicz, and Ingarden he focused, as it was mentioned above, on the Christian tradition represented by scholastic philosophy. Even when Kołakowski was writing about Marxism itself, he concentrated on the wrong ways of its interpretation and only mentioned the appropriate understanding and its commentary (i.e. compatible with everything that the Party did and declared). The Marxist method was commonly glorified but actually it was not adopted. This notion discloses the truth about Marxism and its philosophical barrenness that troubled Kołakowski in *Main Currents of Marxism* (Kołakowski, 1978, p. 523-530). The multiplicity of legitimate ways of interpreting Marxism does not actually lead to social, political and intellectual development, it causes either some kind of dogmatic stagnancy or a variety of concepts that keep their validity apart from their Marxist sources.

Kołakowski was aware of the fact that Marxism did not actualize its inspiring objective, what was assumed as one of its major goals. Quite meaningful are his words in *Dialectical impressions*, his first philosophical publication from 1947, that the principles of materialistic

dialectic were brought to life by the work and fight of the labour movement in the struggle for better social order more than one hundred years earlier, but it is crucial to develop Marxist theory itself (Kołakowski, 1947, p. 11). Furthermore, Kołakowski evaluated its former development as very poor (Kołakowski, 1947, p. 8).

And so, it is hard to find an article of Kołakowski written in the first, Marxist phase, that would be a solid attempt to expand the theory of Marx. Those works are basically polemic and critical. It must be taken into consideration that Kołakowski was still a young author, so a lack of ambition of creating a resolute enlargement of communist theory – even despite a radical nature of his critical works – is easily understandable and rather not surprising.

Revisionism was, by definition, directed towards something that should be called 'a proper way of understanding Marxism', so revisionists concentrated on disagreement with existing interpretation. As Kołakowski himself underlined while defining the term 'revisionism' in *Main Currents of Marxism*, it was applied to people, who attacked various communist dogmas (Kołakowski, 1978, p. 456). Revisionism was a philosophy of disagreement *per se*. This notion obviously does not deprive the revisionists of an ability to create an original, important concept, but points out that revisionism is for the Marxist doctrine like heresy is for Catholic tenet, it is a derivative supplement, a consequent. Ultimately, a revisionist does not try to create, he intends to improve, and when he does it, he usually begins with an objection.

Differences

Marxist

Trying to point out qualities that certainly changed during Kołakowski's conversion from a dogmatic Marxist to a revisionist, I must mention his leaving the institutional way of understanding Marxism and beginning its intellectual interpretation (Kołakowski, 1968b, p. 174-175). According to Kołakowski's words from 1988 main ideas of the revisionist movement are based on respect for: the truth and logical arguments, common sense, democratic values, civil rights, economic efficiency and 'other venerable things' (however, naturally, revisionists maintained the faith that the core of the system should be kept) (Kołakowski, 2002, p. 312). These issues were repeatedly described in

many earlier works, and it seems there is no need to explain them again, however the number of works delineating Polish revisionism is not as big as it can be assumed. For the purposes of this article it is important to point out and to briefly discuss some of those attributes that are relevant for Kołakowski's works and that changed substantially since he had become a revisionist.

First of them is an answer to a question how did he referred to the famous proverb, commonly, but not fully accurately, linked with Machiavelli's *The Prince*: that the end justifies the means. As a young author Kołakowski did not evince the sensitivity that characterized him later. He recounted his radicalism in the extensive interview with Zbigniew Mentzel, saying for instance, that in his youth he did not like the camouflages of PPR (Polish Workers' Party), he preferred to name it communist, not workers', he was disgusted by the fact that at the party's premises there were no portraits of Lenin or Stalin, but of Kościuszko, he saw himself as an elite member, who knows things that other people were not aware of. He knew and somehow justified the fact that the party cheated people when it acted as if it was not really close to communism and presented itself as progressive and patriotic (Kołakowski, 2007, p. 78-80). Kołakowski remembered that he had not been perceived in the 1940s as an uncertain member of the party, but rather as a sectarian, who did not intend to pretend that communism is different from what it practically was (Karpiński, Kołakowski, 2012, p. 215). And from Kołakowski's point of view communism was a tamer of Nazism, it was a myth of a better world, a longing for life without crime and humiliation, kingdom of equality and liberty (Kołakowski, 2007, p. 80). This objective seemed to naturally justify all the attempts necessary for its achievement.

Kołakowski focused on the things that sickened him and needed to be changed, he saw the reality as degenerate, and this is why he believed that bringing some additional evil should not change it notably. In his review of Peter Kropotkin's *Ethics* from 1949 he pointed out the necessity of suspending some moral principles: the human solidarity could come to life only in conditions that would appear when antagonistic aspirations of various classes vanished (Kołakowski, 1949a, p. 7). Shortly afterwards he noticed that this rule (human solidarity) remained in conflict with class struggle and that was why it

was so popular among social democratic revisionists (sic). Moreover, it is not true that all people are brothers – wrote Kołakowski in 1949 – it is merely a wish and a goal of Marxists' aspirations (Kołakowski, 1949a, p. 7). Young philosopher seemed to actually believe that a state of utopia was available. And if so, it was morally admissible to aim at this target by any means. Moreover, it was the obligation of all humans. Therefore, it should not be surprising that he did not see himself as a democrat (Kłoczowski, 1994, p. 21).

Also, the first phase of his social activity is the only one that can be called optimistic. Despite the fact that his works from that time were characterized by offensive, sometimes rough and coarse style, their reading also leads to a conclusion that everything is going to end up well, because such course of events is guaranteed by invariable historical laws. In that part Kołakowski was an unreserved Marxist. The only question was when this end was going to happen. Marxism was then a tragic remedy for one of the features of the world that Kołakowski remembered: that it was deeply sad (Kołakowski, 2007, p. 19). When the reality falsified communists' dream Kołakowski lost his hopeful attitude forever. It also roused one of the most significant aspect of his philosophical forthcoming creations: a decisive objection against all existential and moral complacency.

Revisionist

To begin the characterization of the revisionist phase I must, once again, relate to *Ethics without a moral code*. It is not an exaggeration to say that it is the most prominent essay among Kołakowski's works from that period, even a kind of theoretical manifesto. In that paper Polish philosopher several times summons 'moral intuition' and its notion basically forms some fundamental cohesion in the writings of the author of *The Presence of Myth*.

The foundation of Kołakowski's communist heresy is an act of realizing that the evil does not stop being evil when it contributes to a greater good. As he explains, there is no symmetry between obligations and values (Kołakowski, 1971, p. 176-178). It means that sometimes our duty is to do evil (like stealing food to prevent child's death from starvation), but it does not change the moral valuation of this kind of actions, a lesser evil is still an evil. This awareness leads to looking at

communists' actions more closely, it wakes up moral sensitivity focused on the evil in each of its dimension: both in global, social scale, and in common, daily life practice. Kołakowski stood up against daily mendacity. In *The Concept of the Left*, one of the classic papers of Polish revisionist movement (from 1957), Kołakowski postulated to distinguish ideology and current political tactic: the Left – as he intended to understand it – did not refuse to compromise with reality but at the same time it demanded to call such acts in a proper way, i.e., to call them compromises (Kołakowski, 1968d, p. 81-82). The Left knows (should know if it really claims to be Left) that sometimes men are powerless in the face of crimes but it does not want to qualify crimes as good, or profitable.

Also in this paper Kołakowski accepted that there was no possibility to reach utopia, though this acceptance did not allow him to conclude that it was pointless to make utopian attempts. For the Left excludes utopia from its doctrine like a pancreas discharges insulin. i.e., by its innate natural regularity (Kołakowski, 1968d, p. 70). Following a target that does not seem to be achievable, with full awareness of this fact, makes people sensible to some features of moral situations, namely that a rightful goal does not justify all lesser evils. In the paper *In Praise of Inconsistency* Kołakowski specified such experiences, and called them 'elementary situations'. What are those? Kołakowski says they are 'those human situations in which our moral attitude is unchanged regardless of the way these situations arrive at their culmination' (Kołakowski, 1964, p. 208-209). In other words, they basically are moral events, with which we deal when, no matter how notable the objectives are, we cannot justify the means (for example: genocide or mistreatment of the defenseless). The mention of them is one of major differences between a young and a revisionist Kołakowski. They cause a descent from the area of ideas to the domain of actual living. They also announce – as an exception – ethics without a moral code (as a way of Kołakowski's philosophizing, not only a paper), according to which in moral life people must always oscillate between various values, which cannot be arranged like notches on the thermometer (Kołakowski, 1971, p. 172). The attainment of a world with perfect ethical code would be contrary to some basic moral intuitions. Every total doctrine

is in practice necessarily an inevitable, and moreover, an inadmissible moral anesthesia.

This change in Kołakowski's thinking also manifests itself in the subjects of his interest. As a Marxist he concentrated on the attempts to frame the world, to describe its rules, to place current events in the march of history. However, paying attention to ethical issues, as described above (in the excerpt about involvement), woke him from 'dogmatic slumber'. The fact that Kołakowski recognized that philosophic issues were the ones that related to our moral attitude forced him finally to abandon Marxism. For – as it has been said in few works before – choosing Marxism is not an intellectual but a moral act.

Closure

The trouble of writing about Kołakowski's method of philosophizing is that it is inconsistent. It is based on disagreement and its motive is to present two options, both disappointing but for various reasons. Moreover, contrary to Aristotle's golden mean, there is no synthetic variant for them (Kołakowski, 1984, p. 7). However, as I tried to show, there are some currents that invariably describe Kołakowski's philosophy. They sure do take general form, but on the other hand, taking into account the vicissitudes of his thought, finding them should not be adjudged as irrelevant. After all, in some part, Kołakowski never fully rejected some strictly Marxist convictions: that human thought was continually modified and this process would never cease (moreover, all counter interventions were blameworthy), that philosophy demanded not only theorizing but also influencing moral attitude, that thinkers not only should describe reality, they were also obliged to reject all the falsehood present in the world, and to bare all kinds of fallacy. The change of the ways these ideas have been clarified by Kołakowski is determined, as a matter of fact, by moral sensitiveness. For as he pointed out in *Education to Hatred, Education to Dignity*: 'Evil must be part of the world, but woe to him who bears it' (Kołakowski, 1990, p. 257).

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ABSTRACT

MARXIST TRAIT OF REVISIONISM: LESZEK KOŁAKOWSKI'S CONSISTENT TRANSITION TO INCONSISTENT PHILOSOPHY

In the article the author describes theoretical reasons that stood behind Kołakowski's transition from being an orthodox Marxist to become an actual leader of the Polish revisionist movement. His intention is to concentrate on those aspects of Kołakowski's thought that have not changed, apart from any biographical and psychological reasons. (1) First of those features is Kołakowski's inability of completeness, the anti-code disposition. (2) The second trait is the moral attitude, an intention to influence on people's morality by convincing them that social and internal (necessarily bound with social) changes are desirable; that an existential calm demolishes morality. (3) Third feature concerns the fact that Kołakowski did not attempt to create his own philosophy, he was rather a historian of ideas, a skeptic, and a critic.

KEYWORDS: Kołakowski, revisionism, Marxism, involvement

MARKSISTOWSKIE CECHY REWIZJONIZMU: LESZKA KOŁAKOWSKIEGO SPÓJNE PRZEJŚCIE DO NIESPÓJNEJ FILOZOFII

W artykule zestawione zostają dwa pierwsze etapy twórczości Leszka Kołakowskiego: marksistowski oraz rewizjonistyczny. Wychodząc naprzeciw pracom, które dotychczas poruszały tę problematykę, autor skupia się na tych przekonaniach polskiego myśliciela, które pozostały niezmiennie dla każdego z obu okresów, więcej nawet – które wydały się leżeć u podstaw porzucenia przezeń marksistowskiej dogmatyki. Są to kolejno: (1) systemowa niezakończoność filozofii, jej antykodeksowe nastawienie; (2) potrzeba zaangażowania, związana z pomysłem, że do podstawowych zadań filozofii należy wpływanie na postawy moralne oraz ich odpowiednie kształtowanie; (3) antytetyczność podejścia Kołakowskiego, znajdująca istotny wyraz w przyjmowaniu pozycji błazna, a także konsekwentne nastawienie na negację zastanych propozycji światopoglądowych (tak tradycyjnych jak współczesnych polskiemu myślicielowi).

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Kołakowski, rewizjonizm, marksizm, zaangażowanie

Adam Olczyk

Marxist Trait of Revisionism: Leszek Kołakowski's Consistent Transition to Inconsistent Philosophy

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ON HISTORY AND LIBERTY: THE 'REVISIONISM' OF BRONISŁAW BACZKO

In 1969, just one year after Baczkó was obliged to leave Poland because of the political hostility against him, the French journal *Diogenes* published a short article entitled "The moral responsibility of the historian".¹ This article sums Baczkó's ethical principles as an historian as it summarizes the humanist views of the 'Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History'.² The text points out that the historian is not allowed to select another kind of truth than the one that lies in the texts themselves. The historian is obliged to "choose" the truth and may not manipulate the past, or voluntarily forget some unpleasant events, because of a dogma that tells him what to read in order to respect the interpretation of the world delivered by the political power.³ This article is an important clarification in the field of the history of ideas in regard of the Polish situation, where after the students' demonstrations of 1968 the power became more and more dictatorial. It is not for no reason that this article was recently reprinted in a renewed and separated publication. As a tribute to the recently deceased historian—Baczkó died in August 2016, aged 92—one of his ancient students and continuators, Michel Porret, Professor at University of Geneva, selected this short essay to be rediscovered.⁴

¹ Baczkó, Bronisław, juillet-octobre 1969, *Diogenes*, "La responsabilité morale de l'historien", 67, pp. 61-70.

² Sometimes called the 'Warsaw school of the history of ideas' too.

³ "La responsabilité morale de l'historien est totale et personne ne peut l'en décharger. En tant qu'historien précisément, il doit explorer le passé pour arriver à la vérité ; il est moralement obligé de la choisir et n'a aucun droit à la falsification" (Baczkó 1969, 68-69).

⁴ Porret, Michel (publ.), 2016, *La responsabilité morale de l'historien: Bronisław Baczkó*, Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne.

My article deals with the philosophical specificities of the 'Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History' and more precisely with Baczko's contributions and ideas. My main concerns were to understand how the humanist and subjective questions shaped a historical vision of Marxism during the 1950s and the 1960s at a time when scholars sincerely believed that Marxist theories and socialist societies could be reformed. With his friend the philosopher Leszek Kołakowski (1927-2009), Baczko was the leader of a "revisionist think tank" in the communist Poland. Isolated from the Western World and recovering with difficulty from the World War II traumatism, Poland confronted Russian hegemony with a sceptical apprehension. That is one of the reason why Polish revisionism looked through Marxism with the glasses of historical relativism. What is clearly an original and sophisticated point of view, because most of the theories which aim was to develop Marxist theories—in the West as well as in the Eastern countries—used a philosophical or ontological basis. To look for the values, or to the "humanist content in ideas or in concepts"—what means to look for another kind of language different from the philosophical one—was a specificity of the 'Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History'.

Marxist tensions

During the Second World War, Bronisław Baczko (1924-2016), aged fifteenth, fled into the USSR territories accompanied by his elder brother. To escape the Nazi invasion, he took refuge in a kolkhoz before returning to Poland, as a lieutenant and a political commissar, with the *Polish Armed Forces in the East*.⁵ Baczko originated from a Jewish family was attracted by the communist ideology during his stay in USSR; a reaction to antisemitism might have pushed him to communism.⁶ At the end of the war, aged 21 years old, Baczko studied Philosophy and became a great hope for Polish Marxism. Meanwhile as his students—like Krzysztof Pomian—later specified he did not become a 'hard Marxist' even if its

⁵ Bronisław Baczko might have participated in the liberation of Berlin. Cf. Porret, Michel et Rosset, François, 4 septembre 2016, *Le Temps*, "Adieu à Bronisław Baczko", online: <https://www.letemps.ch/culture/2016/09/04/adieu-Bronisław-baczko>, seen on 28.12.2016.

⁶ Probably because of the anti-Semitic tensions prevailing already in Poland before Hitler's invasion. Cf. Pomian, Krzysztof, 1989, *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, "Baczko: Lumières et Révolution", XXVII, pp. 14-15.

teaching was perfectly orthodox he did not offer a dogma to believe but he developed more a set of questions to ask (Pomian 1989, p. 13-14). From Baczko's point of view Marxist philosophy was not an achieved theory but still dissimulated several problems that needed to be developed to match the proletarian social expectations. These were the kinds of ideas that guided B. Baczko's research during the period of his studies.

In 1950, B. Baczko became a tutor at the institute that trained the executives of the Polish United Workers' Party. During these years as the Polish Marxists were trying to gain a philosophical consideration among the public and their colleagues, Baczko developed a quarrel with a well-established figure of Polish philosophy, Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1886-1981). Baczko considered Kotarbiński's philosophy to be "bourgeois", and he attacked the latter for his lack of comprehension of dialectical materialism. In Baczko's writings Kotarbiński appeared as a figure acting against socialism. The history of this quarrel helps to understand the position of Baczko in the institutions, and how sincerely he was a Marxist, even a Stalinist in the beginning of the fifties.⁷ Even if Kotarbiński was allowed to reply and gave Baczko a lesson of philosophic exegesis, this episode generated great fear among the philosophers that were not members of the communist party, the reason was that under the rule of the Stalinisation they might have been put in detention (Pomian 1989, p. 16).

Baczko wrote his PhD thesis between 1952 and 1955 (Baczko 2003, p. 37). The thesis focused on the "Polish Democratic Society", a group of exiled Polish intellectuals that were active between 1832-1840. They lived and organised a political party in Western Europe (Paris, Brussels, London, etc.), they edited a journal and conspired to free Poland from the hands of the Prussian and the Russian empires. Baczko

⁷ Andrzej Walicki offers this description of the state of mind of his friends in the early 1950s: "The common experience of us all was the Stalinism of the early 1950s and the vigorous reaction to it during the Polish 'thaw' of 1955-56. Except for myself, all the members of the group belonged to the party and in the early fifties Kołakowski and Baczko were, in fact, ardent Stalinists, deeply engaged in the fight against 'bourgeois philosophy' and religious beliefs" Walicki, Andrzej, 1984, "On Writing Intellectual History: Leszek Kołakowski and the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas" (w:), Jacek Migasiński (red.), *Leszek Kołakowski in Memoriam*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, p. 10.

confessed that this topic was imposed and that he was obliged to deal with it in a Marxist-Leninist way, which resulted in a “bad book”. Nevertheless, this PhD thesis was Baczko’s first attempt as a Marxist historian.

Meanwhile, during the years 1953-57, Baczko’s Marxist convictions started to disintegrate. The contradictions inside the Jdanovian philosophy were too strong and the oppositions between the reality and the rhetoric of the party too evident. Even if Baczko was under the influence of the philosopher Tadeusz Kroński (1907-1958), with whom he developed a great interest in the Hegelian philosophy, he could not tolerate anymore the constant manipulations developed by the media and the authority. With Kroński’s help Baczko developed a new interest in the German idealists. The two men tried to follow the line drawn by the party regarding Marxist conceptions, but they developed a personal way of analysing problems (Fernandes 1979, p. 30-120). For Baczko the breaking point was reached in 1956, during the Poznan uprising: “Having seen the proletarian dictatorship crushing with tanks the real workers was for me a key moment”.⁸ That was the time when two travels to Paris were organized, funded by Eastern associations.⁹ Under the de-Stalinisation period, Poland, as a part of the Eastern world, opened itself to the rest of the world. It was during this journey in Paris that Baczko and his colleagues met Claude Lévi-Strauss and other intellectuals. The friendship that Baczko created with the historian François Furet (1927-1997) on this occasion would be of great importance to the development of his intellectual life; Furet became his “favourite intellectual partner”.¹⁰ Furet was introduced to Baczko by Witold Kula (1916-1988), a Polish scholar, whose research on historical anthropology would be of great inspiration to Baczko. Before the rise of the Berlin Wall, the Polish scholars were deeply engaged in reading Western works, they read simultaneously Jean-Paul Sartre’s *L’existencialisme est un humanisme* (1946), young Georg Lukacs, Lévi-Strauss’ *Tristes tropiques* (1955), Max Weber, Marc Bloch, Karl Popper,

⁸ “Avoir vu la dictature du prolétariat écraser par des chars les vrais ouvriers est pour moi un épisode fondateur.” (Baczko 2003, 38).

⁹ In September 1956, organised by the UNESCO and in 1959 with the help of the Ford Foundation. (Porret, M.; Rosset, F. 2016, “Adieu à Bronisław Baczko”).

¹⁰ François Furet « est devenu un ami très proche, infaillible, mon interlocuteur intellectuel privilégié » (Baczko 2003, 40-41).

Karl Manheim, Raymond Aron, George Orwell and Albert Camus, etc. The richness of this cultural discovery deeply affected Bronisław Baczko and his friends. The destruction of Marxist convictions because of the repressions in Poznań together with the discovery of new forms of political and social thoughts generated great curiosity among the Polish scholars, but at the same time it strengthened their opposition to the Marxist-Leninist current. But Baczko as a member of the communist party was still a true Marxist, with his comrades he believed that planned and rational economy was superior to free-market organization. Meanwhile Marxism as a state ideology needed to be reformed, it was too aggressive towards the citizens, and its lack of efficiency in production was evident (Pomian 1989, p. 18; Kolakowski 1978 (1956, *Varsovie Budapest*), p. 63).

At the end of the fifties, as the political situation started to change, some of Baczko's friends were publicly called "revisionists", a position considered antagonist to the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, and that could be severely condemned. Among these suspected persons was Leszek Kołakowski, whose works were more and more criticized. The "revisionists", inspired by the philosophical ideas of young Marx¹¹, were developing an intellectual language focused on man and anthropology, one opposing the economic and political aims of the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. Leszek Kołakowski summarised this position:

"The point is to interpret the classical issues of philosophy as issues of a moral nature, to translate the questions of metaphysics, anthropology, and theory of knowledge into questions expressed in the language of human moral problems, to make an effort to unmask their hidden humanistic content; to approach the problem of god as the problem of human being, the problem of earth and heaven as the problem of human freedom, the problem of nature as the problem of the relationship of the human being to the world, the problem of the soul as the problem of the value of life, the problem of human nature as the problem of the relationship among human beings" (R. C. Fernandes 1976, p. 129-130).

This argument helps us understand how the "revisionists" insisted on the development of ethics in opposition to the strictly political views professed by the Polish United Workers' Party. Baczko and his friends claimed that it was possible for arts, literature, economy, and social

¹¹ Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844.

sciences to be totally free of the ideology of the communist party and¹², in the same vein, that it was possible to develop autonomous universities. The “revisionists” thought that the conscience of the individual might be free too and that no one should be obliged to simply obey the party orders without developing their own opinion. In response to a personal attack made by Gomulka during the Ninth Plenum of the communist party, L. Kołakowski wrote in *Nowa Kultura* in September 1957:

“We are Communists not because we have accepted Communism as a historical necessity; we are Communists because we are on the side of the oppressed against their oppressors, on the side of the poor against their masters, on the side of the persecuted against their persecutors; we are moved to action not by considerations of theory but by moral impulses” (L. B. 1958, p. 254).

Meanwhile, “revisionism” never was a true body of theory. It was a humanist idea shared by individuals – professors, philosophers, artists, economists, writers or citizens. Bronisław Baczko underlined this particularity specifying that: “(...) the books that we published were not crypto-political books, they did not serve as an excuse to display political ideas using Aesop’s metaphors (...)”¹³ (Baczko 2003, p. 42).

The “revisionists” could not organise themselves in political parties or even factions inside the Polish United Workers’ Party (Pomian 1989, 19). But within the university walls, led by Baczko, L. Kołakowski and K. Pomian, they organised a seminar of open debates. Primarily, this group was a way of staying informed. As information was manipulated and hidden by official institutions, gathering specialists from various fields was an opportunity to stay informed and to understand what was truly happening in the country and inside the Soviet Bloc. This seminar was not a “school”, as historians called it sometimes, but more of an intellectual circle; Rubem César Fernandes named it: the “Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History” (Rubem César Fernandes 1976). It existed from 1956 to 1968, was led by Baczko, and reunited a gathering of brilliant

¹² In the arts the “revisionists” wanted to develop other forms of culture than the “soviet realism”. They aspired to develop a true scientific research without necessarily keeping a link between their work and the Marxism-Leninism classics Cf. L. B., June 1958, “Revisionist Poland: Charting a Difficult Course”, *The World Today*, XIV, p. 252.

¹³ “(...) les livres qu’on a publiés n’étaient pas des ouvrages crypto-politiques, ne servaient pas de prétextes à exprimer des idées politiques dans le langage d’Ésope (...)”

scholars like Kołakowski, Pomian and Andrzej Walicki (1930) or Jerzy Szacki (1929). The “Warsaw Circle” attracted scholars from all around Poland and sometimes people from abroad, like François Furet, associated with the Parisian “Sixième section de l’École pratique des hautes études” (nowadays EHESS).¹⁴ What was the “Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History”? R. C. Fernandes summarizes it with the general question “how to speak with clarity about God?”, which means that the group “gained shape as an effort to re-evaluate concepts which were instrumental in integrating the traditional themes of theology and philosophy into the historical material (R. C. Fernandes 1976, p. 122).” In the case of Baczko, the aim was to investigate Marx as a historical figure and the diversity of “marxism” philosophies. The goal was not to search for an absolute truth but for a set of philosophies that might be explained in relation to their historical context and major problems of their time. Meanwhile, Baczko rejected the label of “a school of thought”, they all worked together during a short period of time, he said, and it was not enough to develop a common approach to research, even if some similar aspects emerged.¹⁵

¹⁴ R. C. Fernandes completed a list of the topics discussed from 1962 to 1968. Most of the sessions dealt with religious matters, including mysticism and political perspectives. The Enlightenment, humanism, German philosophy, or historiographic interrogations were part of the talks given in the seminar (R. C. Fernandes 1976, 204-209).

¹⁵ “On parle volontiers en France d’une “école polonaise” historiographique, à laquelle j’ai appartenu. Il est frappant qu’en Pologne, on l’appelle plutôt “l’école des historiens des idées de Varsovie”. Qu’était-ce exactement? C’est une question qu’on me pose souvent et à laquelle je n’ai pas de réponse claire. Le nom, pompeux, désigne en fait les travaux d’une dizaine de personnes sur une période très courte. Parmi elles, on trouve Leszek Kołakowski, Andrzej Walicki – remarquable historien des idées russes, malheureusement insuffisamment traduit en français mais très connu dans le monde anglo-saxon -, et qui n’étaient pas marxistes, ni membres du parti. Il y a aussi Jerzy Szacki, sociologue et historien de la sociologie, qui, à l’époque, a publié un ouvrage sur les paradoxes de la contre-révolution. On y trouve encore Krzysztof Pomian (...). »

“In France, some people speak about a Polish Historiographic School, to which I belonged to. In Poland it is striking that it is named the “Warsaw School of the Historian of Ideas”. What was it exactly? It is a question that I am often asked and to which I do not have a clear answer. The name, pompous, concerns the works of a group of ten people that reunited together for a short time. Among them we can find Leszek Kołakowski, Andrzej Walicki – remarkable historian of the Russian ideas, unfortunately not translated enough in French but well studied in the Anglo-Saxon world – and who were not Marxists or even members of the communist party (there is a problem here in

In fact, Baczko and his friends avoided the question of the absolute meaning of an object in order to look for “what they were after”. Under the dichotomy “alienation/liberation”—a classical opposition in the Marxist philosophy—the Warsaw intellectuals developed a set of questions with regard to the values disseminated by an idea or an intellectual construction. If we consider that a reflection on the absolute is at the same time a reflection upon our proper values or identity, it becomes possible to study the historical perception of the concept of liberation and alienation. The alienated character will not be the same under the Napoleonic rule and in the Soviet society. In the Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History the search for knowledge was above all historic because of the opposition against a teleological perception of History as introduced by classical Marxism and developed by Marxism-Leninism. To quote Kołakowski again, the aim was “to make an effort to unmask the hidden humanistic content (of the concepts)” (C. R. Fernandes 1976, p. 129). Andrzej Walicki commented by saying:

“We had had enough of the “only scientific methods” and the “only scientific answers”, we were suspicious of people who wanted to study ideas from the point of view of their truth or falsity, especially of those who claimed to have a monopoly of “truly scientific methods” and pretended to know the truth itself. The historical approach, with its inevitable ingredient of historical relativity, seemed to us a more reliable weapon against all forms of dogmatism than the substitution of one dogmatic theory for another” (A. Walicki 1984, p. 12).¹⁶

Moreover, the Warsaw humanists developed an anthropological approach, which is the reason why people like Witold Kula, the Annales School of history or Claude-Lévy Strauss were of great interest for

the transcription of the interview, Baczko is only referring to Walicki, not to Kołakowski). There was Jerzy Szacki too, a sociologist and a historian of sociology, who, during this period published a book on the counter-revolution paradoxes. Krzysztof Pomian was part of the group too (...)” (Baczko 2003, p. 38).

¹⁶ Baczko offered this description of the phenomenon as analyzed by Walicki: “(Baczko) saw historicism conceived of as historical herme-neutics (as distinct from historicism as the belief in the ‘objective laws of history’) as the best means of emancipating people from reified, alienated modes of thinking, as a means of acquiring self-awareness and thereby overcoming ‘ideological alienations’.” (Baczko, B., 1965, *Człowiek i światopogląd* (Man and World-Views), “Cryptoproblems and Historicism”, Warsaw, pp. 411-412.)

them.¹⁷ Baczko spoke of “synchronic approach” as he tried to explain that the group wanted to understand and explore historical issues, connected with ideas or intellectual products which contributed to understanding the “hopes”, “fears” or “obsessions” of a period of time, in order to perceive its philosophical nature. That is why “young Marx” was interesting because he studied religion from an anthropological point of view and because he did not share his views on historical and social nature as a “science” as Engels and Lenin would do.

The communist power looked at this research with suspicion. Baczko and Kołakowski were sided with radical communist critiques of the regime. The problem was that, under Gomulka as well as before him, Polish socialism was getting more and more closed in a dogma. Intellectuals, even those closer to the party line, like Adam Schaff (1913-2006),¹⁸ expressed fear to see general “alienation” grow in the Polish society. To suppose that alienation existed in socialist regimes was already a problematic assertion because that meant that the path adopted to achieve communism did not work well. In Baczko’s eyes, these debates underlined the potentialities still dissimulated in socialist philosophies and politics; the heart of socialist ideas could be used to develop a classless society, but all the spheres of social life needed to be organized to share this perspective. Socialist ideas might be discussed regarding family issues, education, enterprise management, and, of course, politics. Unfortunately, dictatorship blocked political power and ideology, with a Stalinist horizon of expectation, frustrated every honest debate on these questions.

Inspired by the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, Baczko started working on Marx and Hegel’s ideas on social reformation. The problem that deeply interested Baczko and his friends was the question of alienation. He jumped from Marx to Hegel to understand how Marx used the conceptual framework explored by Hegel. In Baczko’s eyes, the interpretation of Marx developed by the Soviet authorities as a patchwork of canonical texts was unacceptable. Marx could not be understood only as a scholar whose philosophy was definitively fixed on

¹⁷ Pomian, Krysztof, Winter-Spring 1978, “Impact of Annales School in Eastern Europe”, *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, I, (n° 3/4), pp. 101-121.

¹⁸ Adam Schaff was considered the official ideologist of the Polish Communist Party (Fernandes 1979, p. 160-162).

a set of selected works, he needed to be analysed in relation to his contemporaries and his “mentors”. In short, Marx needed to be historicized. The essays published during the period 1956-60 – most of them dealing with Hegel – were part of a research scenario in which Marx would one day be included.¹⁹ Regarding the problem of “alienation” Baczko interrogated Hegel and tried to understand which differences – and why – were to be underlined between Jean-Jacques Rousseau and romantic philosophers. If the romantic authors saw in the Enlightenment a speculative moment of spiritual miscomprehension, putting aside the utilitarian and individualistic philosophies, how should we understand the “social contract” and its author? Inspired by these questions Baczko started studying Rousseau:

“I did not jump from Rousseau to utopia. I found an “utopia” in Rousseau. How can it be possible to write in the same period the *Social Contract* and the *Confessions* – expression of an excessive individualism? How to put together the city of the *Social contract* and the society of Clarence (*sic!* Clarens), in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*? I needed a conceptual framework; I seized the concepts of community, utopia but also loneliness. This approach corresponds to our common research (to the Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History): to give up the Marxist-Leninist teleological idea of the long road to the end of history” (Baczko 2003, p. 45).²⁰

It took almost ten years for the Warsaw humanists to publish monographs. As Rubem Fernandes underlined it : “The rejection of both psychological and sociological types of reductionism was one of the central tenets of the historiography developed in the context of the

¹⁹ From a list of various works here are some titles: *Studia Filozoficzne*, “Hegel, Marks i problemy alienacji”, I, 1957, p. 36-58; *Studia Filozoficzne*, “Hegel a Rousseau. Cz. I Uwagi wstępne”, VI, 1958, p. 87-120; *Studia Filozoficzne*, “Hegel a Rousseau. Cz. II. Kultura i drogi wolności”, I, 1959, p. 136-169. A complete list of Baczko’s publications is available in Floryńska-Lalewicz, H.; Porret, M., 1989, *Revue des sciences sociales*, “Bibliographie de Bronisław Baczko”, XXVII (n°85), p. 319-332.

²⁰ “Je ne suis pas passé de Rousseau à l’utopie. L’utopie, je l’ai trouvée dans Rousseau. Comment peut-on écrire à la fois le *Contrat social* et les *Confessions* – marque d’un individualisme poussé à l’extrême ? Comment penser ensemble la cité du *Contrat social* et la société de Clarence (*sic!* Clarens), de *la Nouvelle Héloïse* ? J’avais besoin d’un outillage conceptuel ; je me suis approprié les concepts de communauté, d’utopie, mais aussi de solitude. Le fond de la démarche rejoint les acquis de notre questionnement commun : renoncer à l’idée téléologique marxiste-léniniste de la longue marche de l’histoire vers son aboutissement.”

Warsaw Circle” (Fernandes 1979, p. 199-200). With the aim to move beyond the question of the absolute as a definitive answer to a specific problem, Bronisław Baczko developed an “inquisitive” methodology around research questions. In opposition to the “absolute” issues, Baczko and his friends undertook a reflection on the “visions of the world” professed by theories and scholars.²¹ Baczko’s book on Jean-Jacques Rousseau dealt with these kinds of issues.²² Baczko read Rousseau in close relation to Diderot and other contemporaries. The point was to underline how Rousseau surprised its readers and philosophers’ friends and how his philosophy was related to the great questions of the Enlightenment. Initially tempted by a way of life inside society – the only possibility to find friendship – Rousseau, disappointed, found refuge in loneliness. In nature Rousseau could reconstruct his unity as a being. Disillusioned by life in society, Rousseau discovered in loneliness sweet happiness that was vanishing little by little in the middle of complex social bodies. Rousseau discovered that life in society requires a “denaturalization”, which means that the individuals needed to accept a part of the alienation if they wanted to survive. In close contact with Rousseau’s philosophy, Baczko and the Warsaw humanists felt a strong link to the Genevan citizen, regarding him as their contemporary (Fernandes 1979, p. 179). But between nature and society there was a link to be made, a link that required a set of values that might navigate from a solitary existence to a more complex society. Similarly to Baczko, Rousseau undertook a range of social experiences – expressed as “ideal-types” – bidding together the vision of a ‘good patriarch’ in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the supposed natural learning of Emile and, finally, the radically democratic society of the *Social contract*. Meanwhile, in the whole process something was lost. Jean-Jacques Rousseau expressed it when writing *Emile et Sophie, ou, Les solitaires*, published posthumously in 1781. In this piece of fiction, Rousseau described the failure of the sophisticated and individualistic education of the citizen Emile, who was prepared to become an excellent man and a perfect citizen. With regard to this failure, the *Confessions* was more than a personal diary delivered

²¹ Baczko B., 1965, *Człowiek i światopoglądy (Man and his visions of the world)*, Warsaw.

²² Baczko B., 1964, *Rousseau: Samotność i Wspólnota*, Warsaw: PWN; *Rousseau. Einsamkeit und Gemeinschaft*, Wien: Europa-Verlag, 1970; *Rousseau. Solitude et communauté*, Paris, La Haye: Mouton, 1974.

to the public. In this book and in the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782) Rousseau developed a dolorous consciousness of the defeat of civilization and education.

Regarding the Marxist-Leninist tradition, the goal which Baczko achieved with this work on Rousseau was a complete reconsideration of Hegel's perception on Enlightened philosophy. There was something deeper there than "bourgeois" considerations. Rousseau was an accusative mind of his time, but also someone who understood that liberty would not be achieved under the control of an "Idea" acting in the World, rather only with citizen strength. Baczko created a clear and important academic work—not a political essay—but the conclusions of that work were in opposition to the Marxist-Leninist dogma of the end of history. Following Andrzej Walicki, this attention brought to historical relativism and subjectivism was part of the struggle that Baczko and Kołakowski engaged in to escape historical necessity (A. Walicki 1984, p. 11). Walicki claimed that the two friends were fascinated by the problems of historicism in its two different directions. The first of them was the critique of the "Hegelian belief in the rational and necessary laws governing historical processes", the second was accurate historicism, inspired by "Dilthey's method of empathetic understanding (*Verstehen*)", which developed in them the philosophical taste to sophisticatedly understand ideas in their historical context.

Unfortunately, in 1968 came the end of the whole process. Confronted with the incapacity of the communist party to reform itself, the intellectuals and students went on strike. Their massive demonstrations were severely crushed. Thousands of students were expelled from universities. The crisis did not spare the university staff; the humanists were expelled too. Baczko and his friends could not teach, publish, or even be quoted anymore. They were allowed to continue their work in the Academy of Sciences, but they were regularly attacked in the press and could not defend themselves. The situation could not last as the hostility of the authorities was too strong. The friends decided to separate and to emigrate. Helped by a French scholar, Jean Ehrard, Baczko was welcomed at the University of Clermond-Ferrand, in France, where he taught between 1969 and 1973 before moving to Geneva (Pomian 1989, p. 21).

Utopian lights

To understand Baczko's work once he left Poland, we need to remember Kołakowski's rejection of historical necessity and his defence of communism as a body of values. With works like *Utopian Lights* (1978)²³ or "*The social imaginary*" (1984),²⁴ the historian would keep studying the Enlightenment but with a specific approach focused on the symbolic representations of the 18th century.

The concept of "idea-images" needs to be discussed here before we go further. This concept is similar to the notion of Max Weber's "ideal-type". The team of historians and philosophers cautiously read and discussed Weber's works at the University of Warsaw. The notion of the ideal-type would inspire most of the members in their research because of the antinomy between imagination and reality that fascinated them. An ideal-type is in fact an intellectual construction of values and ideas that are bound together to create a perfect image of a selected "reality". "Ideal-types" are idealistic images that might hide in every intellectual activity of the human mind, from scientific knowledge to artistic prospection, "images" tend to inspire and organize a horizon of expectation that sustain the validity of the process.²⁵ One of the most significant images of the ideal-type is the vision of the classless society developed by Marxism. Marx gave no description of such a society, nevertheless this idea organizes Marx's hopes as he delivered his reflections on the capitalist society. This means that there is a utopia in Marx's philosophy. Armed with the notion of ideal-type or "idea-image", Baczko pursued on its own the "revisionist program" developed with his

²³ Baczko, Bronisław, 2001 (1978), *Lumières de l'utopie*, Paris: Payot; *Utopian lights: the evolution of the idea of social progress*, New York: Paragon House, 1989.

²⁴ Baczko, Bronisław, 1984, *Les imaginaires sociaux : mémoires et espoirs collectifs*, Paris: Payot.

²⁵ Baczko defines the concept of "idea-image" as follow: "(...) how to move from "sensitivities" and "visions" to the intellectual domain? I then discovered a concept named "idea-image". Utopias are made from "ideas-images", ideas expressed with images or conceptual images, ideas that generate images and images that generate ideas." (Baczko 2003, p. 48)

"(...) comment passer des « sensibilités » et des « visions » à l'intellect ? J'ai alors trouvé le concept d'"idée-image". Ainsi, les utopies sont faites d'idées-images, des idées traduites en images ou des images conceptualisées, des idées génératrices d'images et des images génératrices d'idées."

friends. To answer the question of “how to speak with clarity about gods”, he developed an intellectual method to explore absolute manifestations and to clarify the way people try to use the term “gods” (or absolute ideals) to organize activities in the society, create institutions, new symbols, or to deliver a new kind of historical narrative, or general understanding of the world. The concept of “idea-image” was developed to discover what kind of values were used by the speaker and to determine the impact of these values in the comprehension of events or in the structuration of reality. Post-War Poland was a significant example of how a totalitarian power created a general narrative inspired by the Soviet domination and how the “Empire” needed to be justified in a teleological perspective as the “natural path” of History.

Working now between France and Geneva, Baczko was inspired by Francophonic intellectuals. During the 70s, some titles quoted in Baczko’s works catch the reader’s attention, such as *Sociology of hope* (*Sociologie de l'espérance*, 1973) by Henri Desroche (1914-1994), or Castoriadis’ *The imaginary institution of society*.²⁶ *Annales School* is a recurrent motif among these prestigious scholars. Another important thinker that played a great role in Baczko’s intellectual development is Jean Starobinski. A descendant of a Jewish Polish family, Starobinski attracted Baczko to the University of Geneva in 1974, where he became a Professor of history of ideas and historiography, which was a prestigious and stimulating position, the only of this kind in Europe at that time (M. Porret 2003, p. 25). Baczko found in Jean Starobinski a devoted colleague and friend with whom he could share his passion for Rousseau and the Enlightenment.

To introduce all the works that Baczko developed during this second part of his life is pointless, I am going to focus here on the ideas and works dealing with the question of utopia, to make understandable his position as a historian in regard of traditional Marxist issues. Inspired by the utopian investigations and reflections on the events that happened in Poland, in Paris in May ’68, and all over the world with the decolonization process, Baczko pursued his works on utopianism. With his friend, Franco Venturi, they studied the texts of a Benedictine monk called Léger Marie Deschamps (1716-1774), known under his

²⁶ Castoriadis, Cornelius, 1975, *L'institution imaginaire de la société*, Paris : Seuil.

Benedictine name of 'Dom Deschamps'.²⁷ This Benedictine monk developed an original approach concerning the state of society. Baczko called this approach "negative theology". Dom Deschamps hoped to recreate an idealistic state of civilization. His main idea was that man came out of the state of nature to enter the state of society, which is corrupt, and, finally, once aware of the moral decadence of their social state, they will evolve into a new state of nature, simply living in the forests with almost no technology, conscious that this situation is their real state of living. Following Deschamps' ideas, man needs to enter the corrupt state of society to understand that they must leave it, never to go back again. Studying Deschamps' "*état de moeurs*" (moral state), Baczko used two specific approaches. As he did before for Rousseau, Baczko studied Deschamps' readings when writing about his ideas, e.g., as he read Deschamps' correspondence too. With his synchronic approach, Baczko looked for Deschamps' ideas within his own worldviews. He analysed Deschamps' writings, but, similarly, he paid attention to what Jean-Jacques Rousseau or Diderot wrote about Deschamps. In doing so, the Polish historian wanted to avoid seeing the Benedictine monk's ideas as precursors of the French Revolution or Hegel²⁸ - he tried to understand his anthropological and social horizon of expectations. This methodological approach was inspired by Claude Lévi-Strauss' works and his ideas on intellectual "*bricolage*" (do-it-yourself). As Baczko quoted:

"What was deeply inspiring for me, what seduced me very much, was the "*bricolage*" concept - Lévi-Strauss' *bricolage*... I think that, retrospectively, we can say that the "*bricolage*" idea was clearly in opposition to the scholar's tradition from the place

²⁷ Baczko B., 1968, *Cahiers Vilfredo Pareto, Revue européenne d'histoire des sciences sociales*, « Le mot de l'énigme métaphysique ou Dom Deschamps », 15, pp. 5-49 ; *Dix-huitième siècle*, « Les discours et les messages de Dom Deschamps », 5, 1973, pp. 250-270 ; Léger Marie Deschamps, 1760-1770 ?, *Le vrai système, ou, Le mot de l'énigme métaphysique et morale*, Jean Thomas et Franco Venturi (publ.), Droz, 1963 (1939).

²⁸ Dom Deschamps was re-discovered in the 19th century, when a scholar, Emile Beaussire, found his works at the library of Poitiers in 1862. He wrote a book analysing Deschamps as a Hegel's predecessor: *Antécédents de l'hégélianisme dans la philosophie française. Dom Deschamps, son système et son école d'après un manuscrit et des correspondances inédites du 18^e siècle*, Paris, 1865.

where I came from, because there it was nothing to explore, everything had already been anticipated, already written, on the Marxist Tables of the Law".²⁹

In the 70s Baczko became more and more critical about the situation in Poland and orientated his reflections on the 'myths' that operated inside the utopian reflection. Baczko and his friend Kołakowski were pessimistic about the possibilities of reformation in the Eastern world.³⁰ Pessimism that Kołakowski would theoretically express in his masterwork, *Main Currents of Marxism*, stating that in the Communist World a problem existed related to Marxist philosophy itself, because some authoritative elements of the philosophy would bring disastrous historical consequences, and the best known were developed under Stalin.³¹

In 1978, Baczko published one of his masterworks: *Lumières de l'utopie*.³² The book is contemporary to François Furet's work *Penser la Révolution française*, and the two books share a similar approach.³³ The two historians avoided thinking about the Enlightenment and the French Revolution as a necessary process, as if the Revolution was already dictated by the Enlightenment and the philosophers. When working on *Penser la Révolution française*, Furet criticized the studies realized by the communist historian Albert Soboul (1914-1982).³⁴ The latter understood the French Revolution with a Marxist sensibility: the

²⁹ "Ce qui parlait énormément à mon imagination, ce qui me séduisait beaucoup, c'était l'idée de bricoler – le bricolage de Lévi-Strauss... Je crois que, rétrospectivement, on peut dire que l'idée de bricoler, évidemment, s'opposait au système dont je sortais ; parce que, là, il n'y avait rien à bricoler, tout était déjà fixé, consigné dans les tables marxistes de la loi" (Baczko 2003, 47).

³⁰ See the contributions of Baczko and Kołakowski in this symposium: Kende, Pierre and Pomian, Krzysztof, 1978, *1956, Varsovie Budapest: la deuxième révolution d'octobre*, Paris: Seuil.

³¹ Kołakowski Leszek, 1976, *Główne nurty marksizmu. Powstanie, rozwój, rozkład*, 3 vol.; *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origins, Growth and Dissolution*, trans. by P.S. Falla, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, 3 vol.

³² Baczko B., 2001, (1978), *Lumières de l'utopie*, Paris: Payot et Rivage; *Utopian lights : the evolution of the idea of social progress*, trans. by Judith L. Greenberg, New York, 1989.

³³ Furet, François, 1979, *Penser la Révolution française*, Paris : Gallimard ; Furet, François, 1971, *Annales. ESC*, "Le catéchisme révolutionnaire", 26 (n°2), pp. 255-289.

³⁴ Soboul, Albert, (1962), *Histoire de la Révolution française*, Paris: Editions Sociales, 2 t. ; Soboul, Albert, (1970-1983), *La Civilisation et la Révolution française*, Paris: Arthaud, 3 t.

moment of the Terror and Robespierre was described as the key point of the Revolution. What it means is that it was the only true revolutionary moment: the Terror was the path the Revolution needed to follow to the realization of the hopes of the people. This perception of the events was obviously structured by the idea that the socialist revolutions of the 19th century was finally achieved by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The analysis undertaken by Soboul made great use of the idea that the Russian Revolution was the dialectical negation and achievement of the French Revolution. Furet criticized Soboul's lack of historic comprehension when he spoke about "class struggles" without offering any kind of demographical and social structuration. Finally, François Furet, like Baczko, was a great defender of the "openness" and fluidity of history. As Baczko would write in the article "Lumières" for the *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, directed by François Furet and Mona Ozouf, the French Revolution was not a direct consequence of the Enlightenment as stated by Albert Soboul.³⁵ There was no kind of necessity in the historical process. The philosophy of the Enlightenment, specifically the thoughts published in the second half of the 18th century, structured the Revolutionaries' comprehension about this extraordinary event. Meanwhile as Baczko shows, the Enlightenment created a distortion. The Revolutionaries, like Condorcet or even Danton, reflected upon the French Revolution as a rational political situation that might be understood and led. But in fact no one was prepared for the actions undertaken by the Parisian people – like the storming of the Bastille – or even the explosion of violence during the revolutionary days. Soboul's historical necessity is sapped by the lack of a serious reflection undertaken on the social origins of the Revolution actors – the questions of who the revolutionaries were, where they operated, with what kinds of symbols, ideas or actions – and on their dreams and worldviews. Baczko's major contributions to this new "histoire des mentalités" is related to imaginary perceptions. The topics analysed in *Utopian lights* are related to the impact of *utopianism* on political and social thought. Baczko understood that the 18th century was a "hot spot" (*période chaude*) for utopian paradigms, not only for communist ideas, of course, but also for liberal conceptions, natural hopes or even urbanistic

³⁵ Baczko, Bronisław, 1992 (1980), *Lumières* (w:), François Furet and Mona Ozouf (red.) *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, Paris : Flammarion, t. 4, pp. 275-291.

projects. As the reviews about *Utopian lights* underlined it, one of the most important aspects of the book was the fact that Baczko made lost objects from the past comprehensible again, like the Revolutionary calendar, whose internal logic was forgotten after the revolutionary fever. (Goulemot 1979, p. 449)³⁶

In *Utopian lights*, Baczko tried to conceptualize the kind of 'imaginary' structuring of the social reality of people living during the French Enlightenment period. *Utopian lights* unveiled some new reflections on Rousseau's *Considerations on the Government of Poland* (1772); Baczko underlined that the propositions displayed by Rousseau were part of an imaginary construction organized around the notion of virtue and military value which needed to be activated in republican regimes. Rousseau was more fascinated by a republican idea-image of a virtuous Poland than by properly analyzing the specific problems of Poland at that time. The same kind of research is conducted with topics entitled "utopia and the city", "utopia and metaphysics" – concerning Dom Deschamps – "utopia and public celebrations" and one of the most interesting: "utopia and the idea of progress in history". This last subject is clearly in contradiction with the analyses delivered by the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Baczko elaborated here on how the ideas-images related to utopia and history played an important role in the development of a mythology concerning the emergence of a rational history (with a specific beginning and an end) and how these ideas interacted with the actions and beliefs of men. Philosophers like Dom Deschamps, Morelly, or l'abbé de Saint-Pierre developed the idea that if their projects were implemented, history would become "rational": daily violence would disappear, as well as wars, famine, or political struggles. Men might behave "naturally" under the good laws of nature or the "rational" laws of society or politics. These kinds of reflections are similar

³⁶ « Pour nous, à deux siècles ou presque de distance, ce calendrier, ses Floréal et ses Prairial, n'ont guère de sens, et pour peu, nos bons maîtres l'auraient attribué à la folie révolutionnaire. Bronisław Baczko nous rappelle fort à propos, et avec pertinence, le rôle qu'ils étaient appelés à jouer dans l'esprit de ses promoteurs. »

"For us, who stand at a distant time of almost two centuries, this calendar with its months called *Floréal* and *Prairial* has no meaning and our old teachers might have thought it was revolutionary madness that dictated it. Bronisław Baczko intelligently brings to light the kind of role his conceptors expected it to play."

to the “ideas-images” displayed in perfect societies; authors like Thomas More or Denis Vairasse introduced the idea that under the good reign of a wise king the society of the Utopians or of the *Sévarambes* was totally transformed and that these people now live a “real life” under a good government. This kind of reflection on utopian legislation helps us understand why philosophers like Voltaire or Diderot put their faith in rulers like Frederic II or Catherine of Russia. During the Enlightenment period, scholars developed the specific utopia of the “enlightened despot” (*despote éclairé*), a ruler that might become a new legislator and found a new city, a city of happiness, peace, and harmony. These sorts of ideas have some similarity with the Marxist utopia of the “proletariat”, a social class that by seizing power would let its humanistic sensitivity speak through its political will and develop a new state liberated from discrimination. Baczko’s analysis demonstrated that the propositions of reforms developed during the Enlightenment were part of an imaginary tradition which perceives the State as an ideal place from where men could transform their society. This aspect was part of the reading that Marx developed about the French Revolution and the execution of Louis XVI: following Marx’s opinion, the path towards the classless society was opened by a Revolution, meanwhile this revolution needed to pass from the “bourgeois” hands to the proletariat as the “Terror” moment in France demonstrated. Contrary to this vision, Baczko underlined that the situation was extremely complex, that during the Revolution different kinds of utopias were fighting against each other, and also that Revolution itself was a utopian machine that created its own reality and possibilities. A fight between “bourgeois” and “sans-culotte” was in any case a historical fatality. Moreover, the events of the Revolution organized from Paris and misunderstood in the rural areas created unprecedented problems whose resolution asked for new talents and capacities. With the emigration of the nobles and the privileged classes from the Kingdom, new personalities found positions that helped to create a new social structuration and to imagine new institutions. But of course, for minds shaped during the Old Regime the new horizon of expectations was not as radical as historians sometimes believe. In isolated areas there was almost no sign of the new reality operated by the Revolution, except for, maybe, the conscription or the changed names of the institutions.

Baczko's analyses help us understand how historical processes are never exclusive or achieved. Making use of the utopian promise of a rational State generating a rational society, Marxist thinkers and French Revolutionaries confined the Revolutionary process to one single interpretation, demonstrated by the idea that only the people might realize a "true" revolution. Moreover, obsessed by the French Revolution paradigm, Marxist thinkers would expect every uprising or every starting of a revolution to activate the hope of a radical economic change. This is, in fact, a myth dictated by historical conditions – like in Russia in 1917 – and not a universal law.

Utopian lights is a sophisticated study about imaginary transformation. Baczko underlines it with various examples, classical utopias helped shape the "social imagination" of the time. It was because of the hopes opened by the thoughts of Enlightenment that men of letters and Revolutionaries could generate new projects stressing how the possibilities hidden in the reason of man could transform the society. The French Revolution was dominated by the hope of creating a new man, rational and patriotic, as the Revolutionaries fought for creating a State where human justice would apply for everyone with no distinctions. But even if these utopias were part of political reflection, they were not only dominated by political world-views. Men from the age of Enlightenment developed expectations of incredible discoveries. They dreamt of finding the roots of a universal and rational language. Knowing the work of the German surgeon Franz-Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), they believed in a magnetic connection between humans and living creatures, a magnetic connection that might impact their lives and health. And one of the most important aspects was that during the Enlightenment, European scholars believed that universal peace was possible – we can recall here *l'abbé de Saint-Pierre's* projects. To create peace and freedom, thinkers started developing pedagogic plans, one of the best known being Rousseau's *Emile*, which tinges the dream of a spiritual link between personal and public life with a strong patriotic dimension. But Baczko looked for projects developed during the French Revolution. He even published a selection of them: *Une éducation pour la démocratie: textes et projets de l'époque révolutionnaire*.³⁷ This shows us the direction

³⁷ Baczko, Bronisław (publ.), 1982, *Une éducation pour la démocratie: textes et projets de l'époque révolutionnaire*, Paris : Gallimard.

followed by his work after *Utopian lights*. Inspired by his colleagues and friends, such as Jean Starobinski and François Furet, Baczko developed research more and more orientated on the comprehension of “symbolic representations” (*mentalités*) and the understanding of “imaginaries”. Some reviews that have then published about his books scorned this approach calling it “neo-liberal” and asking for the economic and social basis that seemed necessary for this type of historical studies.³⁸ Meanwhile, in the 80s, Baczko performed his *linguistic turn* and showed scrupulous interest in the “social imaginaries” – the title of one of his books³⁹ – trying to perceive how imagination interacts with historical events and is itself socially constructed. Again, Baczko developed his approach in opposition to sociological and psychological reductionisms. At the end of *Utopian lights* he explicitly underlines that History and utopia tend to confront each other (Baczko 2001, p. 411) because of the utopian dreams that aspire to escape daily difficulties or political manipulations. Meanwhile not every dream is possible at any historical period. For instance, utopias until the industrial revolution focused on moral perfection – the aim of More’s *liber aureus* analyses is to create a population of Utopians as happy and perfect as possible – meanwhile the utopian writers of the 19th century, such as Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, or even August Comte, would insist in their works on the scientific aspect of their visions and on their economic suitability. This research project has recently come to an end with the publication of the *Dictionnaire critique de l’utopie au temps des Lumières* in 2016. It was developed by Baczko with the help of Michel Porret and François Rosset.⁴⁰ This project was funded by the “2011 Balzan Prize for Enlightenment Studies”, which Bronisław Baczko won as a coronation for his studies on Rousseau and his reflections on the impact of the Enlightenment in the French Revolution. Organized around 54 critical essays on a specific topic – “Luxury, Mathematics, Sexuality”, etc. – and written by various scholars

³⁸ (Anonymous), 1990, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, « Comment sortir de la Terreur, Thermidor et la Révolution », 279 (n° 1), p. 103 ; Gross, Jean-Pierre, 1998, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, « Bronisław Baczko, Job, mon ami... », 314 (n° 1), p. 771.

³⁹ Baczko, Bronisław, 1984, *Les imaginaires sociaux : mémoires et espoirs collectifs*, Paris : Payot.

⁴⁰ Baczko, Bronisław, Porret, Michel, Rosset, François (publ.), 2016, *Dictionnaire critique de l’utopie au temps des Lumières*, Genève : Georg.

in the field – this dictionary answers the questions asked by Baczko at the end of *Utopian lights*: what did utopian societies think about science, love, economy, etc.? As Baczko revealed, utopian imagination most of the time spreads its knowledge to future imagined utopian worlds, not to reality. Even if power gains a new language inspired by actual aspirations and hopes – like the socialist society in Russia in 1917 – it only tends to organize itself more or less powerfully as a “power” with a new language, maybe inspired by utopian literature. Napoleon structured his power with Roman and revolutionary symbols like the Stalinists organized their dictatorship in Poland and Eastern Europe with Marxist speeches, Soviet references and World War II memories.

An incomplete process

To answer the question of what Bronisław Baczko’s revisionism was we need to speak about the ‘Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History’ research. Unfortunately, as Bronisław Baczko and other members of the group underlined it, the whole process came to an end too early. With the exile from Poland, the members of the group could not base their analyses mainly on the political and economic situation in Poland. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that Walicki reveals that in the 80s the generation of the Solidarity movement was questioning more than anthropologic ideas or historical relativism to confront the dramatic situation. Since the political crisis of 1968 or the armed suppression in Czechoslovakia even the communist power stopped believing in its own rhetoric. The new generation needed to defeat the dictatorship instead of arguing against an ideological conception of the world.⁴¹ It is impossible to guess the philosophical direction that the ‘Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History’ would have followed.

⁴¹ “We were indeed striving to free the humanities of all dogma, but our historical relativism was of a peculiar quality, stemming not from indifference towards values, but, rather, from a commitment to certain values, such as freedom of thought, ideological pluralism, self-awareness. (...) The younger people, whose generational experiences were the events of 1968 and 1970, were in a completely different situation. They faced an oppressive system whose representatives were cynical rather than dogmatic (...). In such conditions relativism became suspect as a possible ally of cynical opportunism, while the need for absolute values was becoming more and more apparent” (Walicki 1984, p. 23-24).

Regarding Baczko's research it is necessary to underline that throughout his career he remained faithful to his vision of an 'open' conception of History. As he experimented with his work on Rousseau, when reflecting on the French Revolution, he did not try to close his interrogations with just a few main interpretations. As one of his last books shows – *Politiques de la Révolution française*⁴² – the idea is not to give an interpretation of the Revolution, but to explore how this important event gave birth to a set of questions, actions, passions, etc. Baczko studied the Revolution, helped by a long list of questions; with his works a curious-reader imagines all the events and starts asking questions himself as he understands that the whole process was constantly open. The Revolution itself had no inner logic, but men developed meanings inspired by their interpretations, their hopes, fears, and passions. Finally, as his students underlined, Baczko, who had been praised for being an excellent professor since he started teaching, taught them to reflect on history armed with innovative questions and an extensive curiosity.⁴³ Historical knowledge evolves because of the questions asked, because of unexpected discoveries that arise, and not just when new sources become available. In my opinion, the legacy of the 'Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History' stands out in the humanistic debates due to this range of open and provocative questions.

⁴² Baczko, Bronisław, 2008, *Politiques de la Révolution française*, Paris : Gallimard.

⁴³ *Revue des sciences sociales*, "Lettres d'étudiants à leur professeur et ami", XXVII (n°85), 1989, pp. 27-49.

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ABSTRACT

ON HISTORY AND LIBERTY: THE 'REVISIONISM' OF BRONISŁAW BACZKO

The 'Warsaw School of History of Ideas' is the name given to a 'revisionist think tank' which was led by the historian Bronisław Baczeko from 1956 to 1968 in Communist Poland. This group reunited scholars like Leszek Kołakowski or Krzysztof Pomian around questions related to political beliefs, theological conceptions or utopian thought. Expelled from the University, B. Baczeko left Poland and seek shelter in Geneva where he became a Professor of history of Ideas and historiography. In his new home, he developed an original vision on Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

KEYWORDS: Bronisław Baczeko, Leszek Kołakowski, Warsaw School of history of Ideas, Marxism, Enlightenment, 'Revisionism', Jean-Jacques Rousseau, utopia, revolution.

O HISTORII I WOLNOŚCI: 'REWIZJONIZM' BRONISŁAWA BACZKI

'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei' to nazwa nadana 'rewizjonistycznemu think tankowi' w komunistycznej Polsce, któremu od 1956 do 1968 przewodził historyk Bronisław Baczeko. Do grupy tej należeli badacze tacy jak Leszek Kołakowski czy Krzysztof Pomian, dyskutujący takie zagadnienia, jak przekonania polityczne, pojęcia teologiczne czy myśl utopijna. Wyrzucony z Uniwersytetu, Baczeko opuścił Polskę i schronił się w Genewie, gdzie został profesorem historii idei i historiografii. W swoim nowym domu wypracował oryginalną wizję Oświecenia i Rewolucji Francuskiej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Bronisław Baczeko, Leszek Kołakowski, Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei, marksizm, Oświecenie, 'rewizjonizm', Jean-Jacques Rousseau, utopia, rewolucja.

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**HUMAN PRAXIS, ALTERNATIVE THINKING, AND
HETEROGENEOUS CULTURE – ZYGMUNT BAUMAN’S
REVISIONIST THOUGHT¹**

*What is of primary concern is how to adjust society to individual needs,
not the reverse; how to extend the range of freedom of individual choice;
how to provide room enough for individual initiative and non-conformity.*
Zygmunt Bauman, *Modern Times, Modern Marxism*

Introduction

On the basis of the decision of the Minister of Higher Education, Henryk Jabłoński, taken on the 25st March 1968, Zygmunt Bauman together with five other academics – Bronisław Baczko, Leszek Kołakowski, Maria Hirszowicz-Bielińska, Stefan Morawski, and Włodzimierz Brus – was expelled from his post at the Warsaw University. All these revisionist intellectuals were regarded by the officials as a significant threat to the communist rule. They were officially accused of inciting students to oppose the government during the March events. As far as Zygmunt Bauman is concerned, Nina Kraśko notes: “Because of his origin, position in the scientific life in Poland, active role in the Communist Party, and an identification with Marxism, Bauman became a particular object of an offensive campaign conducted by the media and politicians. His name occurred in press as the generic name; it was

¹ This research was funded by the National Science Centre in Poland on the basis of the grant awarded after obtaining a doctoral degree, based on the decision No DEC-2014/12/S/HS2/00391.

written with small letters and in plural”² (Kraśko 1995: 33; see also: Tester 2004: 79-81; Davis 2008: 18). In fact, before March 1968 Bauman had a remarkable authority among the intellectuals and the wider public. He held a position as a chair of the Department of General Sociology at the Warsaw University. He wrote several books and articles and was a founder and an editor-in-chief of the Polish journal “Sociological Studies”. Moreover, for a several years Bauman supported – more or less zealously – the Polish United Workers’ Party. Before he started his work at the Warsaw University he had served in the organs of state security (Edemariam 2007). In the light of all these facts, the evolution of his thought toward revisionism and the recognition he had gained among other representatives of this intellectual current, had brought upon him considerable enmity of the Party (J. Bauman 1988: 195, Davis 2008: 18, 19). Taking this into account, Bauman decided – like many other Poles of Jewish origin – to emigrate to Israel, where he worked at the University of Tel Aviv. Then, in 1971, he accepted a position as Professor of Sociology at the University of Leeds. Meanwhile, in Poland his name was almost completely erased from the annals of science. The academics had been prohibited to refer to his papers for many years. It was in 1991 that Stefan Morawski wrote: “Since Bauman’s forced emigration due to the anti-Semitic campaign in 1968 his work has been almost completely unknown” (Morawski 1991: 280).

The aim of this paper is to analyze Zygmunt Bauman’s social thought before the Polish political crisis of 1968. The first part of the text presents his very early works that reflect his Marxist-Leninist ideas. The stress is put on Bauman’s progressive disappointment with the situation in Poland, too. The second part concentrates on Bauman’s revisionist papers that offer “an anthropological” interpretation of Marxism. It emphasises the characteristic features of his revisionism as well: an emphasis on human praxis, alternative thinking and heterogeneity of culture. The final part includes a summary and analysis of the influence of Bauman’s revisionist’s thought on his works written in subsequent years.

² All quotes from Polish papers were translated by the author of this article.

The road towards revisionism

Zygmunt Bauman started his academic career at the Warsaw University in 1953. At that time he was a loyal member of the Polish United Workers' Party and a follower of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. It is clearly visible in his very early papers (e.g. Bauman, Wiatr 1953: 69-99; Bauman 1955: 168-196). For example, his first published article, co-written with Jerzy Wiatr, titled *On the Historical Role of the Masses*,³ can be seen both as a scientific paper characteristic for the Leninist doctrine as well as a text representative of contemporary propaganda. The authors repeatedly emphasized the positive value of the transformations that had taken place in the post-war Poland. They commended the abolition of the landowning class, the nationalization of the industry, and the cultural revolution aimed at improving social situation of the masses.⁴ It is also worth stressing that this text reflects well their conviction in the key role of the party in realising all these changes. They wrote: "In order to transform the revolutionary activity of the masses into a real revolution that leads to the realization of the aspirations of the masses, the party is indispensable – strong, hardened, and providing party, able to lead the masses in the right direction" (Ibidem, p. 85). In accordance with the Leninist ideology, Bauman and Wiatr pointed out a need to comply with the directions set by the party. Moreover, they strongly opposed these sociologists and philosophers –

³ All Polish titles quoted in this paper were translated into English. As far as some of the titles of Bauman's writings are concerned, I quoted the translations published in: Tester, Hviid Jacobsen 2005: 224-226.

⁴ In accordance with the official doctrine, Bauman and Wiatr stressed the importance of the economic aspect of social life. They wrote: "(...) the exceptional importance of production is related to its deterministic role in the development of society. The history of society-is the history of production. (...) The transformation of the mode of production entails a corresponding change in the whole social life" (Bauman, Wiatr 1953: 70). It is worth comparing this quote with the words that Bauman wrote fourteen years later, in a paper representative for his revisionist thought: "One of the greatest misunderstandings among the current interpretations of Marxist social theory is the attempt to reduce it to a kind of 'economic determinism'. Not only is there nothing particularly Marxist about attempts at simplified, single-factor, genetic explanations of social phenomena, but there is involved a methodological habit most alien to the basic postulates put forward by Marx" (Bauman 2001: 40).

Florian Znaniecki, for example (Znaniecki 1969)—who had stressed the importance of individuals in shaping the historical process. It is not individuals but the rightly organised masses that are the primary source of change, they explicitly argued.

In accordance with Leninist thought, Bauman accepted a historiosophical vision founded on the belief in the succession of socio-economic formations. The aforementioned paper reads as follows: "Changes in the mode of production do not result from a conscious, deliberate decision of the individuals; they occur in an objective way that is independent of the will of their creators—the people" (Bauman, Wiatr 1953: 70). On the other hand, he was convinced that the pace of the changes is, to some extent, a function of human activity. In this contexts Bauman argued that the revolutionary goals would be achieved, only and exclusively, with proper, wise leadership. The most important issue as far as this matter was concerned was that the party had to maintain the closest possible connection with the masses. "When the party loses the bond with the masses"—wrote Bauman and Wiatr—"when it stops to notice the new embryos developed in the masses' womb and is no longer aware of their initiative—the party ceases to be a part of the masses, to be their representative, and in this way it loses its creative strength in history, too. The strength of the party is not only the strength of the right theory, but also the strength of the masses" (Ibidem, p. 94). In the light of this quote, it is worth analysing his first revisionist paper, written in 1957, at the time of "little stabilisation". Bauman pointed out there that the party had broken its relationship with the masses.

This article, titled *Leninism and the Problem of Democratic Centralism* (Bauman 1957)—was the first book by Bauman published in print. The sociologist criticised there the processes that had taken place in Poland in the previous years. He argued that the members of the party had lost both their revolutionary zeal and political maturity. Instead of achieving the revolutionary goals, they had fought for their own positions. The result was a simultaneous political, social, and economic crisis. The main aim of this paper, however, was not to analyze the problems of the Stalinist era, but to indicate the changes that had to be made on the road to "the Kingdom of Freedom" (Walicki 1997). Bauman believed that the processes of destalinization and

democratisation that had taken place in Poland since October 1956 had given hope for a change in the right direction (Brzeziński 2016: 9-21). To make it happen, it would be indispensable to observe strictly the Marxist-Leninist ideology, argued Bauman. His view on that matter was entirely consistent with the revisionist thought. Leszek Kołakowski wrote on the attitude of its representatives as follows: “More than once, especially in the early stages, they invoked Lenin’s authority, searching his writings for texts in support of intra-party democracy, the participation of the ‘broad masses’ in government, and so on” (Kołakowski 1978: 460). Similarly to other revisionist thinkers of that time, Bauman put emphasis on the idea of democratic centralism in Lenin’s papers. He stated that the process of democratisation had to be carried out by a strong, centralized, monolithic party. Bauman insisted both on the party to rebuild the connection with the masses and on the masses to subordinate to the party. His diagnoses were presented with a passionate conviction that reflected his hope that the changes leading toward communism would take place.

Over the course of time—and a systematic retreat from the reforms that had been introduced in October 1956—Bauman’s hope had been, however, gradually diminished. His own observations on that matter were supported by the empirical research that he conducted. One of them focused on the social structure of the party organization in industrial works (Bauman 1962a: 50-64). The showed that there was a huge difference between the rate of the Party membership between foremen, office workers, engineers, and technicians on the one hand, and workers (especially unskilled) on the other. The members of both groups manifested very different types of attitude as well. Among the former there were mainly “extroverts”, oriented towards reaching the goals of the Party, and among the latter there were mainly “introverts”, concerned simply with doing their job. These observations contradicted Bauman’s contemporary expectations—which were also characteristic of the official Marxists doctrine—that workers would first of all aim towards the social change. Another empirical study focused on the values and standards of the success of youth from Warsaw (Bauman 1962b: 77-90). The research showed that among males aged 18-24 there were mostly those who evinced the “expansive” or “defensive” attitude. The representatives of the former group pursued the goals

that were characteristic of the capitalist society, like, for example, personal career, consumption, high social status etc. The representatives of the latter group aimed toward quality of life, pleasant environment, and security of their position. Bauman underlined that both groups not only had not internalised the values characteristic for socialist ideology, but followed the patterns of consumption, too. The rejection of Marxist standards by those who were brought up after the Second World War and lived in a city with a high level of industrialisation, was a bitter disappointment for the sociologist. With regard to this research, he said in 2001 in a conversation with Keith Tester and Michael Hviid Jacobsen: "Looking back, I suspect that the outcome of our research into the attitudes of Polish youth marked, perhaps not the first, but certainly the most profound of my disenchantments. What I found was not what I and other 'believers' like me hoped to find" (Tester, Jacobsen 2005: 44).

The aforementioned disenchantment with the situation in Poland let Bauman to the reformulation of the foundations of his social thought. His belief in both the Polish United Workers' Party and the Marxist-Leninist ideology had been continually weakened. However, the sociologist had not lost his determination to act towards the improvement of the working class condition within the Marxist thought. Yet, he had entirely changed the way of its interpretation. His very early papers can be described – using his own words—as an example of "a mechanistic" current in Marxist philosophy (Bauman 1964: 546-549). Bauman stated that the representatives of it—for example Karl Kautsky, Georgi Plekhanov, and Nikolai Bukharin—were focused on both exploring the direction of social processes and making people conscious of it. In opposition to this interpretation, Bauman pointed out "an activist" current of Marxist thought. Among its representatives he indicated Vladimir Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Georg Lukács, and Antonio Gramsci. According to Bauman, all of them stressed the role of human praxis. They were convinced the world is as a product of people's actions and they emphasised the role of individual initiative. "(...) this kind of knowledge"—Bauman wrote—"makes human behaviour less, not more predictable. It functions in a manner exactly opposite to the knowledge created by the managerial world" (Bauman 2001: 44). As far as I am concerned, the change in his attitude from his very early papers

to the ones written in the nineteen-sixties of the twentieth century may be interpreted as a transition from “mechanistic” to “activistic” interpretation of Marxist thought. It is the topic of the next part of the article.

Human praxis in the heterogeneous culture

Keith Tester wrote on the characteristic features of the revisionist thought as follows: “Marxist revisionism was harnessed to a commitment to a brand of socialism that argued that actually existing socialism was an ossification of the initial promise of human dignity, and that humanity could only be achieved if this ossification were overcome. In other words the aim of Marxist humanism was not to overthrow socialism but, in tune with the appreciation of paradox, to rehumanise it and, therefore, to make it *more* socialist” (Tester 2004: 63). This trend in Marxist thought interpretation was accompanied by a call for: general democratisation of public life, freedom of speech concerning political reforms and other issues, abolition of the system of repressions etc. Regardless of the differences between the revisionists, they all argued that Marxism would not be reinvigorated without criticism and discussion (Kołakowski 1978: 456-474). Within the last few years of Bauman’s work at the Warsaw University the ideas he promoted were a perfect example of this way thinking. He decided not to leave Marxism, but to revise it in order to locate it in opposition to both the official doctrine and the condition of the actually existing socialism. His aim was to save the ethical core of Marxist thought which he considered a key to social, political, economic and ideological reforms. It should be stressed as well that the sociologist was active in defence of the freedom of speech. An example of this attitude was his support—manifested with other academics—for Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski when they were oppressed as a consequence of the publication of *An Open Letter to the Party* (Kuroń, Modzelewski 1966; see: Tester 2004: 65).

In his retrospective comment Bauman pointed out two main sources of his reinterpretation of Marxist thought in the nineteen-sixties: philosophy of Albert Camus and Antonio Gramsci (Bauman 2008: 231-240). As far as the former is concerned, the sociologist wrote: “Camus’ rebel is a human who says ‘no’. Also a human who says

'yes'. And a human who says each of those words in a way that leaves room for the other one. The rebel refuses to accept that which leaves room for the other one. The rebel refuses to *accept* what is, yet also abstains from *rejecting* it" (Ibidem, p. 232).⁵ Camus' "no" inspired Bauman's view on the issue of the importance of rebellion against both the actually existing socialism and the official doctrine. He began to claim that it is not a human duty to submit to all the norms and rules imposed by the party, but to defy some of them, in order to search for the alternative ways of social or political development (Tester 2002: 63; Davis 2008: 39). Moreover, the sociologist suggested in that time that the belief in the historical inevitability of progress may absolve men and women of the aforementioned duty. He wrote: "Laws of history (...) offer a most effective escape from the guilt of cruelty by stamping the historical inevitability of progress over the distinction between good and evil" (Bauman 2008: 233). Bauman replaced his former conviction founded on the official interpretation of Marxism with the emphasis on the importance of human responsibility. In accordance with Camus' thought, he interpreted the act of rebellion as an act of affirmation with regard to the attempts to strengthen human solidarity (Camus 1953: 28, see: Tester 2004: 46, 47).

It is worth stressing, however, that the conclusions Bauman drew from Camus' writings were inspired significantly by Antonio Gramsci's philosophy.⁶ "I suppose it was from Gramsci's *Prison*

⁵ Camus wrote: "Rebellion cannot exist without the feeling that somewhere, in some way, you are justified. It is this way that the rebel says yes and no at the same time. He affirms that there are limits and also that he suspects – and wishes to preserve – the existence of certain things beyond those limits" (Camus 1953: 19).

⁶ Zygmunt Bauman was one of the many revisionist thinkers that were inspired by Gramsci's ideas. Leszek Kołakowski wrote on that matter as follows: "Although Gramsci's writings do not amount to a coherent theory but, rather, to a vague and embryonic sketch, some aspects of them are clear and original enough to justify the view that they constitute an independent attempt to formulate a Communist ideology, and not merely an adaptation of the Leninist schema. An indirect confirmation of this is the frequency with which seekers of a more democratic and 'open' version of socialism—especially Communists and ex-Communists—turn to Gramsci for inspiration, and also the acute difficulties and resistance that occur when attempts are made to introduce his ideas to Communist parties outside Italy, especially ruling parties" (Kołakowski 1978: 220).

Notebook”–wrote the sociologist–“which I read a year or two after absorbing Camus’ *cogito* ‘I rebel, therefore I am’, that I learned how to rebel armed with sociological tools and how to make sociological vocation into a life of rebellion. Gramsci translated for me Camus’ philosophy of human condition into a philosophy of human practice (...)” (Bauman 2008: 233, see: Bauman 1992: 206, 207). The central message Bauman drew from the work of Antonio Gramsci was that history is, only and exclusively, a product of human praxis. It is shaped by humans and it can also be re-shaped by them. Gramsci questioned the notion of historical necessity and put stress on the need to search for alternatives to the present condition (Gramsci 1971). His philosophy was, therefore, one of the most important inspirations for Bauman as far as his replacement of the “mechanistic” interpretation of Marxist thought with its “activistic” version was concerned (Bauman 1963: 19-34). Keith Tester wrote on that matter: “The lesson of Gramsci’s text was that pessimism is entirely misplaced since the problem the sociologist must confront is not of the order of ‘How is this necessary?’ nor the far more analytical ‘What are the causes of the belief that this is necessary?’ The latter question points to optimism in that if the social causes of the common sense of the inevitable dominance of the actual can be revealed, then it is also possible to uncover and present its utter contingency” (Tester 2004: 57).

Referring to this quote, I would like to stress as well that Gramsci’s philosophy encouraged Bauman to reflect on the nature of the obstacles to the development of human praxis. Following the author of *The Prison Notebooks*, the sociologist put emphasis on commonsensical assumptions. Gramsci defined common sense as “the conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average men is developed” (Gramsci 1971: 419; Bauman 1963: 19-34). *Eo ipso*, common sense discourages people from developing their potential and – in this way – prevents the realisation of socialist ideas. The adoption of this way of thinking by Bauman implicated two main consequences for his social thought. First of all, he pointed out that the role of the intellectuals should be to oppose the schemes and patterns that shape the social reality. The intelligentsia should promote critical and alternative thinking in order to help working class to achieve its

aims. This also meant a need to resist to the politics of the party whenever it imprisons human praxis. Secondly, the interest in the role of common sense had initiated Bauman's in-depth analyses of the role of culture. For a few years before March 1968, culture was his main area of interest. He wrote several articles (e.g. Bauman 1966c: 58-74; 1968a: 19-33) on that matter and two books (Bauman 1966a; 2017⁷). On the one hand he pointed to the structuring properties of the culture, on the other hand, he stressed that culture is a social construct that should undergo transformations (Brzeziński 2017: 6-29).

Among the articles Bauman wrote on culture I would like to concentrate on one, titled *Some Problems of Contemporary Education* (Bauman 1967: 325-337). There are two reasons for this choice. Firstly, in this paper the sociologist returned to the problem of the values and standards of youth, which he had analysed a few years earlier (Bauman 1962b: 77-90). Secondly, this article reflects well his contemporary view on the need to assimilate a critical and alternative way of thinking on the world. Bauman argued in this paper that there was a huge gap between the behavioural pattern transmitted in the process of education and the condition of the actually existing socialism. While the former was deeply rooted in the socialist values, the latter was an obstacle to their realisation. Bauman wrote: "The young man, who in school was brought up to follow the traditions of the romantic heroes, suddenly awakes to find himself in extremely prosaic situations where romanticism is of little use. Being determined to keep strictly to the rules of equality and justice, the young man goes into retreat, helpless in the face of unexpected signs of indifference to human injustice and in the face of other people's strict observance of the differentiations of people's rights and duties" (Bauman 1967: 333). As is clearly seen in the quoted words, Bauman observed a tendency towards egotism, insensitivity and apathy in the Polish society. He argued that men and women are subjected to a process of bureaucratization ever since they start their professional career. Although the quoted words may at first glance indicate that he was an admirer of the process of education in

⁷ The print run of the book *Sketches of the Theory of Culture* was destroyed in a consequence of the March event. The one remaining copy of book was found very recently and was published in 2017.

the socialist societies, it would be a wrong conclusion. The sociologist argued that schools should not promote ideals in abstraction from the wider world. Moreover, he was critical of the fact that educational programs were founded on the belief in the one, objective, and unchangeable pattern of life at the time when society was more and more heterogonous (see: Bauman 1966c: 58-74). Bauman formulated the following advice as far as this in-coherence was concerned: “The idea of life acceptable to a present-day society must include such elements as multiplicity and diversity, and hence it must recognize relativity in codes of behaviour. To be 'closer to life', educators must consistently and frankly show their pupils genuine features of the world in which they will have to move” (Bauman 1967: 337).⁸ What is more, the educational programs should prepare the youth for assuming responsibility for their actions, stated Bauman. Schools should teach them the ability to be open to new perspectives in both the private and the public sphere. It is easy to notice that the aforementioned proposals were in accordance with his revisionist thought.

As in the example above, most of Bauman’s revisionist ideas were presented between the lines of his papers written before March 1968 (see e.g. Bauman 1966b: 145-162; 1966c: 58-74). However, Bauman managed to publish in 1967 in English a paper – *Modern Times, Modern Marxism* (Bauman 2001: 40-52)⁹ – where he presented his revisionist ideas in full extent. On the one hand, he criticised in this text both the positivistic interpretation of Marxism and its materialisation in the form of the actually existing socialism. In this context he discussed such phenomena as: dominance of managerialism, development of bureaucratization, subordination of men and women to arbitrarily designed plans and norms etc. As far as he was concerned, all these processes were a testimony to distortion and contradiction of the ideas presented by the author of *The Capital*. “The interest and significance of human beings consists in their interest and significance for managerial purposes” –wrote Bauman on the consequence of this way of

⁸ Bauman drew in recent years very similar conclusions regarding education: Bauman 2012.

⁹ Page references to this article are from the copy published in: Peter Beilharz (ed.), *The Bauman Reader*, Malden-Oxford: Blackwell, p. 40-52.

interpretation of the Marxist thought (Ibidem, p. 42). On the other hand, he presented there his own revisionist ideas that were contrary to this managerial vision. Instead of emphasising the notion of order and predictability, the sociologist indicated the significance of human praxis. He was focused on the liberation of both creative and social nature of men and women and their ability to materialise socialist values to full extent. It is legitimate to claim that Bauman was determined to act against the mechanisms of alienation (see: Marx 1977), which he believed were characteristic of the actually existing socialism. In accordance with his contemporary interest in the theory of culture, he put stress on its heterogeneity as well. He argued that the managerial approach and the idea of perfect planning associated with it are inconsistent with the contemporary, pluralistic condition (see: Bauman 1966b: 145-162). Instead of focusing on the organisational and structural solutions, he proposed to draw attention to the multiplicity of human efforts directed at a more righteous society. He presented the most important consequence of this reinterpretation of Marxist thought in his remark I have made the motto of this article. Here I would like to quote it within a broader context: "What is of primary concern is how to adjust society to individual needs, not the reverse; how to extend the range of freedom of individual choice; how to provide enough room for individual initiative and non-conformity. (...) What is needed is a kind of knowledge which shows how to 'manipulate the human environment by enlarging the scope of information in human minds', instead of how to 'manipulate human behaviour by modifying the patterns of external situational pressures'" (Bauman 2001: 44).

The aforementioned article was a testimony of how much Bauman departed from the assumptions characteristic for the official interpretation of Marxist thought. A few years before March 1968 he was convinced that not only the Polish United Workers' Party did not lead people towards the communist society but also that the officials were an obstacle as far as aiming towards better future was concerned. He was developing his own, revisionist thought, with emphasis on the concepts of human praxis, alternative thinking, and heterogeneous culture. Bauman had, however, a very limited chance to explicitly express his ideas. His works were strictly censored by the officials, especially since he had manifested his support for Kuroń and

Modzelewski. Since that time he suffered several other difficulties from the authorities, too (Davis 2008: 18). His expulsion from the Warsaw University in the consequence of the 1968 Polish political crises and the following exile were subsequent manifestations of the enmity of the authorities towards this revisionist thinker.¹⁰

Summary

In this paper I presented the evolution of Zygmunt Bauman's socialist thought from Marxism-Leninism to revisionism. I started this analysis by indicating the fact that at the beginning of his academic career he was a staunch believer in the Polish United Workers' Party and an adherent of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Although he was aware of the problems that had taken place in Poland, he hoped that after the Polish October the changes towards a righteous and equitable society will be implemented. His thoughts on that matter were written in his first revisionist paper. In subsequent years, however, the party had retreated from the reforms and—as the research conducted by the sociologist showed—the masses did not want to engage in civil issues. Bauman was deeply disappointed by this state of affairs and it had a considerable impact on his social thought. Instead of becoming an anti-Marxist, however, he started to revise the Marxist thought, inspired by the works of Albert Camus and Antonio Gramsci. In the following years, Bauman developed his un-orthodox ideas that led him to become one of the leading revisionists in Poland. He emphasised the anthropological frame of reference as far as Marxist interpretation was concerned. His hope for change was founded on belief in human praxis and alternative

¹⁰ Bauman was among first scholars who published the analyses of the March events (Bauman 1968b: 5-21; 1969a: 7-23; 1969b: 3-8, see: Brzeziński 2016: 13-15). He emphasized two major differences between the students' revolt in Poland and in other parts of Europe in 1968. Firstly, the protests that took place in the West were highly acclaimed by some commentators and their leaders gained popularity among the publicity. The students in Poland were in a different situation, they were ridiculed, slandered, and persecuted. Not only the government but also the media opposed their demands. Secondly, the students in France, Great Britain, the United States, etc. acted within a pluralistic system; conflicts and tensions within different groups were its characteristic feature. Meanwhile, the protest in communist Poland was something extraordinary. By suppressing this revolt the authorities wanted to show Polish people that there is no place for protests in any communist country.

thinking. Nevertheless, this hope was confronted by the oppression of the state authorities.

Bauman's revisionist ideas did not die after the political crisis of 1968 in Poland, but evolved over the course of time.¹¹ Regardless of the significant changes his social thought undergone, he has been faithful to the Marxist philosophy and he was still revising it (Bauman, Tester 2001). Moreover, the ideas that he drew from the works of Camus and Gramsci were still vivid in his papers. On their basis, Bauman formulated in the nineteen-seventies his theory of culture (Bauman 1973b), concept of utopia (Bauman 1976c), and his view on the critical role of intellectuals (Bauman 1976b). It is easy to find some influence of his revisionist thought—with its emphasis on human praxis, alternative thinking, and heterogeneous culture – in his more recent papers too. As an example, I would like to point out his critique of modernity (Bauman 1987), concept of postmodern ethics (Bauman 1993) and the idea of liquid modernity (Bauman 2000). The most important and far-reaching consequence of his revisionist thought has been, however, his concept of “utopian sociology” (Brzeziński 2015). At the end of this paper I would like to quote his words on that issue: “(...) sociology was and is to me a critique of extant social reality. Sociology is meant to expose the relativity of what is, to open the possibility of alternative social arrangements and ways of life, to militate against the TINA (‘There is No Alternative’) ideologies and philosophies. As an interpretation of human experience laying bare its invisible, hidden or covered-up links, the mission of sociology, as I understood it all along, was to keep other options alive” (Bauman 2008: 238).

¹¹ On the evolution of Bauman's revisionist thought in the years after the Polish political crisis see: Bauman 1971a: 25-51; 1971b: 45-53; 1973a: 9-25; 1974: 129-148; 1976c; 1976a: 81-108; Tester 2004: 82-97.

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ABSTRACT

HUMAN PRAXIS, ALTERNATIVE THINKING, AND HETEROGENEOUS CULTURE – ZYGMUNT BAUMAN'S REVISIONIST THOUGHT

Zygmunt Bauman was one of the leading revisionists in Poland before March 1968. Together with six other academics he was expelled from the University of Warsaw on the basis of the decision of the Minister of Higher Education taken on the 25st March 1968. It should be stressed, however, that at the beginning of his academic career Bauman had been a staunch believer of the Polish United Workers' Party and an adherent of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. In his first revisionist paper, published soon after the Polish October, he criticized the previous policy of the Party and expressed his hope that significant changes will take place in Poland. As a result of Party withdrawal from the reforms, his attitude towards both the communist rule and Marxism-Leninism had been changing. This paper analyses the evolution of his thought towards revisions. It presents the characteristic features of Bauman's revisionism as well: an emphasis on human praxis, alternative thinking, and heterogeneity of culture.

KEYWORDS: Zygmunt Bauman, Marxism-Leninism, revisionism, Antonio Gramsci, human praxis, alternative thinking, heterogeneous culture, March 1968

LUDZKA PRAKTYKA, MYŚLENIE ALTERNATYWISTYCZNE I KULTURA HETEROGENNA – REWIZJONISTYCZNA MYŚL ZYGMUNTA BAUMANA

Zygmunt Bauman był jednym z czołowych polskich rewizjonistów przed Marcem 1968. Razem z sześcioma innymi pracownikami naukowymi został relegowany z Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego decyzją ministra szkolnictwa wyższego z 25 marca 1968 roku. Należy jednak zwrócić uwagę na to, że na początku swej kariery akademickiej gorliwie popierał on Polską Zjednoczoną Partię Robotniczą, a także był zwolennikiem ideologii marksizmu-leninizmu. Swój pierwszy rewizjonistyczny tekst Bauman napisał wkrótce po Październiku 1956 – poddał w nim krytyce wcześniejszą politykę partii i wyraził nadzieję na zajście w Polsce znaczących reform. W konsekwencji odwrótu partii ze ścieżki reform, jego stosunek tak do niej, jak i do marksizmu-

leninizmu, uległ zasadniczej zmianie. Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest analizie ewolucji myśli rewizjonistycznej Baumana. Wskazuję w nim na charakterystyczne cechy tejże, a mianowicie: nacisk na ludzką praxis, dowartościowanie myślenia alternatywistycznego i wskazywanie na potrzebę heterogenizacji kultury.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Zygmunt Bauman, marksizm-leninizm, rewizjonizm, Antonio Gramsci, praxis, myślenie alternatywistyczne, kultura heterogenna, Marzec 1968

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GETTING HANDS DIRTY: ON ADAM SCHAFF'S POLITICAL WRITINGS

The case of Adam Schaff brings together several interesting aspects of Polish Marxism. First of all, his position was that of a theoretician actively involved in political life – not only in the sense of discussing the problems of political practice (which is not unusual for a Marxist), but in the sense of an active participation in the political struggle within the Party and in building state institutions. This obviously characterizes the situation of Marxism in all Soviet Bloc, as opposed to the position of some brands of Western Marxism, that could concentrate solely on social critique. What is less obvious, are the consequences of this situation in terms of specific 'stakes' of theoretical work, and their almost immediate political effect. Consequently the thinking itself must take into consideration its functioning, and reflect it in a series of textual strategies.

It is clearly discernible in the way by which Schaff constantly underlines the compatibility of his position not only with Marx and Engels' classic texts, but also with vital interests of the communist movement and Soviet Bloc, up until the severe crisis of the former and dissolution of the latter. On the other side, though Schaff was probably the most prominent philosopher in Poland, with connections in the highest ranks of Party officials and enormous influence on the organization of philosophy as a discipline in postwar Poland of the 1940's and 1950's, his influence became considerably smaller in the following decades, as Schaff's political connections became weaker and theoretical positions became more and more controversial within party circles. The turning point took place in the years 1967-1968, which marked a sort of generational exchange within the Party. It was paired politically with an anti-Semitic purge and a nationalistic shift in the Party's rhetoric. The fate of Schaff's position was inextricably linked

with those developments, as he was of Jewish descent, and a representative of a generation dominant during the Stalinist period, that was losing its influence in the next decades. What is paradoxical, the political form of developments in question was in accordance with the most controversial elements of Schaff's position in this period, namely his statement, that socialist countries are politically alienated and are still at risk of landsliding into nationalism and racism (I will expand on this point in subsequent sections of this text).

The second aspect of Polish Marxism that is reflected in Schaff's work is its relatively open and anti-dogmatic character. Marxism was, in a way, the official philosophy in postwar Poland, but it was not the only philosophy. Poland had strong traditions of analytical philosophy, phenomenology and Christian philosophy (esp. Thomism). Even during Stalinism, the persecution of philosophers of non-Marxist orientations had not exceeded restrictions in public teaching (for instance, most of them kept their university positions and salaries, but were held on forced leave from work). Poland even had a catholic university, which was exceptional for the Soviet Bloc. This produced special conditions for the development of Marxism in Poland (more on this problem, see Siemek 2002: 307-323, Skolimowski 2002), that had to take into account other philosophical schools, if only to criticize them as ideologically suspicious (see also: Skolimowski 1969: 37-42). Those characteristics of Polish Marxism are clearly visible in Schaff's preoccupation with expanding the scope of Marxist theory, and taking into account problems that were 'specialties' of other philosophical traditions. This is the background of his polemics with existentialism (Schaff 1961), and his takes on the philosophy of truth (Schaff 1951) philosophy of language (Schaff 1967), epistemology (Schaff 1970), semantics (Schaff 1960) and philosophy of man (Schaff 1965).

At the same time, this relative openness brought specific political tensions, as Marxism was still expected to legitimize Party politics and the system in general. In effect, a growing number of Marxist-oriented thinkers, Schaff among them, was labeled 'revisionists', as their theoretical positions were increasingly becoming hard to coordinate with the Party's political practice. Another issue is the volatility of the label 'revisionist', that could be easily used to discredit political opponents regardless of their theoretical position. Situation is clearer in the case of such Marxist thinkers, that over the years were becoming

more and more distanced towards the theory as such, as was the case with Leszek Kołakowski. But Schaff remained a theoretically convinced Marxist thinker even after the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc. Labeling him as a revisionist had more to do with the limits of freedom of thought within Marxism, as well as with tactical and personal games within the Party, than with his actual political stance. This ambiguity was clearly visible at the time and was reflected in the ironic qualification of Schaff as an 'orthodox revisionist' (see Skolimowski 2002: 190).

All of this constitutes a very complex plexus of political, theoretical and historical problems, the proper analysis of which largely exceeds the scope of this text. In the following pages, I will rather try to highlight only selected fragments of Schaff's work, which in my opinion accurately reflect his political position. Those freeze-frames, taken from the rich and complex body of work, can be an interesting point of departure for reflection on the link between theory and political practice, as well as on the ability of Marxist thought to properly analyze the problems of *actually existing socialism* – social formation obviously unknown to the founders of Marxism and posing new and urgent theoretical problems for the doctrine itself.

Late 1950's: avoiding extremes

The first freeze-frame is connected to what is one of the greatest political crises in the history of the communist movement – the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Khrushchev's 'secret speech' (1956), in which the party leader denounced the practices of Stalinism. Settling accounts with the period of the so-called 'cult of the individual', opened up debate on the political practice of Party leadership, and the status of Marxism as a theory and scientific method. During the years of 1956-57, Schaff published a series of articles, gathered in a volume called *Spór o zagadnienie moralności* ('Controversy over the issue of morality') (Schaff 1958). Schaff tried to intervene in what he perceived as a grave ideological crisis of socialism and the way he describes the conflicted parties, as well as what he envisions as the right answer to the problems of the day, speaks a lot on his political position at the time.

First of all, Schaff distinguishes two conflicted parties, each of them equally dangerous. Schaff presents them as positions, sets of

views, and names no concrete people involved in each of the camps. The first one are 'the dogmatists', unable to admit that the crisis is real and that it is something more than a mere provocation. The second are the 'revisionists' or, how Schaff prefers to name them, 'the liquidators'. And here we should stop for a moment, to explain why Schaff is reluctant to use the term 'revisionists' and why he wants to replace it.

In Schaff's view, the term 'revisionism' is used in a misleading way, because it suggests that any theoretical creativity in the field of theory is something dangerous. This suggestion, Schaff argues, is false, as every theory needs to be confronted with new problems, and in consequence developed. The problem is different: that so called 'revisionists' are claiming to be Marxists, where in fact they already left the Marxist position and use arguments that lead to a liquidation of the socialist project altogether (see Schaff 1958: 31-32).

Though Schaff uses only general arguments, it is sometimes possible to see which theorists, and even texts, he has in mind. One of the most prominent philosophers connected to Marxism, and one of those most frequently deemed 'revisionist', was Leszek Kołakowski. In one of his famous essays of the period, 1957's *Aktualne i nieaktualne pojęcie marksizmu* ('Up-to-date and not up-to-date conception of Marxism') (Kołakowski 1989), Kołakowski claimed, that what is true in Marxism is already absorbed by human sciences, and what doesn't stand to the test of empirical knowledge of those sciences should be abandoned. Kołakowski's argument is simple: he claims, that Marxism shouldn't be treated as a dogmatic set of sanctified statements on social reality. What strikes someone with even vague knowledge of Marxism is the way in which Kołakowski oversees, that Marxism was never simply 'one of the sciences', but was always connected to political stance. Schaff doesn't mention Kołakowski's name, but sums up his position and precisely names its weakness, namely that Kołakowski 'forgot' about class struggle: there is no neutral science, that could absorb the rational core of Marxism, because what is 'true' and 'rational' about society can be defined only from two incompatible points of view, determined by class position of one or another way of thinking (see Schaff 1958: 62). Schaff names those two positions as 'idealist' and 'materialist'. Those named 'revisionist' simply left the position which every Marxist is supposed to take. They are formulating demands, that make sense only from the 'other side' of the class struggle.

Schaff's position is a fairly uncontroversial one among some Marxists even to this day. It is pretty obvious, even among some sociologists, that human sciences are 'overdetermined' by class struggle, that there exist different perspectives on politics and social processes in general, according to different positions in class conflicts. It was stated in several ways through the years among Western Marxists – here it will be sufficient to recall Louis Althusser's famous claim, that 'philosophy is a class struggle represented in theory', which meant, similarly, that there are only two fundamental positions within philosophy, that represent, in the domain of theory, two basic positions in class antagonism (Althusser 1971: 18).

Here we find the key to Schaff's position, this paradoxical 'orthodox-revisionism'. Schaff tried to propose a way of developing Marxist theory, but at the same time to stay faithful to 'the right position' in the class struggle. His consequent way of applying rules of Marxist theory to the problems of socialist reality led to conflict with the Party establishment, because it was far from the ritual way of iterating the same set of ossified formulas from Marx and Lenin, as we will see in the next section of this text. But, at the same time, Schaff remained loyal to the case of 'actually existing socialism' even after he was expelled from the Party (in 1984), because he stuck to the 'right position' in the class struggle, as he understood it – and of course, he understood class struggle in a very specific way.

Schaff conceives class struggle globally, and from a historical perspective, not as the struggle of social classes in every society, but as a struggle of blocs: Soviet Bloc is, as a whole, on the side of the proletariat and socialism, the capitalist countries – on the side of the bourgeoisie (capital). Schaff sees the interest of the Soviet Bloc as convergent with the historical interest of proletariat, as the interests of the proletariat are convergent with the interests of the Revolution and, in a long-term perspective, the 'transition to communism'. This consequently held position marked out Schaff's work among other revisionisms – Schaff voiced some 'inconvenient truths' but from the point of view of someone loyal to the general interests of the 'Marxist Bloc', understood not only as a doctrine, but also as a political entity (on this point, see also Somerville 1973: 322, 327-328).

This also brings to mind, why Schaff could state during late 1940's, that Stalinism was a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' – a

statement impossible to make, unless we remember, that in Soviet Marxism the Party was the 'real proletariat' – the avant-garde, the bearer of the historical interests of the proletariat, and not the contingent interests of actual industrial or agricultural workers. This theoretical move to distinguish between 'proletariat' and empirical 'working classes' was vital for the Bolsheviks, who had to strengthen their rule by fighting popular resistance (on this point see Staniszkis 2006: 232-235 and Staniszkis 2010: 274-275), but rather controversial for those who would like to follow Marx on this point.

The position taken by Schaff has serious shortcomings. For instance, as it makes it impossible to theorize class relations within socialism. It makes Schaff to state, in a manner rather shocking for today's reader, that the 'Great Famine' in Ukraine was a question of choice between the 'tough answer' of the Party and, possible breakdown of the revolutionary cause (see Schaff 1958: 146) – with a clear suggestion that terror of this magnitude could be rationally justified. Schaff raises the question about the dosage of terror, that is inevitable, and the moment in which terror becomes an independent means of its own (Schaff 1958: 141), but rather in connection with the show trials than with terror used as a means of disciplining the masses (Schaff 1958: 147). His take on the meaning of terror will change only gradually, as we will see in the case of his writings from the 1980's and 90's, but certain elements of his thinking will still bear resemblance to the late 50's position.

1965: alienation in Socialism

In 1965 Schaff published one of his most important works, both in terms of science and politics. In earlier years, Schaff opposed the attempts of 'supplementing' the blank spots in Marxism with other philosophical theories. One of those blank spots, generally neglected as less important, was the theory of the human individual. In *Marxism and the Human Individual*, Schaff argues that there is a strong and coherent outline of this theory in the classic texts of Marx and Engels – it only needs to be extracted and made agreeable with other elements of the theory. Schaff acknowledged, that the works of 'young Marx' are of great importance here, but at the same time, contrary to some (notably Louis Althusser and his school), argued that they are coherent with Marx's latter works. There is no need to create any new theories, like the

theory of human personality and creativity, or to borrow from other theoretical schools (like existentialism) – it is rather that one has to fit the theory of alienation and individual creativity with the general laws of human society elaborated in the later works of Marx.

This theoretic goal leads Schaff to more general question of laboring untheorized (or insufficiently theorized) questions. One of those questions is the problem of alienation in socialism – obviously not tackled by Marx, who not only couldn't witness the political practice of actually existing socialism, but who imagined even the conditions necessary for proletarian revolution differently. The end of capitalism, according to Marx, was to be initiated by most developed countries and in the entire developed world, as Schaff accurately reconstructs (Schaff 1965: 268-270). The reality of the 1917 revolution was different, and it produced prolonged, complex problems, which have to be theorized. This elaboration of the issue of alienation in socialism is the second political 'freeze-frame' I would like to propose.

Schaff sees the reality of socialist countries as a prolonged interim period – significantly different from the reality of capitalist countries, but not yet a completion of the Marxist ideal of social emancipation. Stating differently, writes Schaff, would be not only naïve, but also incoherent with Marx' vision of communism as a process and not a state of things (Schaff 1965: 276-277)¹. This long process will not resolve itself automatically according to changes in the economic base, but needs active reflection and action in several spheres of social life, that are vital for individuals' wellbeing. Not only does this prolonged interim period not liquidate the problems of alienation, but in some aspects even exacerbates them. For instance, socialism doesn't liquidate the division of labour – on the contrary, by enabling accelerated industrialization and urbanization in underdeveloped countries, it deepens certain forms of alienation related to progress as its dark side (Schaff 1967: 274). Even the success of modernization has its price: the advent of leisure brings about the risk of using it the wrong way, in the absence of genuinely socially-oriented attitudes. Moreover, as socialism was introduced in countries with a specific historical burden, there are

¹The same point Schaff will make in his later remarks on alienation in socialism, notably in his 1977' book (published abroad, as at the time Schaff was unable to find a publisher in Poland) *Entfremdung als Soziales Phänomen* (Schaff 1977: 344).

forms of, so to speak, site-specific political alienation, such as nationalism and antisemitism, that have to be controlled and counteracted by promoting an internationalist approach (Schaff 1965: 312-313). Generally speaking, as the interests of the individual must be agreed with the interests of the collective, socialism as a political process needs certain educational measures introduced to fight with unwanted tendencies towards egoism and the risk of a return of nationalist passions (see: Schaff 1965: 281).

Schaff's text was, to some extent, prophetic, as subsequent years of political history of the Polish People's Republic would show. In 1967 something that was officially named an 'anti-Zionist campaign' had begun, prolonged political action of purging the party and ranks of professionals of 'Israel-friendly' (read: of Jewish origin) people. Thousands of people left Poland, supplied with a one-way document, which allowed them to go abroad without the return option. The action though was different from pogrom-like outburst of dark passions of uneducated masses (which Schaff could probably have in mind in 1965) – it was orchestrated by Party structures (with ritual acts of condemnation during Party meetings and with rallies with checked attendance). The inspirators of those events were interested in opening the opportunities for promotion in several spheres of social life and using the anti-Semitic arguments as a weapon in faction fights within Party leadership (more on the motives behind those events, see Stola 2000: 196-199)

Most important processes of 1970's could also be seen as announced in Schaff's text, as the decade brought important shifts in Party orientations. New Party leadership pushed for a more intense economic cooperation with the West, as it focused on loans enabling investments in technological development, and boast in infrastructural investments and consumption. The official language of Marxism was even more fossilized in the form of meaningless doublespeak (for analysis of political language of the 1970's see: Bralczyk 2007: 18-225), which was a cover up for largely pragmatist worldview of Party officials, interested in technocratic management. The new legitimization of the system was largely consumerist in social practices, and supplemented at the symbolic level with certain nationalist overtones, used intensively by the circle of so-called 'Partisans' in Party leadership. The system was normalized when the Party took on a more pragmatic approach, and

resorted to nationalist sentiments, but a certain kind of political alienation deepened, as the still dominant, nominally socialist, official language became more and more devoid of meaning.

Yet another prophetic aspect of Schaff's political argumentation was the theme of a 'new industrial revolution' – automation, new advances in technology (computers and information processing), that will free large groups of people from unwanted labor but also, cut them away from the satisfaction and social bonds that come with work (Schaff 1965: 330-332). It is clear for Schaff that alienation is not a problem of the middle classes (or intelligentsia) – it pervades the whole of the social body, only manifesting itself differently in different social milieus. From this point of view, the problems of a superstructure, such as popular culture and new forms of education, gain new urgency (Schaff 1965: 321-330). New industrial revolution will be a recurring theme for Schaff till his very last books, gradually becoming one of the most important problems (as in Schaff 1990). It is always seen as the danger of new forms of alienation of the individual, and, at the same time, as a point of political hope, as this new world of automated labour and saved human energy makes some kind of socialism inevitable (I will discuss this vision more closely in the next section of this text). In 1965 Schaff anticipated this change as a challenge and a chance for socialism, as socialist countries are, according to him, more efficient in the task of social planning.

What is also a recurrent motif on the politically-oriented pages of *Marxism and Human Individual*, is the insight that changes in social circumstances don't produce automatic advancements on the side of attitudes. The problems of the future will also have a lot to do with the aforementioned theme of 'aligning interests of the individual with social interests'. Schaff sees clearly that the task is impossible to achieve solely by means of propaganda, which differentiates this position from his earlier appeals to 'faith in socialism' (Schaff 1958: 83-91) as a way of restoring deteriorating political enthusiasm. What is indispensable in creating this kind of alignment is a certain sense of responsibility which is, in turn, impossible without a certain dose of independence and democratic freedoms (Schaff 1965: 296-302).

At a certain point in his argumentation, Schaff recalls a well-known apologetic motive of 'special circumstances', which made terror an inevitable element of socialism survival in the hostile international

environment. Democracy had to be sacrificed in the process, as socialism was built in one country, and furthermore – a country that had neither strong parliamentary traditions nor material conditions to make real democracy possible. Schaff includes in this argument not only the Russian Empire during the 1917 Revolution but the whole of what was to become the Eastern Bloc after the Second World War. All those countries, according to Schaff, were going in the late 40's and early 50's through a period of intensified modernization and class struggle, and, as such, were unfit to put authentic socialist democracy into practice. His argumentation, nonetheless, doesn't come down to this. In surprisingly frank pages, Schaff admits that parliamentary democracy with certain freedoms, snubbed in some brands of Marxist literature as 'merely formal', has its actual merits as a centuries-long training, which produces habits of social responsibility, such as abiding by the rule of law (Schaff 1965: 294-295). And above all, though some freedoms of parliamentary democracy are 'formal', one shouldn't be proud that those freedoms are limited in socialist countries (Schaff 1965: 299). As Slavoj Žižek observed in recent years, formal freedoms are important exactly on their 'formal' level – that purely formal regulations open up a blank space of possibility, and as such are indispensable in making possible political creativity (see Žižek 2008: 147-152). Schaff, in a more modest way but obviously risking more in the context of the time, made similar point on the advantages of what is 'merely formal': it is not enough – and indispensable all the same.

This is maybe the most interesting point he makes in terms of political thinking. Admitting that formal democracy actually had some value, needed a certain dose of courage to step outside easily repeated pseudo-Marxist cliché, which was proven false by the experiences of Stalinism and political practice of what Schaff termed in his earlier works as the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Formal freedoms may not be the same as actual freedoms but most probably the latter are impossible without the former.

Interesting as it was, this argument was not expanded by Schaff, which only proves that he struggled with the idea of democracy as something that is not only verbally encouraged but also guaranteed on the level of law and social practice. In his earlier work, Schaff also advocated taking individual responsibility and thinking independently (Schaff 1958: 95), but at the time he didn't propose any means to

guarantee those freedoms – the sole guarantee for them had to be the Party's political will to promote democracy among its members, as it would bring them closer to the role model of a 'communist man'. But without certain guarantees exceeding the will of political circles, responsibility and independence will always fall prey to appeals to 'strategic interests of Socialism' – interests always defined by the highest ranks of the Party officials. Schaff gradually became conscious of this problem but apparently couldn't find solution to it in his 1965's work and became entrapped between two opposing types of argumentation: one of them advocating democratization, the second one – formulated along the known 'strategic' lines – from the point of view of historical interest of actually existing socialism.

1990's: explaining catastrophe

The decade of the 1980's was the time of the prolonged crisis and dissolution of actually existing socialism in Poland. First years of that time saw unprecedented outburst of mass protest with the 'Solidarity' movement, last years – the Round Table negotiations and the first elections in which the representatives of the opposition could take part. Schaff wasn't a supporter of Solidarity. He backed the imposition of Martial Law by the general Wojciech Jaruzelski, aimed at strengthening of the state control over the course of the events. Supporting the system against the protest movements didn't save Schaff from expulsion from the Party (1984). Since then, Schaff was politically a complete outsider: still supportive of socialism, though not aligned with the opposition.

Schaff's political writings form the 1980's and 1990's can be summed up into three major threads of thought: one is an analysis of causes and repercussions of the crisis of the communist movement and existing socialism in general; another is devoted to perspectives of future socialism; the third one is an attempt on autobiography of Schaff himself and his generation. During those years Schaff modifies his opinions on actually existing socialism – he becomes more critical of it, though he tries to justify the political engagement of those who participated in constructing the system. At the same time, Schaff still identifies himself as a Marxist, convinced that the theory of the author of *Capital* provides the key to understanding the present and future tendencies of developed societies. Schaff achieves more critical distance towards the political practice of the existing socialism, but without

modifying the theoretical frame of Marxism. And he does that in a way that has a peculiar effect: in a way, he moves backwards in the history of Marxist thought and in his last works his position becomes very similar to those held by German social democrats (notably, Karl Kautsky and other ideologues of the Second International).

There are three main similarities between his position and the social democratic one. First of all, he stresses that political shortcomings of actually existing socialism were the effects of the conditions in which it came to power in the first place. The same argument that Schaff used in 1958 to criticise those who demanded 'premature democratization', in 1980 takes on a different meaning: the initial conditions in which the Communist Party came to power continued to weigh on the political practice and had devastating effects on the legitimization of the existing regimes and the communist movement in general. In the absence of proper conditions enabling transition to socialism (economic development, international solidarity, democratic traditions, to name a few), the system was caught in a spiral of violence: circumstances of internal poverty and external hostility demanded strict organisation ('military communism'), and gradually violence became the basic instrument of exercising power. It was clear to Schaff as we can see in his works from the 1980's, such as the book titled *Perspektywy współczesnego socjalizmu* ('Perspectives of Modern Socialism') (Schaff, 1990). Gradually, Schaff came even to the conclusion that Bolsheviks shouldn't take power in 1917 and instead should support accelerated democratic development modelled on countries with parliamentary democracy (Schaff 1999: 30-31). The taking of power in 1917 for Schaff is the 'original sin' of the revolution: in the circumstances of the time it had to end in political repressions and a prolonged deficit of democracy. No wonder that a book from 1999, in which he presents his criticism, Schaff defends Karl Kautsky claiming that he was not a 'renegade' (as in the famous Lenin's anathema) but a 'defender' of proper Marxism (Schaff 1999: 31). As we can see, Schaff still formulated his position from the point of view of 'true Marxism', but since 1958 this Marxism in question changed – from that of Lenin's to that of social democrats'.

The second major similarity is Schaff's view on political superstructure. As I have already mentioned, in his works from 1958 and 1965 Schaff used particular interpretation of the notion of 'class

struggle' to justify limits imposed on democracy in the socialist states: in given conditions there was no chance to install in Poland and elsewhere in the Soviet Bloc a 'parliamentary rule' of a British type. In his later works this argument disappears as it became clear for Schaff that democracy is indispensable in any future realization of socialism (see Schaff 1995: 76-78, Schaff 1999: 32), which also is a point made by social democrats.

The third similarity is evident in the way in which Schaff tried to envision the future of developed countries as some new kind of socialism. The basic argument was unchanged since 1965: automatization of work would make large portions of workforce redundant. As societies would face the problem of structural unemployment, it would become necessary to provide a growing part of the population with socially useful jobs, not bound to the labour market. This makes some kind of socialism indispensable in the forms of universal redistribution of wealth (an idea discussed today as 'universal income'), education, and social planning. Transition to this new society could be peaceful, as it would become evident for politicians and policy makers that modern technology demanded new forms of social organisation (see Schaff 1990: 60-72, Schaff 1999: 71-79, 82-83).

Similarly to social democrats and reformists of the past years, Schaff saw this major social shift as a possibly gradual change, made inevitable by the changes in the social 'base'. In those circumstances, it would be possible to achieve decisive steps by social engineering and political leadership of some 'New Left' of the future. For Schaff there was no necessity of new violent revolutions and struggle for new forms of redistribution, though in his later works he warned in passing about the risk of some new forms of fascism becoming the superstructure of this new social formation. What changed greatly during the years is the role he saw for the existing socialism in this process: in 1965 he thought that the socialist countries had valuable experiences to share with their capitalist counterparts, in the late 1980's it was clear to him that actually existing socialism failed in competition with Western countries in terms of organisation of production processes, technological and scientific development, and personal freedoms, which severely limited its attractiveness as a model for future social experiments (see Schaff 1990: 78-95, 200-207).

His most critical take on actually existing socialism was

elaborated during the 1990's, most notably in works *Notaki kłopotnika* ('Notes of a Bothered Man', 1995) and *Próba podsumownia* ('To Sum Up', 1999), in which he claims that countries of the Soviet Bloc combined 'socialist base' with a 'fascist superstructure': there was collective ownership of the means of production and a political rule based on organised violence (see Schaff 1995: 51-53 and Schaff 1999: 45-47, 124-125). What Schaff still left untheorized were the specific workings of actually existing socialism. For instance, his critique was concentrated almost solely on political violence and not on specific forms of social power and class struggle produced in socialism of the Soviet type. Another problem is the way in which socialism reproduced itself as a specific mode of production, with certain ways of organising the process of production, and with political and cultural superstructures. Schaff always linked problems of socialism with historical circumstances of the October Revolution (or, in the case of USSR satellite states, with circumstances of imposition of socialism by the hegemonic Soviet empire after the Second World War). The architecture of the system, combining socialist and fascist elements, once set is simply producing the same effects – there is no place here for any historical dynamics, let alone dialectics of social processes.

The questions of class conflict and the problem posed by the reproduction of the system seem to be impossible to deal with unless we are able to modify Marx's theory – not to abandon it, but to modify its terms in order to save its potential. We have to resort to some modification of class theory if we want to interpret social conflicts in socialism as class struggles. For instance, Polish workers repeatedly clashed with the state power as they fought with oppression in the workplace, demanded better life conditions, and tried to register trade unions independent of the Party's control. In an attempt to understand those dynamics, Leszek Nowak proposed during the 1980's a scheme of 'triple class power', which includes economic (control over the means of production), political (control over the state) and ideological power (control over the language providing meaning to social actions) (see Nowak 2011 57-58, 135-136). In his analysis, actually existing socialism was a social formation in which those three sources of power, normally divided between different fractions of the dominant classes, were accumulated by the Party officials. This triple domination was also a climactic form of class domination in history.

Nowak's claim should be critically assessed, as it simplifies the dynamics of social power in the socialist Poland – for instance by ascribing too easily to the Party the whole ideological power, which seems doubtful in a country with a historically strong role of intelligentsia and the Catholic Church as symbolic elites. What is more important, though, is that his modification of class theory opens up the question of class dynamics in a way that is impossible to achieve when we stick to interpretation of Marx's theory, according to which there can be no classes in a social formation in which means of production are state-owned. That way, by modification, Nowak restores the explanatory potential of the class conflict theory for understanding the political dynamics of actually existing socialism.

Another question is the problem of the reproduction of the system. When Marx analysed the structures of capitalism, he showed how certain basic principles (as the accumulation of capital) set into motion an entire assemblage of interposed processes, which produced serious crises of the system and would eventually lead to its collapse in the future. In Schaff's attitude to actually existing socialism there is no such dynamics – it shows only an inertia of the 'original sin' (of the revolution exploding in the wrong place and time) producing mechanically its detrimental effects. Different approach is presented by Jadwiga Staniszkis in her late 1980's book *Ontologia socjalizmu* (*Ontology of Socialism*) (Staniszkis 2006). Staniszkis proposed an analysis of the 'socialist mode of production' inspired by an analogous model of capitalism made by Marx. Staniszkis claims that in economy with state ownership of the means of production there can be no articulated structure of interests. The only sphere in which conflicts can express themselves is the sphere of needs. This conflict, situated on the side of distribution and consumption, doesn't find analogous expression in the sphere of production. Decisions cannot be evaluated by some objective measure, there is also no way of assessing costs of production processes. In effect, the sole mode of regulation are repeated crises which lead to political corrections that always come too late and produce enormous costs.

Staniszkis' analysis can be disputed on several points, for instance as it overestimates the value of the market (especially the capital market) as a provider of objective information. But regardless of this, one can easily see the dialectical potential of an analysis of this

type which aims to grasp specific effects produced by certain basic traits of the system. This analysis, though far from Marxist orthodoxy, is true to the dialectical method. Schaff, on the contrary, is faithful to classic Marxist positions (only this time it's Kautsky's and not Lenin's, as in 1958), but doesn't provide any truly new insight into the dynamics of the system which he knew so well. His Marxism remains tied to a well-known type of arguments on 'historical necessity': even when Schaff drops the evidently lost case of actually existing socialism, he envisions some new, 'unnamed-yet' type of socialism in this place, as if to be able to replicate the same line of thought in new conditions.

One can easily see several traits of 'orthodox revisionism' in the position developed by Schaff during the last two decades of his theoretical work. He modifies only the source of 'orthodoxy', which, in turn, enables him to use the general theoretical frame of the development of social formations. Moreover, it justifies his political optimism, namely the conviction that Socialism, even if under different name, will revive itself in the future. Clearly, this 'refurbishing' of old arguments can be taken as a major weakness of his position and a sign of his inability to go outside a certain vision of Marxism that has its roots in theoretical disputes from the decades before World War II.

What are, then, the merits of Schaff's late works? One should be seen in the sole willingness to interpret actually existing socialism as a form of socialism after all. A form that resulted in a failure but demands interpretation. Schaff sees this analysis as something necessary, if the political left is to become capable of building some alternatives for the future, and he opposes those who claim that 'actually existing socialism' couldn't be a form of socialism by definition. This type of ideological 'purity' is for Schaff completely false, and it actually seems suspiciously simple – an explanation that magically saves the Left from arduous work of thinking over the 20th Century.

Marek Waldenberg in a short but poignant critical essay on Schaff's position from that time points out an interesting contradiction in Schaff's thinking: he criticizes 'communism-fascism' and claims that the Soviet Bloc was a form of socialism at the same time (Waldenberg 1998: 44-45). For Waldenberg it's a sign that Schaff didn't define socialism properly, but a different interpretation seems to be more interesting: that Schaff expressed an actual political contradiction with which the Left must struggle if it wants to reinvent itself. Maybe the

worst part of actually existing socialism, from today's Left point of view is that it was, in fact, a form of socialism, that the political left must struggle with it (and its failure) as an important part of its own tradition. Schaff is willing to do this, although his account of the problem remains insufficient.

This brief overview of Schaff's political positions brings together several points that deserve to be stressed. Firstly, Schaff wants to deal with the problems of political practice. And as he wants to play a role in institutional politics, he is not free to take completely critical, 'pure' position. We see him as a thinker, who above all wants to influence Party's politics and is ready to 'get his hands dirty' with questions of strategy, ready to sacrifice part of intellectual elegance for political responsibilities – a trait evident in his 1950's and 1960's writings. Even in his last work from 1999 he doesn't pose as an outsider but speaks from the point of view of his generation, defending it and what he perceives as its political accomplishments.

This political ambition forces him to make concessions, to put things in euphemist or even ambiguous terms, as we have seen in his arguments for democracy or his first takes on the critique of the Stalinist period. In effect, Schaff's criticism of actually existing socialism is strikingly mild in comparison to, for example, the texts by Kołakowski. But what makes Schaff's texts interesting in this regard is his effort to modify Marxism according to its functioning in a political situation completely alien to circumstances in which the theory was born: namely in a situation when Marxism, though most often in a form of trivialized dogma, was nevertheless the official language of institutionalized power. Schaff tries to combine this position of political power with emancipatory vein of the original theory, sometimes with disputable outcomes. For years Schaff tried to secure for Marxism a place of intellectual dominance in conditions which he defined as those of socialism being realised in some political form. In contrast to those who saw socialism as an infinitely anticipated and postponed ideal, he saw it as a complex and highly troublesome, disappointing reality that had to be dealt with in given circumstances.

Schaff tries to argue from the same position even after the collapse of actually existing socialism (and 'official Marxism' with it): in

his writings from the 1990's he still asserts that he speaks from the point of view of historical necessity – again assuming a position infused with a certain kind of 'power', if only discursive one. His anticipation of New Socialism, which could be termed as 'automated and digitalised mode of production', echoes age-old arguments about the inevitability of historical changes, but is also an attempt to have the last word on political perspectives of emancipation.

What Schaff's arguments fall short of is the proper wording of problems with actually existing socialism, wording that would be really enlightening for a reader with today's knowledge. Although his later writings were full of critique aimed at political practice of the Party, his arguments remained predominantly general, resorting often to lines of thought developed decades before, for instance by theorists of social-democratic background. It is as if Schaff remained enclosed in the requirements of his role from the 1950's – a Party's philosopher, able and willing to play an active political part. Even in the 1990's Schaff felt in a way a responsibility of someone who had to take into account the strategic dimension of what he writes – as a representative of his political *milieu* and generation, as a representative of the interests of some imagined future political reality. Even in those weaknesses Schaff's writings are valuable as complex and contradictory documents in the annals of certain political experiment which ended so abruptly towards the end of the last century.

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ABSTRACT

GETTING HANDS DIRTY: ON ADAM SCHAFF'S POLITICAL WRITINGS

Adam Schaff was one of the most important Marxist philosophers in Poland. His work well documents the time, when Marxism was an 'official philosophy', burdened with political responsibilities and problems of strategy. The text is a critical analysis of Schaff's political writings. It highlights the most specific traits of his often paradoxical position, that was termed in literature as 'orthodox-revisionism'. Schaff tried to meet double and often conflicting requirements: tried to develop Marxist theory by posing problems unforeseen by the classics, and to stay faithful to what he understood as strategic interests of socialist countries at the same time. It will be argued, that even in its theoretical shortcomings, his writings are still among the most important resources for reflection on complex and tragic history of the Left in 20th Century.

KEYWORDS: Marxism, socialism, Soviet Bloc, Adam Schaff, revisionism, alienation

NIE BAĆ SIĘ PRAKTYKI: O PISMACH POLITYCZNYCH

ADAMA SCHAFFA

Adam Schaff był jednym z najważniejszych filozofów marksistowskich w Polsce. Jego prace dobrze dokumentują czasy, kiedy marksizm był "oficjalną filozofią", obciążoną polityczną odpowiedzialnością i kwestiami strategii. Artykuł jest krytyczną analizą pism politycznych Schaffa. Zostały w nim zaakcentowane najbardziej charakterystyczne cechy jego często paradoksalnej pozycji, określonej niegdyś jako "ortodoksyjny rewizjonizm". Schaff próbował sprostać podwójnym, nierzadko sprzecznym, wymaganiom: rozwinąć teorię marksizmu, podejmując problemy nieobecne w pracach klasyków, a zarazem pozostać wiernym temu, co definiował jako strategiczne interesy bloku socjalistycznego. Celem artykułu jest pokazanie, że nawet w swoich teoretycznych słabościach, jego pisma pozostają jednymi z najważniejszych materiałów dla refleksji o złożonej i tragicznej historii lewicy w XX wieku.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: marksizm, socjalizm, realny socjalizm, blok wschodni, Adam Schaff, rewizjonizm, alienacja

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HISTORIOGRAPHY AFTER REVISIONISM. REMARKS ON POMIAN'S IDEA OF WRITING HISTORY

As an introduction to a text about official, “bureaucratic” history and its revisionist counterpart, Krzysztof Pomian has written in an opening passage:

“The word *revisionist* has a negative tone. It has been used especially in order to condemn people described as such, which meant that they have supposedly doubted in principles held as obvious or in truths accepted as incontestable. Indeed, there were cases of usurpation of that notion, by people who in fact wanted to be stigmatised with it.” (Pomian, 2006, p. 188)

Revisionism, in a historiographical context, could simply mean that a historian would dare to contest an already well-stated interpretation of a past event, which was, obviously, of political significance. Revisionism is thus a will to revision, re-interpretation, which is a typical condition of history as discipline. At the same time, it seems obvious that the word has a political, ethical signification and thus can be instrumentalised by political forces, which is the reason why revisionism “has a negative tone”. It is also the case of Polish revisionism, a 1950s intellectual movement.

In my article I wish to show, firstly, that “revisionism” in Polish tradition had maintained both political and philosophical (methodological) meaning and, secondly, that Pomian’s, one of the prominent Polish revisionists, ideas on history rise from his political and philosophical position that can be seen as a critique of Marxism-Leninism.

Revisionism in the wake of socialism in Poland

Such a meaning of revisionism as presented above can be treated as a specific case of a general trend, i.e. revisionism within Marxism, which, as a consequence, is also critical of Marxist historiography. It still maintains that negative ambiance which can be easily used for immediate political aims. That double, philosophical and political, meaning of "revisionism" persists in Polish tradition.

Nevertheless, revisionism has primarily a philosophical meaning. It could be possible to trace a revisionist discourse in the wake of the socialist thought in Poland, when it was already considered as a kind of accusation by some, while other saw it as a political necessity or a part of a "true" doctrine. I believe that a good example of what revisionism meant philosophically and, at the same time, politically can be traced in Kelles-Krauz' article on Polish independence.

In *Niepodległość Polski a materialistyczne pojmowanie dziejów* Kelles-Krauz describes a dispute between PPS (Polish Socialist Party) and SDKP (Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland) where PPS was called by its opponents "«revisionists who reject historical materialism»" and that is why they dare to present such a [political] programme (that is, fight for independence of Poland), whereas SDKP is «fixed on doctrines of historical materialism»" (Kelles-Krauz, 1962, p. 370). For Kelles-Krauz it was not a case of revisionism, rather a necessity to change, revive, and adjust Marx' theory to a changing environment. He sees it as a way of finding accordance between what was the aim of the party and what was going on in the society: "the realisation of demands is secured (...) by their correspondence with the direction of economic growth and economic needs of society" (Kelles-Krauz, 1962, p. 372).

Thus, revisionism could be seen as a more nuanced version of Marxism that sees historical materialism as a dynamic doctrine, historical as any other theory, and thus forced to change and adjust. It does not necessarily mean modification solely on the level of political aims. As the aims and the whole historical process are unconscious (Pomian, 2014, p. 139), one can propose a sociological theory which unravels forces and political aims. It can describe them but cannot fully justify their significance. They "happen" independently from a certain theory and only if they are not in contradiction to economic conditions.

The latter seems to be, according to Kelles-Krauz, the core of historical materialism (Kelles-Krauz, 1963, p. 373).

The historical context in which Kelles-Krauz was writing that article is very different in many ways from the one of post-war Poland which was the background of Pomian's revisionism. Nevertheless, the nineteenth century dispute shows that the term has a certain history in Polish socialism. Even in the second half of the twentieth century philosophical disputes surrounding Marxism were deeply engaging and demanding. Marek J. Siemek regards this phenomenon as an effect of high standards of philosophical education and coexistence of three, strong philosophical traditions, that is Lvov-Warsaw school, Christian philosophy and phenomenology. Because of these strong contenders, Marxism in Poland "has always been inherently «revisionist»" (Siemek, 2002, p. 311-319).

Moreover, one should note that, in fact, "we are all revisionists now" (Labeledz, 1962, p. 9). It is virtually impossible to discern what can be treated as "true" teachings of Marx and to what extent they can be maintained unaltered. Even if we take for granted what an orthodox Marxist would say, there is no reason to believe that what is said holds up today. I would argue that revisionism within Marxism is an obvious and natural standpoint, rather than any sort of heresy. I will not examine that further in general terms but in a given scenery.

Revisionism of the 1950s and the 1960s

The first reference to revisionism¹ in the context of Polish thaw of 1956 was made by Leszek Kołakowski in his article *Intelektualiści a ruch komunistyczny* (Intellectuals and Communist Movement), and afterwards taken over by the Party to address unwanted ideas (Kemp-Welch, 2008, p. 135-139). Kołakowski stressed in this article that the existence of intellectuals in the Party is crucial, as is sociological research. The Party could benefit from intellectuals because they ensure that Party's decisions would be thoughtful (Kołakowski, 1956, s. 31). He also advocated for freedom of thought within the Party as well as the need for reforming Marxism to meet contemporary situation.

¹ For other specific meanings of revisionism in that period see Kemp-Welch's book *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History* (Kemp-Welch, 2008, p. 133-134).

As a result of the debate that started afterwards, repercussions, and protests², public opinion learned that there was a group of revisionists. That group was perceived, of course, negatively by the leaders of Party, even though the revisionists themselves had various ideas and did not form any organised group within the Party nor outside³. The history of revisionism ends substantially in 1968 when a group of intellectuals was expelled from the Party, some lost their jobs and were banned from publishing.

Among them was Krzysztof Pomian, who in the aftermath decided to emigrate to France. He took part in the revisionist movement as a member of the Party. Later, he said:

“My philosophy was as follows – and it was shared by Kołakowski – people who joined the Party not for profit and who wanted to make a political protest out of leaving it, should not send back the documents; the only honourable way out was to be expelled, and not just for failure to pay the membership fee.” (Pomian, 1991, p. 6)

I believe that the reason for such an idea is Pomian's understanding of what revisionism was, apart from its philosophical background. Its political dimension forced everyone involved to choose and formulate an explicit ethical position.

Pomian mentions his idea of revisionism couple of times and acknowledges the ethical postulate included in it. During the years of Stalinism every aspect of life was controlled by the decisions of the Party. Every individual was reduced to his or her social situation and any dilemmas encountered by that individual were understood as expressions of false consciousness (Pomian, 2006, p. 11). That is why the revisionist critique stressed “anthropocentric” moments in Marx' works, most notably in his early writings and within the whole strain of existential Marxism. Pomian realised at the beginning of the 1960s that epistemology and general history of culture interests him more than ethics and history of philosophy (Pomian, 2006, p. 12), and admitted that revisionism was no longer a part of his life. The fight with revisionism

² I do not want to recapitulate the history of Polish thaw with regard to intellectuals. One can find a detailed account in Kemp-Welch (Kemp-Welch, 2008, p. 132-145)

³ There were various groups that met during academic seminars or unofficially in private houses. There was no organized opposition within the Party (Pomian, 1991, p. 5).

was won by the Party in 1968, and it seemed to have shattered all dreams of reforming the principles of government⁴.

However, one should note two things. Firstly, Pomian and other revisionists maintained commenting political situation in Poland, even after the emigration in 1968. Unofficial groups reprinted some of Pomian's texts in Poland⁵. Moreover, Pomian stated in 1991 that revisionism had actually more importance as an experience than he realised earlier (Pomian, 1991, p. 6).

First of all, Marxism played in Poland a modernising role, a role that no other current of thought tried to do on such a scale. Revisionism stressed that role in spite of all the wrongdoings of the Party and the ideology itself. Revisionists believed in a free flow of ideas and realised their research in different domains. As the most interesting historical work, Pomian mentions achievements of Witold Kula, among a few others. All of that is a proof of revisionists' importance. Moreover, there is still a lesson to be taught from those events, namely the idea of autonomy of culture. "Culture should be equally autonomous with regard to religion as well as ideology. The same applies to ethics." (Pomian, 1991, p. 6)

Historiography after revisionism

The case of revisionism in Poland has some emblematic traits. It did not only show the pathologies of Polish government of that era – it posed questions of a truly philosophical nature, concerning the freedom of speech, the role of the intellectual, and, consequently, how to write about historical events. The latter issue is of special interest here.

Krzysztof Pomian has written numerous works on historiography and theories of history. As I have mentioned earlier, his interest has shifted from ethics to epistemology and general history. This is why his early works from 1950s are more focused on philosophical issues treated in an academic way. But even then we can find first remarks that show in what way he was critical of Marxism.

⁴ For more information on events of 1968 concerning Pomian and other members of the Warsaw School of History of Ideas see Sitek's part II of the second chapter of *Warszawska szkoła historii idei* (Sitek, 2000)

⁵ For example *Robotnicy i sekretarze (Workers and chairmen)* published in 1979 in *Biblioteka robotnika*.

In *Preface* to Polish translation of Lucien Goldmann's work *Philosophy and Social Sciences* Pomian presented a brief critique of a method adopted in the book. Sitek even treats this passage as expressing the opinions of Warsaw school of history of ideas and I shall cite it *in extenso*:

"[There is] a conviction that the basic fact, explaining literary or philosophical works, is the social division into battling classes. However, we believe that this basic fact should be that those works were created in the same epoch, at the same stage of development of certain social-economic formation. In practice, it means that (...) we should not only ask what constitutes differences in their (literary and philosophical works' – M.L.) content and worldview, but also what is common to all of them. Battling classes (...) exist in a common society; their antagonism is possible only on the grounds of a community's existence." (Pomian, 2006, p. 134)

Moreover, Pomian criticises Goldmann for establishing a symmetry and analogy between "grand works or philosophical systems", worldviews, and classes. For Goldmann that hierarchy is descending and transitive, which means that any kind of behaviour is, firstly, reducible to class consciousness, and, secondly, can be used to reconstruct a given worldview.

Pomian stresses that he maintains the basic premise of historical materialism, namely the fact that every worldview is a social product. Nevertheless, it seems that the change is clearly visible. Orthodox Marxism, which usually treated Marx' *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* as a short theory manual, saw the relation between material conditions and ideas as a simple cause-effect structure and denied any significance of legal, literary or philosophical works. As a consequence, it also rejected any proper history of philosophy or law because it would only be a specific history of a ruling class consciousness. Goldmann presents a more nuanced position, enabling research on history of literature by simply "dividing" literature into class related "portions", i.e., one author represented the working class, the other bourgeoisie, and another the nobility. For Pomian it is still an oversimplified view which actually would not be supported by Marx himself. Marx used various methods and theories depending on the subject matter and strived to produce a nuanced and critical vision (Pomian, 2014, p. 141).

Marek J. Siemek credited Pomian, along with Kołakowski, for fully abandoning Marxist position. That may be true and I do not wish to prove that Pomian remained a Marxist. This would give absolutely no interesting results and would in fact say nothing about Pomian's work at all. Of course, any contemporary social theory and historiography, both of which are important parts of Pomian's theoretical endeavour, is indebted to Marxism. That debt, obviously, consists in rejection, acceptance, or reworking. The latter seems to be the most common situation.

In the domain of historiography, Marxism has posed questions which are still valid and constructed conceptual framework which was adopted, even if partially. The main problem of Marxist historiography, as I see it, concerns the ground for explanation. The question arises: which laws are universal? Which laws of history are to be taken into account? From which standpoint, temporal or ethical, should I perform a critical analysis? Adam Schaff answered those questions as follows. There are three types of laws that form a Marxist worldview on history. There are law of dialectics, immanent to reality and applicable to every ontology, there are laws of historical materialism that explain the development of society and, finally, there are laws of methodology that should operate according to the abovementioned laws and produce ideologically coherent texts (Schaff, 1955, p. 52-53). Schaff also realises the problem of temporal standpoint, that is: can we use contemporary critique to describe what happened a century ago and what is the relevance of the outcome to our current situation? When referencing to Engel's work *Peasant war in Germany* he writes:

"Indeed Engels is interested in the peasant war in relation to a new, contemporary democratic revolution. He rejects a false, mechanistic method of vulgar analogy; he refrains from looking at past events through lenses of today. In the past Engels finds the forces, analysis of which enables understanding the present and establishing the rules for demeanour. (...) [The] class struggles of today become more comprehensible in the light of experiences of the past, and conversely – the past events seem more familiar to the contemporary reader thanks to unravelling regularities which occur in a current event in their developed form." (Schaff, 1955, p. 64-65)

Those regularities were both universal and local, or rather, pan-historical and specific to a given epoch. One should note, however, that the idea of class struggle and immanent contradiction is specific to

capitalism, in a sense, that an economic formulation of material thesis cannot be taken for granted and applied to every epoch (Pomian, 2014, p. 138). Here lies one of the most important differences between mainstream Marxist historiography and a more nuanced standpoint presented by Pomian.

Two theses in Pomian's work which are connected to the problem discussed above drew my attention especially: the irreducible pluralism of history and the characteristics of presentism.

The first one is rather self-explanatory. History is a discipline that gains knowledge of facts through sources, which means that historical knowledge is always indirect. Pomian compares the difference between memory and history to the difference between direct knowledge of an event and indirect reconstruction of a fact (Pomian, 2006, p. 233). Because of that, there are multiple ways to reconstruct that fact and, consequently, many different methodologies. Moreover, those methodologies are not reducible to each other, nor is there a possibility of presenting an all-inclusive theory. Why is that? There are two reasons for that. Pomian acknowledges that ideological, ethical etc. standpoint of a historian is constitutive to his or her ways of research. Secondly, every source has undergone some cognitive act, which determines a conceptual framework for outcomes. According to Pomian, there is little chance to eradicate any of those characteristics. That is why history is always methodologically plural (Pomian, 2006, p. 231).

Presentism, on the other hand, has a double meaning. Presentism is a term used by François Hartog to describe one of the regimes of historicity. Regime of historicity is a concept which can be translated into "the way historians write history in a given epoch". Presentism would then mean that historians tend to narrow their interests to the present. At the same time, the present enlarges to encompass not only the immediate moment but at least one generation before. Historians do not restrict themselves to the past and the present; they tend to speak about future as an unavoidable effect of the present. Obviously, presentism is a regime of historicity typical for modern times (Hartog, 2015).

There are various reasons why history has reduced its temporal interests. More important, I think, are the consequences of such a situation. Pomian notices the fact that the present is the most important temporal level of our culture. It shapes our norms and the way we look at the past. We use "the criteria and norms of today as if they were valid

for all the epochs of the past” (Pomian, 2013, p. 84). Moreover, we believe that our present will last forever; sciences, even social sciences, are shaping our belief in an a-temporal view on reality. Then there is no reason why we should not believe in perpetual reproduction of the present (Pomian, 2013, p. 83). History becomes a science of curiosities: the past is known and symmetrical to the present and the only thing that can draw our attention is something unusual and local.

Pomian is sure that the past “persists in the present” and shapes its every aspect (Pomian, 2013, p. 84). The problem, then, is the question of making the past important on existential level. Here Pomian stresses the need to change the way history is taught. In order to show how the past is valid today, one should tell the history both from the past to the present and from the present to the past (Pomian, 2013, s. 89, 92). More importantly, what should also be showed is the multi-layered construction of the past and its meaningful relation to the present (Pomian, 2013, p. 86).

It seems that the idea of meaningful past is consistent with what Schaff said about Engels’ historiography. Of course, the main problem concerns the question of critique: what do we want to show? Pomian does not express his ethical position robustly, but we can assume that he maintains values that can be labelled as liberal or leftist. It is not unimportant, given the fact that Goldmann acknowledges a primarily ethical point of departure of every historian. And he concludes that the only acceptable one is the thesis of emancipation of the working class. From this the choice of methodology should be obvious (Pomian, 2006, p. 125). Pomian rejects it and shows not only that we can maintain a progressive ethical position and write history in different ways (probably not all possible). He also gives the reason to make that ethical choice. Our present situation is relevant as is the past that shaped it. Historical and ethical preconditions of a discipline are unavoidable. Acknowledging that may help social sciences and humanities to overcome the crisis they are in (Pomian, 2010, p. 33-35).

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ABSTRACT

HISTORIOGRAPHY AFTER REVISIONISM. REMARKS ON POMIAN'S IDEA OF WRITING HISTORY

Krzysztof Pomian's works on history are one of the most interesting theoretical achievements of contemporary humanities. Being one of the prominent revisionists, Pomian took part in an important period of Polish history. Revisionist movement has also played an important role in shaping some basic ideas of Pomian's later work. Article shows the meaning of revisionism in Polish tradition concerning historiography, and more specifically the meaning of Pomian's ideas on historiography.

KEYWORDS: Pomian, Marx, historiography, revisionism, presentism

HISTORIOGRAFIA PO REWIZJONIZMIE. UWAGI O POMIANA IDEI PISANIA O HISTORII

Prace Krzysztofa Pomiana dotyczące historii są jednym z najciekawszych osiągnięć współczesnej humanistyki. Pomian, będąc tak zwanym rewizjonistą, brał udział w ważnych wydarzeniach w historii Polski powojennej. Jednocześnie sam ruch rewizjonistyczny wpłynął znacząco na kształt podstawowych wątków w późniejszej działalności naukowej Pomiana. Niniejszy artykuł pragnie ukazać znaczenie rewizjonizmu w Polskiej tradycji historiograficznej, a w szczególności w poglądach Pomiana na historiografię.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Pomian, Marks, historiografia, rewizjonizm, prezentyzm

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JERZY KMITA'S METHODOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF KARL MARX'S PHILOSOPHY. FROM IDEOLOGY TO METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Introductory remarks

New interpretations of Marxism began appearing in Polish philosophy after 1955, and some of them enriched Marxism with inspirations stemming from contemporary Western philosophy. Among the most important of the new interpretations from the late 1960's and early 1970's were the interpretations developed in The Poznan Methodological School founded by Jerzy Kmita, Jerzy Topolski, and Leszek Nowak. In this paper, as stated in the title, I will deal only with Kmita's interpretation of Marxism, although all three of the interpretations, which appeared simultaneously, deserve individual discussion. One can even talk about three distinct interpretations of Marxism that were motivated by common assumptions. Among these assumptions I would mention the belief held by the founders of The Poznan Methodological School during the whole period of its activity. They believed that Marx's method of inquiry was exceptionally inspiring and useful for the study of social phenomena. The input of The Poznan Methodological School into the evolution of Marxism in Poland is extremely original and valuable. Besides its historical value, it is also still inspiring and brings methodological tools that enable reflection on the whole of the socio-economic system and the place of the human activity within it.

Taking on the issue of Kmita's interpretation, I need to begin by indicating some problems, which in my opinion had influenced Kmita's

interpretation of Marxist philosophy. The first one pertains to the approach of the leader of The Poznan Methodological School to Marx's legacy. His approach was specific and very non-standard within Polish philosophy, especially in the context of Marxist philosophy in Poland in those days. Kmita's interpretation was done from the perspective of the philosophy of science, and not through the horizon of the dominant – ideological – approach to this philosophy. Metaphorically speaking, Kmita was interested in “Marx's road to freedom”. From this point of view, Kmita's interpretational perspective was extremely innovative. At that time the philosophy of science went through a turbulent development. The ideas of Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, or Willard Van Orman Quine appeared, and in Poland the works of the Lvov-Warsaw School were carried on, mainly by Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz. These conceptions were widely discussed not only in philosophy—including Polish philosophy, but were also popular among the scientists themselves. In Poland the representatives of the Poznan School were pioneers that popularized and creatively followed the developments of the Western philosophy of science (Jerzy Giedymin, Jerzy Kmita).

As I mentioned before, the philosophy of science was one of the important points of reference in Kmita's interpretation of Marx, and it made its mark defining the range of the interpretation. What Kmita was interested in was not as much the substance of this conception (i.e. the propositions from the field of economics or those relating to social structure), but rather the way of thinking of the author of *Capital*. He did not confront Marx's theses with existing economic or humanistic knowledge, he did not develop any theme usually connected with Marxism. Kmita was interested in Marx's form of thinking, the way he organised the relevant substantive statements, which means that Kmita was interested in Marx's methodology of inquiry. The presence of Marx's substantive statements was limited to two cases: either they illustrated the epistemological theses formulated independently of Marx's doctrine, or the content of *Capital* was the basis for the reconstruction of research procedures applied by Marx. This approach to Marx's legacy was far from typical, and it received a negative response in the community of Polish Marxists. It must not be forgotten that it all happened in the country in which Marxist ideology was dominating, and intellectuals were supposed to support this ideology.

The most repeated accusation against the Poznan Methodological School and its approach to Marx's legacy was made from the ideological point of view. This accusation was expressed in the statement which implied that this interpretation of Marxism is „too logical” or that it was made “in the spirit of neopositivism”. This is not the first time in history when an ideology became the enemy of rational thinking.

The interpretation that will be discussed below, was made in light of the interpretative coefficient of the interpreter. Kmita's interpretative factor consisted of the analytic philosophy of science, with a particular regard for the humanities, and his theoretical reflection on art (symbolic culture).

The second issue that should also be discussed at the beginning pertains to the status of the interpretation. I found it groundless to think about Kmita's interpretation in terms of revisionism, as far as revisionism understood as the interpretation of Marx's thoughts initiated by Bernstein, or in terms of its definition given by Gomulka¹, or as the approach to Marxism represented by a group of left-wing Polish intellectuals². Even though the methodological interpretation of Marx did not represent “the spirit of Marxism” for some Polish Marxists, on the account of its specificity, Kmita always emphasized that he interpreted Marx's method „by bringing into his arguments some, frequently considerable, modernizing corrections, but still sticking to this ‘something’”. (Kmita, 2007, p. 279). Also, this interpretation is not the comprehensive perspective on Marx's research method, it limits itself to some selected methodological issues that were still essential for Marxism, as well as for the practice of science and philosophy in the 20th century, especially for the research in social sciences.

¹At the IX Plenum of the Central Committee of PZPR in 1957 W. Gomulka criticized revisionism: „Revisionism is the set of false and erroneous views essentially coming down to the negation of the regularities of social development that are objective and validated by the every-day reality, to the negation or undermining of the basic experiences of the revolutionary labour movement, that have its universal use at the given stage of the historical progress”.

²„Revisionists” was the name given to the group of the left-wing intelligentsia that was active from the second half of the 1950's to the end of the 1960's. It consisted of Kołakowski, Brus, Baczeko, Pomian, Modzelewski, Kuroń, Bieńkowski, as well as “Puławy” group: Albrecht, Zambrowski, Kosman.

As I already mentioned, Kmita's interest in Marxism falls on the turn of 1960's and 1970's. During this period, he published a series of papers on Marx's method and edited some books³. After many years, in the 21st century, he made an assessment of Marxism in the Polish intellectual life and his part in it, answering the question asked by Jacek Hołówka, the editor-in-chief of *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, about the role of Marxist philosophy in Polish intellectual life. The answer was published in [Kmita 2007]. This is important in the context of this paper because in that work Kmita formulates his position on Marx's philosophy and Marxism in Poland. In it, he held up his previous beliefs about Marx's conception that had been formulated in the 1960's and 1970's when the interpretation of Marx presented here had been developed.

Up until circa 1955, as Kmita says, it was forbidden to discuss Marxism in Poland: "A serious discussion about philosophy, including Marxist philosophy, could not happen here. (...) there was no one (...) to discuss Marxist philosophy seriously due to current political reasons. The cultural and historical causes of all this were also playing their part" (Kmita, 2007, p. 278).

Until 1955 it was impossible "to develop the disparate interpretations of Marxist philosophy" that were making use of the philosophical inspirations coming from the West. Kmita's interpretation of Marxism was developed in this atmosphere of permission to draw on the inspirations from Western philosophy. In the presented paper Kmita emphasizes that his interest in Marxism does not come only from the permission to develop new interpretations of Marxism. He believes that Marxism, and especially Karl Marx's concepts „in spite of being anachronised, mainly after the death of the great philosopher–its creator–(...) considerably inspired the very core of the contemporary philosophy. Following Margolis, we can call this core cultural relativism; Karl Marx himself would surely prefer the term 'historical relativism'" (Kmita, 2007, p. 280). Emphasising the influence of Marx on contemporary Western philosophy, Kmita named Marx's pioneering idea: the introduction of thinking in the vein of cultural (historical) relativism into philosophical considerations. This particular

³ (Kmita 1973; 1974; 1977).

accomplishment of Marx's proved to be priceless. Let us notice that it was not until the end of the 20th century that the idea of relativism had become the centre of philosophers' attention, for instance in Kuhn's theory or in American neopragmatism and postmodernism. Kmita's main objection to Marx was about the latter's too far-reaching acceptance of the methods of natural sciences in the humanities, and Marx's fixation on the naturalised vision of science that he had carried over to the field of social research.

In 1970, Kmita's paper titled *Uwagi o holizmie marksowskim jako koncepcji metodologicznej* was published (Kmita, 1970, p. 61-122), wherein he presented the fundamental outlines of his own interpretation of Marx's methodology. In the latter texts, the ideas were formulated in a more precise manner. I am referring to the methodological structuralism thesis, Marx's methodological holism thesis, and the idea of functional-genetic explanation that he connected with Marx's research method. Generally speaking, he focused on working on methodological procedures of research of social phenomena, in which a man acts consciously and intentionally, but simultaneously his acts are determined by objective conditions.

The thesis of methodological structuralism

Before Kmita reached for Marx's works, he had already completed the studies on the methodological programme of the representatives of the classical German philosophy of the humanities: Wilhelm Dilthey, Heinrich Rickert, Eduard Spranger, and Max Weber. If we appeal to Karl Popper's distinction (naturalism-antinaturalism), we can name them the studies on anti-naturalist methodology. The result of this research was the monograph written together with Leszek Nowak, *Studia nad teoretycznymi podstawami humanistyki* (Poznań, 1968), and a series of papers published in philosophical journals. Alongside the anti-naturalist reflection, we can find here an essay on the concept of rational action. The assumption about the rationality of human actions and the conception of the explanation model called a *humanistic interpretation* were elaborated. The interest in rational action and the usefulness of this concept in the humanities was a continuation of

Ajdukiewicz's philosophical programme that Kmita supplemented with the reflection on the game and decision theory. Analysing Marx's *Capital*, he paid attention to Marx's use of the *assumption of rationality* and of his own explanation model of human activities that he called *humanistic interpretation*. In this way *Capital* confirmed the usage of these procedures by Marx.

The methodological structuralism thesis informs that "propositions that characterise the meaningful structure assigned to a particular action, which is rational in the light of this assignment, or to the result of such an action, are cognitively prior to propositions that characterise the different types of rational action or types of the result of the rational action" (Kmita, 1970, p. 73). How did Kmita understand the concepts of rational action, meaningful structure and cognitive priority? By rational action he understood a conscious and intentional activity, i.e. the activity which is subjectively determined by three elements: "The rational action is the action A_i that is determined by: 1. the knowledge K of the subject of an action A_i that characterises (a) the set $\{A_1, \dots, A_n\}$ ($i = 1, \dots, n$) of possible actions, (b) the effects of an every action A_1, \dots, A_n , that I will subsequently call values S_1, \dots, S_m . 2. Norms N of the subject of an action A_i that establish the relations of preference R , which gives order to the set of values $\{S_1, \dots, S_m\}$ and will be subsequently called the order of values. 3. The rationality of the subject of an action A_i , i.e., the fact that it always chooses the action that results in the value that he prefers the most" (Kmita, 1970, p. 67). This value gives a meaning to an action.

The explanation of the subject taking up rational action is thus based on attributing a meaningful structure to the agent of that action. The meaningful structure consists of a system of dependencies among three elements: the knowledge of an actor, the system of values ordered by his preference, and the assumption of rationality which states that the subject chooses an action leading to his preferred value. The most preferred value gives an action its meaning. Kmita calls this type of explanation of rational action *a humanistic interpretation*. In the century-long philosophical debate on the concept of interpretation in which *the understanding* of human activity was opposed to *the explanation* of this activity, Kmita took the unconventional position

preferring the explanation. One can not only understand human actions, but primarily explain them along with the fact that Kmita's model of exceptionless explanation (humanistic interpretation) meets the formal conditions of the causal explanation. He took a stance which was contrary to the position accepted by the followers of hermeneutic philosophy, who advocated solely for the understanding of human action, rigorously juxtaposing understanding with explanation.

These premises led Kmita to formulate the methodological structuralism thesis, which states that every human activity has its meaningful structure and if the subject of a humanist's inquiry is a particular activity, then its analysis must be preceded by the assumption of the meaningful structure of this activity. The meaningful structure creates a kind of pattern providing a given direction to an inquiry that must be observed during the empirical studies of a particular human activity.

In short, the aim of this research practice is the analysis of a particular meaningful structure (the activity of a baker, a painter, a politician etc.). All the mentioned kinds of concrete activities follow the same pattern: they have a meaningful structure. Kmita gave the methodological structuralism directive the status of the researchers-addressed norm, demanding "their research practice to be conducted in a manner defined by the thesis of methodological structuralism" (Kmita, 1970, p. 64), which means that the humanities, in their effort to know human activities, should explain them by attributing the proper, empirically-verified meaningful structure to them.

The most controversial part was the assumption of rationality (for conditions of certainty): "the statement that a rational action R_i has just been taken up follows logically from the conjunction of the following statements: 1. from the statement that the subject of an action A_i had knowledge on the basis of which he can take up one of the actions A_1, \dots, A_n leading respectively to values S_1, \dots, S_m ; 2. from the statement that the norms of the subject of an action A_i define the hierarchy of values according to which the value of the action A_i is maximally preferred; 3. from the assumption of rationality" (Kmita, 1970, p. 67).

He added that the assumption of rationality can be understood objectively or metalinguistically (we can speak of an action or of the sentences describing it). Most controversial was the assumed characteristic of rationality (of decision making), which was a far cry from the everyday understanding of rationality and rational action. In many debates, critics demanded a definition of „the essence” of the rational conduct, and the formulation of criteria for distinguishing the rational action from irrational or non-rational. According to Kmita's intention, a researcher who appeals to the assumption of rationality should simultaneously abstract from the assessment of the evaluative choices made by an acting subject, and from the true/false qualifications of knowledge selected by an actor as a means of action. According to this assumption, someone acts rationally even if he or she chooses values that are not accepted in a given culture (considered as irrational, non-rational, or incomprehensible), and has erroneous knowledge about the path of their realization. If one thinks about Marxism as an ideology that is expressed in a specific axiology and the manner of arriving at it, then the assumption of rationality formulated by Kmita is disappointing, and it is not surprising that its content was often misunderstood. What became unintelligible in this interpretation of Marx's work was abstracting values and the means of their realisation recommended by Marx from positive evaluation. Nobody noticed or considered the fact that the assumption of rationality does not collide with advocating the selection of a certain set of substantially specific values, including Marxist axiology. Both Marxists or non-Marxists, the followers of various ideologies or research programmes, act rationally (their adherents follow the goals and choose means to realise them), or we must assume that they are rational for the explanation of these actions to be possible. Failing to accept this assumption undercuts the effort to make the humanities an intellectual activity that will meet the requirements of scientific knowledge in a manner defined by the standards of the natural sciences. The humanities would not have tools to explain human behaviour in a justifiable way, and to give meanings to the results of action. The assumption of rationality in the dominant ideological approach to Marxism in Poland had turned out to be worthless. The argument that this assumption is the basic element of the explanation of the

humanistic interpretation (causal explanation of action-taking), and that its removal makes the procedure of the explanation of the human activity impossible were incomprehensible and thus misguided. Besides, the scientific ideal of the humanities was no alien to Marx who believed in the naturalistic paradigm of practising science.

There is also the second circumstance which reveals the importance of the assumption of the rationality of decision making in the context of the object of interest of the social sciences. It is a relation between the subject's world of thought and the action taken by him. After all, there is no necessity by means of which having a particular motivation must result in acting upon it. Philosophers notice this problem. They invoke the concept of the will (to act), and trying to analyse it they mobilise metaphysics. Giving up the metaphysical reflections on the will, one can refer to the assumption of rationality stating that a man is consistent, that he acts in accordance with his thoughts. Thus, a certain obstacle is being removed, one concerning the shift from the world of thoughts and imagination of a man to the sphere of the actions undertaken. On the one hand, with the elimination of *the assumption of rationality*, the social inquiries would lose the possibility of formulating the credible descriptions of human actions, on the other hand, they would lose even the intermediate access to the human mental world. After all it is from the results of the actions, all the artefacts amongst them, we learn about the world view of the subject and we authenticate the vision that is attributed to the subject by looking for the confirmation in the results that he left (the results are included in the empirical base).

Now, Kmita attributed to Marx the knowledge and the usage of the methodological structuralism thesis from *Capital*. The activities of a capitalist, a worker, and of any participant in the market economy were, to Marx, the rational actions in the above sense. Kmita illustrates this thesis with examples taken from Marx's works, especially the analyses of the concept of labour from *Capital*.

Marx's thesis of methodological holism

Marx's methodological holism thesis assumes the cognitive priority of the objective structure over the meaningful structure. Inasmuch as the respect for methodological structuralism is read by Kmita into Marx's line of thought, and into statements he formulated, Marx's methodological holism thesis is classified by him as Marx's original achievement. Kmita gave methodological dimension to this assumption, one of Marx's basic theoretical ideas. According to this thesis, the identification and the attribution of the specified meaningful structure to human actions requires knowledge about the socio-economic system that this activity happens in.

The definition of the meaningful structure had already been described in the previous paragraph. To give a sense of Marx's methodological holism, the remark on the pair of the concepts - objective-subjective and the definition of cognitive priority are needed. In the subject literature, two interpretational tendencies of these definitions were dominant: the anthropological and the one that emphasized the materialistic ontological monism of Marxism. According to the anthropological version, a man's vision of the world forms the only one, subjective reality that is the object of cognition, and according to which the subject functions in the world. This vision is of a subjective nature, and what is delineated in this vision as objective is also subjective; it is connected with idealistic philosophy. The ontological materialistic monism in turn accepts the existence of the only objective reality, and subjectivity is the special case of what the objective is. Both interpretations were inadequate to Kmita in the context of Marx's statements. He came to a conclusion that the interpretation that will be suitable for Marx must fulfil two assumptions: (1) the assumption of the subjective character of the process of the cognition of objective reality and (2) the assumption of an active role of the subject. The first assumption is obvious, it is us, humans, who know the world by means of conceptual tools. The active role of the subject is evident in the belief that a human is at the same time an author and an actor of the history or social reality (men create the institutions, and the institutions create men). The activity of a man is based on his images of the world, which change the world in the actions. The actions of man, the human practice

is the place of constitution for the social structures that are recognized as objectively existent, but also as the place of confrontation for the visions created, and for the conceptions with produced reality. These interpretations, the anthropological and the monistic, cannot simultaneously contain both of these assumptions. The anthropological emphasizes human activism in the sphere of cognition and action, the monistic and ontologising however, is simultaneously deterministic in regard to human activity, being reduced here to objective conditions.

Kmita suggested the following interpretation of Marx's understanding of a pair of the concepts objective-subjective, in which "(...) the subjective is expressed as the objective and the objective is expressed as the subjective, has its own representation in the form of, let us say, the meaningful structures (subjective and subjectifying representation of given objectivity) or contrarily, in the form of given functional assumptions that correspond to so-called the quantitative laws" (Kmita, 1970, p. 79). In Kmita's interpretation, Marx was a realist. He assumed the existence of an objective reality, but at the same time he claimed that human actions are subjectively determined (the methodological structuralism thesis) by the knowledge and the values of the acting subject. What we call objective reality can be only represented subjectively, or represented in a subjective-objective way. The subjective representation pertains to the beliefs of the acting subjects, and thus to the state of the recognition of their own activity. The subjectively objectifying representation is cognitive knowledge (fulfilling the scientific criteria and thus intersubjective) about the human actions that are formulated in the studies, the scientific ones for instance.

According to Marx's thesis of methodological holism, the propositions about the objective whole (in the above sense of the word 'objectivity'), i.e. the propositions about the socio-economic system, have cognitive primacy over the propositions describing types of rational actions or their products. In other words, the mentioned cognitive primacy is noticeable in the following directive: to explain human behaviour, aside from indicating the motives of the actors, one must refer to the propositions that characterise the socio-economic system in which the action takes place. Obviously not every action can

be explained by the propositions describing the socio-economic system. I will return to this later.

Kmita's analysis of the category of labour in *Capital* was inspirational in the context of devising the new meanings of Marx's concepts: subjective and objective. Marx characterised labour as, on the one hand, the rational activity understood as the meaningful structure (here Marx was realising the methodological structuralism directive), and on the other hand, he perceived labour as located in the socio-economic system, which gave it an altogether different meaning. The relativisation of labour to the capitalist socio-economic structure reveals a new dimension of human activity. This is a type of labour characteristic Marx considers to be objective and conditioning for intentional human activity. The objective characteristic is made within the scientific theory about the socio-economic system, thus what the scientific theory states is for Marx the representation of objective reality (subjectifying objectivity). Thus, when one speaks about the objectivity, what one can mean is only the objectivity that is recognised by the consciousness formed independently from the beliefs of the subjects engaged in the capitalist process of production. Marx's method of inquiry, according to Kmita, is the realisation of *Marx's methodological holism thesis*.

Labour as the process of production of use-value gives human effort a given meaningful structure, sets goals, and recognises the nature of the means of production used. Realising a given goal, labour is a meaningful action. The rational action, i.e., labour producing a given use-value, Marx also considers in a different manner: as the process of production of values with a certain objective effect assigned; whereby the value exists only in the use-value, in the commodity. Thus, considering labour in light of production of values simultaneously assumes the understanding of labour as rational activity producing use-value. Use labour needs to exist for labour creating values to come into existence. The production of values by labour is referred to by Marx as the socio-economic system, because the value is determined by the time of the social labour that is necessary for its creation. Value is quantifiable, and there is a standard of its measurement.

“As far as the subject of labour understood as the rational action which uses the means of production in a way set by his own knowledge and the goal of labour, labour understood as the production of values flows (leads to given results) in a way set by the socio-economic system no matter if the person entangled in the process treats the result of this process as his own or not” (Kmita, 1970, p. 92).

Concrete labour is regarded subjectively (conscious and intentional activity), and objectively—when it is considered as the value producing (the objective effect of the action realizing the intended goal), then: “It is now no longer the labourer that employs the means of production, but the means of production that employ the labourer” (Marx, *Capital*, ch. 8).

The dual characteristics of the category of labour in *Capital*, Kmita considered the characteristic feature of Marx's method of research into social phenomena. The point of view on human labour understood concretely was connected with the one understood abstractly. This connection is very original. The acting subjects' (a capitalist and a worker) knowledge of a goal, and a means of action (the meaningful structure of an action) differs, it does not correspond with the knowledge of the same action, which is defined as the element of the capitalist socio-economic system. They are not reducible to one another. The theory of capitalism, according to Marx, includes the knowledge of the socio-economic system.

Functional-genetic explanation

Now, let me go back to the previous issue of Kmita's interpretation regarding the connection between the meaningful structure, and the whole of the socio-economic system. This problem can be formulated as the following question: *does every action taken by a subject (the meaningful structure) need to be explained based on the knowledge of the socio-economic whole?* The followers of the ontological monist interpretation of Marxism answered in the affirmative. However, the admirers of the anthropological interpretation either agreed on the autonomy of both accounts of the concept of labour (subjective and objective), or they suggested redundancy of the subjective account in spite of the fact that for other (non-economic) humanistic disciplines they suggested the humanistic interpretation. I will explain in advance

that in Kmita's interpretation not every action is determined by the socio-economic system, and therefore not every action can be, or needs to be, explained in terms of knowledge of the socio-economic structure.

"Now it is doubtless that the whole class of human activities need not be explained, according to Marx – in any way taking into account the actual socio-economic system. These are activities that are non-rational, natural, i.e., the ones that cannot be interpreted humanistically by attributing to their subjects the given knowledge and goals. (...) According to Karl Marx, only some individual rational actions should be explained exclusively in terms of the socio-economic system" (Kmita, 1970, p. 107-108).

Kmita also argued that the belief postulating the existence of rational action which could be explained exclusively in terms of the actual socio-economic system would be inadequate to Marx's theory. Then which rational actions, or types of rational actions, should be explained by the propositions about socio-economic structure?

"The explanation in terms of the actual socio-economic system can be applied to: (1) non-dissemination of particular forms of consciousness, (2) their dissemination, (3) their persistence, (4) their fading" (Kmita, 1970, p. 112).

Not only can these types of rational actions be explained in terms of the knowledge about the socio-economic system, but also the products of the actions that can disseminate and fade in a society. In other words the originality of the method of *Capital* is that it can be applied to the explanation of an origin of social beliefs, and their fading in a given society. This explanation is not about claiming that a certain type of action could not disseminate because it was retrograde towards a given social structure, or it was too modern for a given age. Rather, it is about whether or not the system "granted" the possibility to realise the meaning of rational action, or if it made this realisation impossible. This consent takes place when the meaning of the action is consistent with the objective result of this action in the context of the socio-economic system. If, for instance, the goal of a capitalist is to multiply profit (the meaning of a capitalist's activity), and if the characteristics of the economic process indicate that the objective result of this process is the multiplication of profit, then we have the sought-after consistency between the goal and the result of the objective process. Then, the actions taken by the capitalist have the opportunity to disseminate. For

the capitalist, the increase of profit is a value, and simultaneously, the profit is an objective result of the capitalist economic process. If there is a difference between the above explained goal and a description of the results of the economic process indicated by the theory, then the actions of a capitalist in the previous manner cannot disseminate and can even fade. A type of explanation for human actions and their products, or the system of beliefs that embraces the dissemination or fading of the above mentioned categories in a given socio-economic structure, Kmita termed *the functional-genetic explanation* and declared as Marx's methodological directive in *Capital*.

Developing a model of functional-genetic explanation, Kmita took up the issues that had not been adequately recognised. Those were (1) reflections on the kind of determination that takes place between a meaningful structure and the socio-economic whole in which this action occurs, and (2) the methodological account of the socio-economic system that constitutes the autonomous whole.

According to Kmita's interpretation of Marx, the characteristics of action in terms of socio-economic system, or the objective conditions of action, should include the meaningful structure of an action. The characteristics of an action as rational, of its subjective context (a value and knowledge of the acting subject) is thus necessary. If we were to understand the basic thesis of historical materialism as do the majority of Marxists, that the objective socio-economic conditions causally determine the subjective context of an action, then Marx's reflections on, let us say, concrete labour would be redundant and incomprehensible. The concept of abstract labour would be sufficient. In the characteristics of abstract labour, the concept of concrete labour would be *implicite* included (the concept of concrete labour would be reduced to the concept of abstract labour). However, Marx emphasised the duality of the concept of human labour, arguing that the value of abstract labour does not exist without the use-value produced in the process of concrete labour. Karl Marx's deliberations directed Kmita's attention to search for a model of the determination connected with historical materialism which would be more adequate than the causal model. The goal was to give an account of the determinacy relations of the subjective context of determination by an objective one, which

would avoid a reduction of the subjective context to the objective one. After the critical analysis of the belief in which historical materialism is seen as relying on the model of causal determination, he came to a conclusion that functional determination would be more adequate to Marx's intentions. He replaced causal determination with his own model of functional determination, arguing that it better corresponds with Marx's beliefs than the dogmatic account of the causal determination model. The source of Kmita's inspiration in developing the concept of functional relations, and the concept of functional explanation and functional structure, were the works of, on the one hand, the French Marxists Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar and the Polish economist Oskar Lange and, on the other hand, the French psychologist Jean Piaget, the structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss and the contemporary research on Darwinian evolution (Kmita, 1973, p. 237-254).

A little bit earlier, in the mid 1960's, the French Marxists had been the first to start research the model of determination assumed by Marx in *Capital*, seriously questioning the universal attribution of the causal determination model to Marx. They applied a similar approach to the concept of socio-economic system, making use of the structuralist thesis in defining the concept of the socio-economic whole. In discussion with the above mentioned thinkers, Kmita developed the concept of the functional structure. According to Kmita, the socio-economic structure is adequately represented by the functional structure, which he understood in biological terms:

"By the functional structure I understand every single organism, often the organism with its immediate surroundings. The functional structure can be roughly characterised in the following way: (1) it divides into a series of elements whereby for every single element there is a certain repertoire of its possible states; (2) in the set of every possible sequence of elemental states, which I will call the global states, there is a distinguished proper subset of it, so that a given structure has a determined property P, known usually as the state of equilibrium if and only if it is characterised by the global state which is a member of this subset; (3) for every subsequence of the elements there are subsequences of the elemental state so that with any given state of other elements the structure would not have the property P—this type of subsequence of the elemental states we will call the anti-functional series of the elemental states; (4) the functional structure always has the respective value" (Kmita, 1973, p. 213-214).

The premises of the functional explanation making up its explanans he called *the functional reason*.

The functional reason of the answer to the question "(...) why is there chlorophyll in the leafage? Can be put in the following way:

- (1) This organism is an embryophyte.
- (2) Every embryophyte is capable of photosynthesis.

(3) Lack of chlorophyll in the leafage of an embryophyte would cause its loss of the capability of photosynthesis (it is anti-functional on account of the capability of photosynthesis)

There is a chlorophyll in the leafage of this plant”.

The premise (3) of the functional reason is the functional law, while the premise (2) formulates the law of maintaining equilibrium. From this moment up to the time of development of the model of the functional explanation, of the functional dependence etc., the fundamental epistemological issue taken up by Kmita which pertained to Marx was expressed in the question about the relations between the meaning and the functional reason.

While identifying the socio-economic whole with the functional structure on account of a given property P, he replaced the causal determination commonly attributed to Marx with the functional determination. The functional explanation embraced the valid explanation of the features of particular elemental states of this structure, and particular subsequences of its elements.

The socio-economic structure functionally determines its elemental states while human consciousness is one of the possible elemental states of this whole. The functional law takes the form of a statement that it will be impossible to maintain a state of equilibrium of a given socio-economic structure, if the appropriate type of beliefs (meaningful structures) does not appear in this structure. To the functional structure in form of the socio-economic whole, the law of maintaining the state of equilibrium is the thesis of reproduction. The

socio-economic whole is in a state of equilibrium if there is reproduction i.e., all of the social relations are reproduced. The simple reproduction takes place when every relation is reproduced in the same form. There can also be an extended reproduction that increases in a reproductive cycle, and an atrophic reproduction that diminishes the extent of the social relations in a reproductive cycle.

From the characteristics of the functional mechanism follows that the content of the beliefs "serving" the functional structure cannot be derived from it. In other words this structure does not determine the content of beliefs. Let me remind that through functional explanation, one can explain only their dissemination, fading, and persistence. *How do the meaningful structures that turned out to be functional originate?* Firstly, let us note that reflection on consciousness and the ways of its dissemination goes beyond the scope of considerations pertaining to functional mechanisms, examples of which are brought by biology. When we enter the territory of the humanities the objective biological analogies are useless. However, it does not mean that the theory of evolution stops being the inspiration for the social sciences. The formal analogies between the theory of development of the natural world, and the description of the progress of the human world, including the sphere of subjectivity, are still being exploited. Social theories of development take into account the relations between the subjective and objective context of action.

In Kmita's conceptual apparatus the relations are identified as those occurring between causal determination (subjective context of action) and functional determination (the objective context of action); also between the motives of a human action and the socio-economic structure. Kmita was not completely satisfied with the answer given by Althusser who admittedly also equated the socio-economic structure with the functional structure, but he characterised the human actions only within an objective context. However, Lange, whose proposition Kmita considered to be an example of a diachronic-functional structure, reckoned that human actions are functional in regard to the directional development of this structure. Both answers were considered by Kmita as one-sided, they were insufficiently taking into account, or completely ignoring, the subjective contexts of human actions.

While analysing K. Marx's propositions about a dissemination of the transformation of natural rent into rent land, the creation of manufactures, and the process of exchange, Kmita reached the conclusion that Marx used the model of functional-genetic explanation. As I already mentioned, while discussing the scope of problems falling within the model of the functional-genetic explanation, a chance for dissemination exists for these kind of actions and products, or more precisely their subjective contexts, in which the meaning of an action (also the meaning of the products) is in accordance with the objective result (the function of action) of action in the socio-economic structure. Moreover, the functional-genetic model explains the upholding and fading of beliefs.

"This is an outline of Marx's scheme of a functional-genetic explanation of a dissemination of the subjective context of a given rational action (...)

(1) A certain type A action, having a meaning M appears in the context of a socio-economic structure E having a property P.

(2) Every type A action and every M meaning leads to a type R result in the context of any socio-economic structure with a property P.

(3) $S \approx R$ (a result R corresponds approximately to a subjective goal S).

(4) If any A type action and meaning M appears in the context of any socio-economic structure having a property P, in which the result of A is R and $R \approx S$, then A disseminates in the context of this structure.

A type A activity and meaning M disseminates in the context of a structure E"
(Kmita, 1973, p. 253).

The presented model of the functional-genetic explanation, as it can be seen, does not reduce consciousness to the objective context, nor does the socio-economic structure determine causally the content of beliefs that contribute to the meaningful structures. Kmita acknowledged the above reconstructed mechanism, one which hides behind the model of the dissemination of the subjective context explanation, to be the fundamental in Marx's thinking. The developed model of the functional-genetic explanation which argues for the acceptance of characterising human activity in terms of decision rationality is necessary not only in the process of explaining individual

activities which are devoid of a greater historical meaning, but it is also necessary in the process of explaining historically important decisions made in the name of community and the phenomena concerning mass activity.

Explaining historical phenomena of development

Kmita regarded the explanation of historical development phenomena as a foreground task for Marx's theory of scientific knowledge. In the Introduction to *Założenia teoretyczne badań nad rozwojem historycznym* (1970) he mentioned some reasons in favour of this approach. As part of this task, he worked on the meaning of the fundamental theses of materialistic holism, and he inferred from them the consequences pertaining to the development of the social sphere of the scientific practice. In the mentioned text, he uses the phrase *Marx's theory of scientific knowledge*. The leader of The Poznan Methodological School was encouraged to use this concept perhaps by the results of the analyses of Marx's research method that had been conducted by the School so far. Marx's research method was elevated to the level of an epistemological theory which, as a coherent and organised set of the methodological propositions, should have a proper legitimisation (philosophical justification) to avoid typical objections raised against rival epistemologies (for instance Neopositivist or Popperian). The important postulate addressed to any philosophical conception is also the demand of self-referential application of its own statements to itself. Therefore Marxist epistemology cannot precede science, "be a science before science" (to use Marx's phrase); it is preceded by historical materialism. Historical materialism itself is historical, so is the Marxist theory of scientific knowledge. The reflection on the status of historical materialism and the general theory of social development included in it provides, in Kmita's interpretation, the premises for explaining the development of the scientific practice, its subjective context composed of methodological norms and directives. The binding norms and directives of a given discipline or group of disciplines were constituted and universalised as the response to the expectations towards science through the demands of social development of the socio-economic structure in which the science functions.

Kmita began his reflection on Marx's conception of social progress with the analysis of the Darwinian theory of the evolution of species, in an effort to reconstruct this type of explanation in the categories of philosophy of science. He concluded that if the theory of evolution explains the development of species, then the pattern of this explanation is in any way different from the explanation pattern of physics. The fundamental difference lies in the selection of general propositions, i.e. scientific laws that are the necessary element of every model of explanation. Comparing the law of physics with the fundamental law of theory of evolution (the principle of natural selection) he distinguished two kinds of laws: "(...) (1) laws in the narrow sense – describing specific regularities; (2) nomological formulas describing contour regularities" (Kmita, 1976, p. 55). The distinction between the types of laws turned to be the basis of the two kinds of explanation: the exceptionless explanation, the explanans of which would include scientific law in the narrow sense, and the historical explanation, the explanans of which includes the nomological formula.

The position that the application of the exceptionless explanation model has a limited range in the humanities, because of the difficulties with formulating scientific laws in the narrow sense is commonly accepted, and the view that this group of disciplines is of an idiographic nature becomes more and more popular. Kmita's historical explanation gives a solution to the outlined dilemma. It connects the two opposite positions, helping to hold the view that social knowledge is nomological, while simultaneously being idiographic. The specific character of nomological formulas and corresponding overall regularities lies in the fact that laws as nomological formulas indicate only the main functional dependence (the natural selection and the function of mutations). Referring to the law of natural selection is in no way a final form of explanation. The actual empirical studies are necessary to conform the nomological formula to empirical data. It is necessary to equip the formula with empirical content accommodating the spatiotemporal parameters of the phenomena being explained. It is about recognising particular mutations that are predicted in the evolutionary principle of natural selection.

By the analogy with the status of the laws of biological evolution, Kmita attributed the status of nomological formulas to the laws of historical materialism.

“The fact that the concrete historical explanation referring to Marxist theory of social development uses the explanans in which a unique combination of historical events appears, does not exclude the law in the form of a proper nomological formula under which this combination falls. In my opinion, the laws of historical materialism are, similarly as for instance the principle N of natural selection for the biological theory of evolution, the nomological formulas” (Kmita, 1976, p. 62).

In the discussed interpretation, Marx's laws of historical materialism direct and sensitize the researcher to the problems and connections that should be taken into account, but in no way does historical materialism replace the honest empirical studies. The laws of historical materialism serve the same function as the principles of structuralism for the structuralist studies. Additionally, if we assume the distinction between the social and individual consciousness, as Kmita did, then it follows that the social practice functionally determines the social, but not the individual, consciousness, i.e. the commonly accepted belief that actually lingers in a given state of the socio-economic structure.

Marxist theory of scientific knowledge

To the area of Marxist epistemology recreated by Kmita, apart from historical explanation and characteristics of the status of historical materialism, we should add the speculations concerning the social practice and historical possibility and necessity. These speculations were carried out in a methodological spirit, and their intention was to create proper methodological tools, on the one hand enabling the possibility of knowledge of social phenomena, and on the other, building the understanding of Marx's perspective of inquiry.

The social practice, taken from the view of epistemology attributed by Kmita to Marx, was characterised as “(...) a special case of the diachronic, hierarchical functional structure—on account of the (developmental) global quality consisting of the reproduction of the

existing objective conditions connected with the production of the new conditions of this sort" (Kmita, 1976, p. 21).

As one can see, the above understanding of practice is consistent with the previous findings made within the framework of this interpretation, but let us notice that they are distant from the common sense meaning of the term "practice".

The reflections on the concepts of historical possibility and necessity in turn complete the methodological model of historical explanation. The goal was to better define the historical process through pointing at the historical necessity that determines the social practice. A thing that is initially only possible becomes a necessary fact, becomes real in the process of actualization of this possibility in the social practice. In other words, this happens when one of the possible projects achieves, through the practice, the form that is independent from the project. Referring to the findings of William Dray, who distinguished two independent procedures in historical studies (answering two questions: *Why did the given situation happen?* and *How did it happen?*), Kmita took these two procedures to be connected by the concepts of historical necessity and possibility (Kmita, 1976, p. 69n.).

In the subsequent chapters of *Szkice z teorii poznania naukowego* Kmita was concerned with the scientific practice which he defined as the substructure of the dynamic and hierarchical functional structure that he identified with the whole socio-economic system. His thought slowly evolved towards the shifting from "(...) the problems of the theory of historical knowledge to the problems of the historical theory of knowledge" (Kmita, 1976, p. 29). Then he took up the task of developing an epistemological theory which he named **historical epistemology**. Kmita always thought that "(...) among the ideas making up the Marxist account of the social world and the ways of knowing one can extract a number of thoughts that constitute not only a certain conception of science but also the conception that is able to face the difficulties that the contemporary philosophy of science is struggling with" (Kmita, 1983, p. 45).

Kmita tried to show the validity of inspirations drawn from Marx in the process of solving the problems of philosophy of science that in the second half of the 20th century was going through a crisis. The crisis was connected with two groups of issues: the status of methodological

norms and directives of practicing science (between relativism and universalism), and the rules of scientific progress (between epistemology and sociology of knowledge).

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Kmita's interpretation of Marxism discussed above is very specific, because it was developed from the perspective of philosophy of science and its state at the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, i.e. one hundred years after Marx's *Capital* had been published (1867). Karl Marx was not a methodologist nor a theoretician of science; he was a philosopher and social scientist who developed and applied an original method of inquiry. He did not lay out systematically the methodological rules of his method. Among his published works, we can find only a few casual remarks on the applied method. Those remarks are scattered throughout his texts. One can also use, as Kmita did, the analyses of social phenomena that Marx carried out according to this method. In these circumstances, the effort to make Marx's methodological statements consistent was—and still is—a considerable intellectual challenge. But the interpretation of Kmita aimed at something more: at the restating of Marx's scientific methods in the categories, concepts and problems of philosophy of science as it was in the second half of the 20th century, and in doing so it endeavoured to achieve three goals. First, to demonstrate the competitiveness of Marx's approach against the dominant methodological paradigms at that time, and second, to provide the research tools for the contemporary theoretical analyses of the social world. Last—and supposedly not least—not to lose this “something” characteristic of Marx's thought. Thus, Kmita's interpretation of Marxism is not restricted to a literal reading of Marx's texts.

translated by Ewa Modrakowska

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ABSTRACT

JERZY KMITA'S METHODOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF KARL MARX'S PHILOSOPHY. FROM IDEOLOGY TO METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

The article presents J. Kmita's methodological interpretation of selected cognitive methods used by K. Marx. Those methods were (and I believe they still are) significant for the social sciences and the humanities, even a century after they had been developed. J. Kmita's interpretation reveals specificity of epistemic procedures carried out by the author of "Capital" and emphasizes contemporary actuality of Marx's epistemological ideas. To achieve that aim, Kmita refers to the concepts established in the field of philosophy of science of his time. According to J. Kmita, the attractiveness of Marx's approach lies in the opportunity to develop a methodological interpretation of Marx philosophy, which in turn enables the formation of a unique theory of science development, alternative to those provided by logical positivism, falsificationism, neopragmatism or sociology of knowledge. Such theory would combine the perspective of sociology of knowledge with an epistemological approach to the development of science.

KEYWORDS: historical explanation, functional explanation, functional-genetic explanation, humanistic interpretation, methodological structuralism, Marxist holism, assumption of rationality

JERZEGO KMITY INTERPRETACJA METODOLOGICZNA FILOZOFII KAROLA MARKSA. OD IDEOLOGII DO POJĘĆ METODOLOGICZNYCH

W artykule przedstawia się interpretację metodologiczną wybranych przez J. Kmitę metod poznawczych stosowanych przez K. Marksa. Metody te, były (i myślę, że są nadal) doniosłe dla uprawiania nauk społecznych i humanistycznych jeszcze po stu latach od ich powstania. W przeprowadzonej interpretacji, wydobywa J. Kmita specyfikę sposobu postępowania poznawczego twórcy *Kapitału* oraz ukazuje aktualność rozwiązań epistemologicznych Marksa. Wykorzystuje do tego celu dorobek współczesnego mu stanu filozofii nauki. Atrakcyjność Marksa, zdaniem J. Kmity, leży w możliwości wypracowania w oparciu o metodologicznie zinterpretowany dorobek Marksa, nowatorskiej w stosunku do logicznego empiryzmu, falsyfikacjonizmu, neopragmatyzmu czy socjologii wiedzy, koncepcji rozwoju nauki.

Anna Pałubicka

Jerzy Kmita's Methodological Interpretation of Karl Marx's Philosophy. From Ideology to Methodological Concepts

Łączyłaby ona perspektywę socjologii wiedzy z podejściem epistemologicznym w charakteryzowaniu procesu rozwoju nauki.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: wyjaśnianie historyczne, wyjaśnianie funkcjonalne, wyjaśnianie funkcjonalno-genetyczne, interpretacja humanistyczna, strukturalizm metodologiczny, holizm marksistowski, założenie o racjonalności



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**FROM INTERPRETATION TO REFUTATION OF MARXISM.
ON LESZEK NOWAK'S NON-MARXIAN HISTORICAL
MATERIALISM**

Foreword

The purpose of this article is to outline the theory of a historical process developed within the framework of the Poznań School of Methodology, mainly by Leszek Nowak and a team of his co-workers. The presentation of the peculiarity of Marxism developed in the Poznań School will be more complete when it is compared, at least perfunctorily, to similar research programs. It seems that the Marxism of the Poznań School of Methodology resembled the most the Anglo-Saxon analytical Marxism initiated at the end of the 1970s (see: Lebowitz 1988, Nowak 1998, Wright 1994, Tarrit 2006) with a discussion about Gerald A. Cohen's *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Cohen 1978).

On the meta-philosophical level, this branch of analytical Marxism had the following characteristics (not necessarily evident in the work of all representatives of the group but definitely shared by a large part of them):

- a critical approach to the existing Marxist tradition, perceived as devoid of clarity and logical rigorousness in defining basic terms and concepts,
- systematically explicating and defining the core terms and concepts of Marxism,
- rejecting the Hegelian heritage present in Marxism, especially dialectical logic,

- rejecting the thesis of the methodological identity and specificity of Marxism, which leads to the acceptance of the positivist (or hypothetical) philosophy of science,
- rejecting the hypothesis of the methodological and theoretical unity of Marxism – instead, viewing Marx's and Engels's texts as a set of more or less intertwined theories and social concepts,
- formulating a functional dependency which describes the relations among the global components of historical materialism,
- accepting the principles of methodological individualism and explicating basic Marxist ideas with the use of the rational choice theory and the game theory.

This stream of research is presented in the “Studies in Marxism and Social Theory” publishing series of Cambridge University Press.

There were important differences between the Western European analytical Marxism and its counterpart in Poznań with respect to meta-philosophical assumptions such as:

- the methodological specificity of Marxism, based on the idealizational theory of science,
- the possibility of a holistic and not only fragmentary reconstruction of Marx's and Engels's writings,
- the existence of the need to reconstruct the Marxist-Engelsian dialectics derived from Hegel's thought, and
- the adaptive dependency which describes the relations among the global components of historical materialism.

The scientific output of the School was published in the “Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities”, printed by the Rodopi (from 1975), and later by the Brill publishing house (since 2014). Polish counterparts of this philosophical book series were “Poznańskie Studia z Filozofii Nauki” and “Poznańskie Studia z Filozofii Humanistyki”.

The meta-theoretical assumptions of the Marxism of the Poznań School of Methodology

The adaptive reconstruction of historical materialism presupposed the idealizational theory of science (Nowak 1970, 1971, 1974, 1977a 1980b; Nowak, Nowakowa 2000) and categorial interpretation of Marxist dialectics (Nowak, 1977b).

The categorial interpretation of Marxist dialectics made it possible to characterize, in ontological terms, the nature of the historical reality described by the adaptive reconstruction of historical materialism. It is assumed that a given phenomenon is influenced by a number of factors. An essential structure is a set of factors which affect a given phenomenon in different ways. These factors are ordered with respect to the power of their influence on a given phenomenon. In this structure, one may discriminate between the main factor for a given phenomenon, characterized by the greatest influence, and a number of secondary factors, exerting smaller influence than the main factor. The nomological structure of the studied phenomenon, that is, the relationships between the factors and the phenomena determined by them, could be recreated in an analogous way. The dependency of the studied phenomenon on the main factor is called a regularity or inner dependence. A regularity could have different forms, depending on the influence of secondary factors on the phenomenon.

The dialectical position (in the categorial interpretation) presupposes changes of the main factors and, what follows, of the regularities pertaining to the studied phenomena. We can distinguish two basic types of changes of essential structures: *transformations* and *alterations*. Transformations occur within the scope of the main factors of the essential structure of the studied phenomenon; alterations – within the scope of the secondary factors. Transformations lead to a correction of the assumed regularities, while developments cause a change of a regularity itself.

According to the idealizational theory of science, a research process consists of two stages: first, the first model is created, with a radical deformation of the studied phenomenon, and then this model is modified in order to grasp closer a reality under investigation. A scholar assumes that a host of factors have an impact on the phenomenon and that their impact can be of primary or secondary nature. The

idealizational law has the form of a conditional sentence. The antecedent contains counterfactual assumptions on the basis of which the influence of factors considered to be secondary is omitted. The consequent describes how the studied phenomenon depends on its main factor. This dependency is valid when all the idealizing assumptions expressed in the antecedent are in force, which is rare in the empirical world.

In the course of concretization, the idealizing assumptions are canceled and the initial idealizational law is modified. It is shown how the studied phenomenon depends on the secondary factors. A sequence of idealizational statements obtained in this way is closer and closer to empirical data. Concretization takes place in a certain order. First are removed the idealizing assumptions which relate to the secondary factors exerting the greatest influence on the studied phenomenon. Then, the secondary factors which exert a smaller influence are taken into account. Finally, all idealizational assumptions are canceled and a factual statement is obtained.

In research practice, however, the final concretization is never performed. Usually, after a series of concretizations has been made, the influence of the remaining, less important secondary factors is determined by way of an approximation, however, on condition that the level of the admissible divergences between the empirical data and the result obtained from the theoretical formula is not greater than the one generally accepted in the given domain of science.

The explanation of a given phenomenon consists of showing the dependence between this phenomenon and its main factor. Next, from an idealizational law obtained in such a way, one derives more and more realistic concretizations. The sentence being explained results from a factual (or approximative) statement and from the initial conditions.

The main ideas of the adaptive interpretation of historical materialism

On the nature of adaptive dependencies

In a common sense interpretation of Marxism, the global relationships between productive forces and relations of production, a social base and a legal and political superstructure, social and economic conditions and particular states of social consciousness are interpreted in causal way. This has given rise to the well-known interpretive difficulties as it has not been clear how productive forces are to cause the appearance of particular relations of production, a social base—of a legal and political superstructure, and social and economic conditions—of particular states of social consciousness.

Those difficulties have been solved by adaptive understanding of those dependencies. Nowak (1973, 1982b) assumed that we were dealing with two states of affairs: state of affairs α , (called a set of possibilities) and state of affairs β (called a set of conditions). Let state of affairs A (from set α), in conditions B from set β , lead to state of affairs x . The set of those results (e.g. states of things x and y) is ordered according to a particular criterion. Namely, the distinguished states of affairs are characterized by property k to different degrees. Therefore, they can be ordered according to the degree of the intensity of that property. For example, a state of things x which is characterized by property k to a greater degree will precede a state of things y characterized by k to a smaller degree. The adaptive dependency of a set α on conditions B of a set β with respect to property k is presented by means of the formula:

$$A_{opt} = ad_k(\alpha, B)$$

which is read as follows: from the set of given states of affairs of type α that state of affairs becomes widespread, which, in given conditions B , will lead to a result having property k to the greatest degree; the state of affairs from a set α is called A_{opt} . Property k is called 'a criterion of adaptation' and function ad is a function of adaptation.

The author illustrated his proposal with the example given below. Let us assume that a person has invented a new device for increasing work efficiency and, what follows, the possibility of increasing a surplus

product. Owners who compare various systems of the organization of production (traditional, invented by specialists, etc.) select the one which they believe to be capable of ensuring the growth of the surplus product—with the use of that device. However, if the expected growth does not happen, the owners will still be looking for an advantageous system of the organization of production. If any of them delays the reorganization of production, that owner's profits from an additional surplus product will shrink and, in the end, the owner will go bankrupt. After a sufficiently long time, by trial and error, and the elimination of those who do not learn fast enough, an optimal system of the organization of production, with respect to the used tool, will become common in the observed economic sector. The mechanism of adaptation of systems of production to the level of productive forces, which operates in the way described above, has been formulated as follows:

(I) that system of the organization of production, from a set of historically given systems of the organization of production, is adopted on a mass scale which, at a given level of productive forces, ensures the highest surplus product for the owners of the means of production.

There is an analogous adaptive dependency between the superstructure and the economic base. On a mass scale, those systems, from among the various legal and political systems (traditional or invented by philosophers), become common which ensure the most effective introduction of the optimal system of the organization of production from the point of view of the owners class, given a particular state of the base. That dependency is formulated as follows:

(II) that political system, from a set of historically given politico-legal systems, is adopted on a mass scale in a society which ensures a system of the organization of production which is optimal for the ruling class, at a given level of the economic base.

The dependency of social consciousness on social being is similarly adaptive in nature. In that case, the interests of the owners classes, guaranteed by the legal and political system, function as a

selector of individual ideas. On a mass scale, such ideas become common as they ensure, in given social and economic conditions, the durability of the political system. That is expressed by way of the following dependency:

(III) those ideas, from a historically given set of ideas, become widespread on a mass scale which ensure, in given social and economic conditions, the highest stability of a legal and political system.

Dependency (I) describes the adaptation of systems of the organization of production to the level of productive forces. Together, the level of productive forces and the optimal system of production (relations of production) constitute an economic base. Dependency (II) describes the adaptation of legal and political systems to the economic base. The optimal political and legal system is called a superstructure. Together, an economic base and a legal and political superstructure form social and economic conditions. Social consciousness adapts to them, which is described as dependency III. The adaptation statements obtained in that way and binding for numerous idealizational assumptions constitute the initial model of the social-economic formation. Their later (in 1970s and at the beginning of 1980s) gradual cancelation (one of the key assumptions was that of the stability of productive forces, Łastowski 1982) became the basis for the development of the adaptive interpretation of historical materialism (see: Buczkowski 1982; Nowak 1998; Brzechczyn 2005, 2010b). Graphically the system of adaptive dependencies can be presented as follows:

| | | | |
|--|--|----------------------------|------------------------|
| The means of production | The system of the organization of production | | |
| Economic base | | Political and legal system | |
| Economic and social conditions (being) | | | Economic consciousness |

The categorial reconstruction of Marxian-Engelsian dialectics made it possible to formulate the paradox of historicism. Namely, the Marxist dialectics presupposes the changeability of the main factors of studied phenomena (Nowak 1977b, pp. 89–90), while the Marxist historical materialism presupposes that productive forces and the relations of production are the main determining factors in social life, in all societies and in all historical periods. This presupposition gives rise to the question of whether the repertoire of main factors is or is not subject to change in historical process. If the answer is positive, then another question arises about the nature of those non-economic but still material factors.

Epochs and formations in the historical process

Within the framework of AIHM researchers have tried to deal with the aforementioned paradox of historicism by creating an idealizational-adaptive interpretation of Engels's historical materialism (Burbelka 1980, 1982). According to that approach, the reproduction of immediate life and not economic production was the main factor in primitive societies. The production of goods became the main factor in the epoch of class societies.

According to the reconstruction of the basic concepts of Engels's historical materialism (Burbelka, 1980, pp. 38–39), the reproduction of immediate life and kinship relationships form an “ancestral base”. The economic and political superstructure and the ancestral base constitute together an “ancestral” being (socio-ancestral conditions). Socio-ancestral conditions, understood in that way, determine the consciousness prevalent in the whole society. As the above considerations concern a pre-class society, the consciousness is tribal and not the consciousness of the dominant social class. Therefore, the essential structure of a typical formation of the tribal epoch looks as follows:

R, Kr

R, Kr, e-pS

R, Kr, e-pS, trC

Abbreviations used: R – reproduction of immediate life, Kr – kinship relationships, e-pS – economic and political superstructure, trC – tribal consciousness.

Jolanta Burbelka also reconstructed the basic laws of the theory of the family formation:

(I. R) That kinship relationship, from a set of historically given types of kinship relationships, is adopted on a mass scale which ensures the highest survival ratio in given conditions of the reproduction of immediate life.

(II. R) That economic and political system, from a historically given set of economic and political systems, is adopted on a mass scale which ensures the most effective augmentation of the optimal kinship relationships in a given 'ancestral' base.

(III. R) That system of ideas, from a set of historically given systems of ideas, is adopted on the mass scale which ensures the highest stability of an optimal economic and political superstructure in given socio-ancestral conditions.

The structure of the kinship-social formation was analogous to that of the social-economic formation:

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| The reproduction of immediate life | Kinship relationships | | |
| Ancestral base | | Economic and political system | |
| Socio-ancestral conditions | | | Tribal consciousness |

Burbelka distinguished three kinship formations with respect to family relationships (the form of marriage): As regards the first kinship formation, group marriage of the first degree was common, which precluded, first, sexual relationships of parents with children and, then, of siblings. Group marriage of the second degree became popular in the next kinship formation; it precluded sexual contacts between close and more distant relatives. The monogamous marriage became more common in the third kinship formation. It constituted a further restriction on people's sexual relationships. According to the interpretation presented above, this diachronic evolution of the forms of marriage resulted in the production of the healthiest possible

offspring. The author also postulated that the history of the development of humanity could be divided into two principal epochs: the tribal one and the class one. Within those two epochs we could distinguish the social-kinship formations and the social-economic formations.

The author also defined the principles of transitions between the epochs. The main factor for the development of societies in the tribal epoch was the reproduction of life, while in the class epoch it was production. The transitions between these two periods were to occur as follows:

1. In the last formation of the previous epoch the main factor from the next epoch occurs above the surface essentiality level.
2. In the first formation of the new epoch the main factor from the previous epoch occurs above the surface essentiality level.
3. In the new epoch the main factor from the previous one cannot occupy a position at the lowest essentiality level (Burbelka 1980, p. 127).

The essential structure of the last formation of the social-tribal epoch and of the first formation of the social-class epoch, then, looks as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| R, Kr | P, Spr |
| R, Kr, P | P, Spr, R |
| R, Kr, P , e-pS | P, Spr, R , polS |
| R, Kr, P , e-p S, trC | P, Spr, R , polS, clC |

The political momentum in the adaptive interpretation of historical materialism

Distinguishing between two types of materialism: Engels's and Marx's entailed the problem of generalizing them and of constructing such a third form of materialism that would be applicable to systems of real socialism. Piotr Buczkowski, Andrzej Klawiter, and Nowak (1982) tried to construct such a version of materialism. The authors assumed that the structures of the political and cultural spheres were analogous to that of the economic sphere. In the political sphere we could distinguish

the means of coercion and a system of the organization of power which constituted a political base; the political base and the system of political institutions combined to produce social and political conditions, and political consciousness.

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| The means of coercion | The system of the organization of power | |
| Political base | | The system of political institutions (superstructure) |
| Socio-political conditions | | Political consciousness |

Between those constituents of the political momentum, adaptive dependencies occurred which can be described in the following way:

(I. P) That organizational system of power, from a set of historically given systems of the organization of power, becomes adopted on a mass scale which ensures the highest sphere of regulation to the class of rulers at a given level of the means of coercion.

(II. P) That system of political institutions, from a set of historically given systems of political institutions, becomes adopted on a mass scale which ensures the introduction of the most optimal system of the organization of power at a given state of the political base.

(III. P) That system of ideas, from a set of historically given systems of ideas, becomes adopted on a mass scale in a society which is the most effective tool for legitimizing the optimal system of political institutions in given socio-political conditions.

The cultural momentum of a society was reconstructed in a similar way. The means of producing knowledge are material tools for spreading ideas. The particular arrangement of social roles fulfilled by people forms a system of producing knowledge. The cognitive base of a society is made up from the material means and the system of producing knowledge. The cognitive base with the system of the cognitive organization created socio-cognitive conditions having an impact on the spread of metacognitive consciousness. Adaptive

dependency also linked the distinguished elements of the structure of the cultural momentum.

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| The means of producing knowledge | The system of producing knowledge | | |
| Cognitive base | | The system of cognitive organization | |
| Socio-cognitive conditions | | | Metacognitive consciousness |

These dependencies were expressed with the following formulas:

(I. K) That system, out of a set of systems of producing knowledge, becomes widespread on a mass scale, at a given level of the means of producing knowledge, which is the most effective for increasing the circle of the followers of the ideas introduced by the people who have at their disposal the means of knowledge production.

(II. K) That cognitive organization, out of a set of cognitive organizations, becomes widespread on a mass scale, at a given state of the cognitive base, which ensures the introduction of the most optimal system of producing knowledge.

(III. K) That system, out of a set of historically given systems of meta-cognitive consciousness, becomes widespread in a society which is the most effective for legitimizing the optimal system of cognitive organization in given socio-cognitive conditions in that society.

Those considerations led to the explication of the historical-material momentum of a society (Buczkowski, Klawiter, Nowak, 1982, p. 241–242). It is a relatively autonomous sphere of social life which reflects in its internal structure the global structure of social life. The historical-material momentum has three levels. The material one consists of means of a certain type and a set of social relations among the people who use those means. A system of institutions augment that state of interpersonal relations, while consciousness motivates people to perform the social roles ascribed to them. Between those components of momentum of a given type there occur adaptive dependencies. The interpersonal relationships are adjusted to material means of a given type, an institutional system adjusts to a level of

material means and social relations, etc. However, ultimately it is the material level that decides—in adaptive way—about the other levels of social life. A characteristic feature of a social momentum is a division into those who decide about the use of material means and those who do not have such influence, which leads to an internal contradiction of social interests.

The authors assumed that the dominance of the economic momentum over the remaining momentums meant that the level of technological development decided directly, i.e. in a causal manner, about the effectiveness of the means of coercion and of the means of the propagation of knowledge. Moreover, when the assumption about the independence of the political momentum from the economic momentum was canceled, then the acceptance of the optimal system of power depended, in an adaptive way, on the level of the means of production and coercive measures. Those systems, from a set of historical systems of the organization of power, become common which ensure the preservation of the most optimal system of the organization of production. That power system, from a set of power systems compliant with the optimal system of the organization of production, becomes prevalent which ensures the greatest sphere of power regulation. There are analogous relations on other levels of social life. The same relations occur between the economic and cultural momentums.

The authors have considered a situation in which the economic momentum loses its distinguished position (Buczowski, Klawiter, Nowak, 1982, p. 268). This happens when the momentum is not capable of maximizing its criterion of adaptation (surplus product). Then one of the subjugated momentums begins dominating social life and ensures, through its domination, the survival of the society as a whole, as well as maximizes its own criterion of adaptation (in the case of the political momentum that criterion will be the increase of power regulation). According to the authors, the so-called Asiatic social formation resulted from the dominance of the political momentum.

Non-Marxian historical materialism as a refutation of Marxian historical materialism

For Nowak, attempts at applying the generalized form of the adaptive interpretation of historical materialism to the construction of a theory of socialism appeared to be unconvincing, which inspired him to construct non-Marxian historical materialism (Nowak 1998, p. 228-229, Klawiter 2013). The theory overtakes the AIHM view of the isomorphic structures of three realms of social life: politics, culture, and economy, and it strengthens the antagonistic nature of historical materialism. Consequently, the concept of a social class is generalized. Nowak assumes that social classes exist not only in economy but also in politics and culture. In political life the rulers class, which has at its disposal the means of coercion, increases the global sphere of influence and restricts citizens' autonomy. In economic life, the owners class, which has at its disposal the means of production, maximizes its surplus product at the cost of producers' direct income. In culture, the monopoly of the means of spiritual production allows the priest caste to augment its spiritual authority and restrict believers' autonomy. The social antagonisms based on unequal access to material social means (means of coercion, production, and indoctrination) in each of the three realms of social life are, then, autonomous. Class divisions from the adjacent spheres of social life can only act as strengthening or weakening factors. Class divisions can also cumulate and, for example, one social class, in order to boost its social power, can overtake the means of coercion and of production or the means of coercion and of indoctrination, etc. Nowak notes that the phenomenon described above leads to a situation in which:

“[t]he economic momentum loses its exceptionality in a more general perspective. It turns out to be one of the three material momentums of society with the same internal structure [...]. Now, when it is known that not only the economic momentum is marked by the fact that the dominant role is played in it by the disposal of the material means of society and the needs of the masses, when it is known that not only the economic sphere of society generates the class division, then the role played in society by economy ceases to be self-evident and requires an explanation. [...] Now, there appears the possibility of taking into account—within the materialist, not the idealist, and class, not the individualist perspective—that there are at least theoretically admissible types of societies where not the economy but e.g. politics plays the dominant role [...]. Now this has become not a matter of speculative considerations

but simply a matter of facts. [...] in fact, such speculations are without any relevance – no society is possible without the working of gravity, an appropriate interval of temperature, appropriate rules of heredity and thousands of factors of similar kind” (Nowak 1983, p. 177–178).

Non-Marxian historical materialism consists of multi-model theories of property (Nowak 1983) and of power (Nowak 1991), a one-model theory of a hierocratic society (Buczowski, Klawiter, Nowak 1987; Nowak 1988), and a model of an economic-political society with a static and dynamic economy (Nowak 1983). I will present, shortly and in a simplified manner, selected models of historical development created in non-Marxian historical materialism.

A model of an economic society

The basic model of an economic society assumes a simplified structure of a social system, consisting of two social classes: owners and direct producers, without the influence of institutions and of social and economic consciousness. The society in question is externally isolated. Apart from the standard idealizing assumptions mentioned above, economic assumptions are also made in that model. It is assumed that the accumulation fund in the considered society equals zero (simple reproduction takes place there) and the number of the fields of production is constant.

The basic theoretical category is the alienation of work, defined as the difference between the level of direct producers' economic needs and the variable capital used to satisfy those needs. The level of economic conflict among classes depends on the degree of the alienation of work. Namely,

- when the level of the alienation of work is low, that is, when most of direct producers' needs are satisfied, there is social peace;
- when the level of the alienation of work is high, that is, when most of direct producers' needs are not satisfied, there is also peace in the social system because destitution breaks up direct producers' solidarity and their ability to organize mass protests;
- a revolution happens in the case of a medium level of the alienation of work – exploitation is then painful for most of

direct producers but it has not destroyed their ability to jointly organize revolutionary protests yet.

Let us present an idealized simulation of the development of a model of an economic society constructed in the way described above, consisting of three phases.

The phase of the increasing alienation of work. The mechanism of economic competition allows owners to maximize their profits by limiting employee income. On the social scale, this practice leads to an increase of the alienation of work and, consequently, growing social resistance. At first, the symptoms are lower work efficiency, single strikes, etc. In the end, there are mass protests of employees, on such a scale that the social system enters the phase of revolutionary disorder.

The phase of an economic revolution. In the face of mass protests the owners, deprived of the support of people who have at their disposal the centralized means of coercion, increase direct producers' remuneration. However, that does not help much because when direct producers return to work, the mechanisms of economic competition continue to drive the alienation of work and lead to another escalation of social unrest. The only durable long-term solution of that social conflict is a change of the property relations between owners and direct producers, such as would increase direct producers' autonomy of production and, in that way, motivate them to higher productivity. The owners who do so will be able to maintain or even increase their profits while simultaneously increasing direct producers' income, earned by those producers.

The phase of an evolution of property relations. Some owners modify property relations and come out of the phase of revolutionary disorder. Within the framework of the old economic system, then, new, progressive property relations are formed which give more autonomy to direct producers. The revision of property relations restores social peace in economy and brings about better material results: higher production and profits. Other owners also transform their property relations with their direct producers. There is an evolutionary transformation of property relations in that phase of social development. When most of global production takes place within the framework of the new, progressive property relations, there comes the transition to a new social-economic formation.

Extensions. That model was further concretized. Nowak (1981) canceled the assumptions about the zero level of an accumulation fund (i), constant level of productive forces (ii), and constant number of fields of production (iii). These concretizations made it possible to conceptualize the mechanisms of the economic development of the slave, feudal, and capitalist formations.

The removal of the first assumption (accumulation fund equals zero) poses the problem of the realization of a surplus product. The economic development in model II of an economic society (the approximation of the slave formation) is propelled by the owners' consumption.

The assumption about the constant level of productive forces has been replaced with a more realistic assumption about periodical technological development which leads to the appearance of a new field of production. That is supposed to be the characteristic of the feudal formation in which, as a result of the technological development at the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century, there appeared a new sphere of production: urban economy. Therefore, additional value was realized in a different way in that formation. Generally speaking, the rural sphere of production created demand for products made in the urban sector of economy, and vice versa.

Capitalism in that approach is a formation characterized by constant growth of productive forces. For that reason, on the micro-social level, particular owners can leave revolutionary disorder behind not by changing property relations but by raising direct producers' salaries. This is how, on the global level, the owners class solves the problem of the realization of a surplus product, by raising the global value of variable capital.

A model of a political society

Static assumptions. Every person has a set of preferences which guide his or her actions. Those actions can be divided into autonomous ones and those which are regulated by rulers. The regulated actions are undertaken under the threat of repression from the rulers. Autonomous actions are not affected by such pressure. That distinction should not be treated in too simplistic a manner because actions regulated by the

rulers may include administrative actions which maintain social order and are beneficial for all members of the society.

There are two basic methods of the etatization of social life: terror and bureaucratization. Terror consists in the physical elimination of those citizens who are centers of social relations independent from rulers. Bureaucratization consists in the replacement of autonomous social relations of the citizen-citizen type by etatized social relationships of the citizen-ruler-citizen type. In that way, state authorities gradually permeate the structure of social life, which makes it impossible to undertake any social action without their approval.

The proportion of regulated (but not administrative) actions to the universe of all citizens' actions is an indicator of the level of civil alienation. The intensity of the social resistance of the citizens' class depends on that proportion and can be expressed with the following formulas:

- when the percentage of citizens' actions (and, consequently, also the degree of citizens' alienation) controlled by rulers is small, there is social peace in the society,
- when citizens' alienation is at a medium level, a civil revolution breaks out,
- when the degree of citizens' alienation is high, there is social peace again because the increased power regulation atomizes and disrupts the citizens' class.

The state of declassification, however, is not stable. It is presumed that when the level of enslavement in a given society exceeds a certain threshold, there appears a trend in that society to gradually reevaluate autonomous citizens' relations. Bureaucratic social relationships, mediated by rulers, are replaced with autonomous, unmediated ones, for example, the control of information fosters gossiping, the control of economy – trading on the gray market, and the control of politics – the appearance of informal or even conspiratorial organizations.

Let us, then, present an idealized development of political society constructed in such a way. It is assumed that there are only two political classes: rulers and citizens (so the distinction of the studied society into economic and spiritual classes is omitted); the society is

externally isolated, the technical level of the means of coercion is constant, rulers use the means of coercion directly, and the influence of political institutions and doctrines on the social and political processes in question is disregarded.

The phase of increasing civil alienation. Political competition causes an increase of the regulation of social life in the initial stage. Those rulers who do not increase the regulation of social life will either be eliminated from the structures of power or they will also learn to do that. Such competition for power results in a limitation of citizens' fields of autonomy and in an increase of civil alienation. Consequently, citizens' political resistance grows and gradually transforms into an open political revolution.

The phase of a civil revolutions. Such a confrontation can end with citizens' victory or defeat. Let us assume that the revolution ends in citizens' victory. In such a case the power of the *ancien regime* is overthrown and replaced with a revolutionary elite. Just like in the case of the previous rulers, the sphere of control is accumulated. The revolutionary elite, having at its disposal the revolting masses, not to mention armed paramilitary units which form new means of coercion, constitutes the germ of a new rulers class. That is why after a victorious revolution the elite of the citizens' movement, as it overtakes control over the means of coercion, becomes a new rulers class. The mechanisms of competition for power also lead to the maximization of power for itself. The true revolutionaries who do not want to extend their influence are either eliminated from the political structure or learn to take care of their (material) interests. Consequently, power regulation increases, giving rise to social resistance which transforms into another revolution, in this way closing the *civil loop*. There is another political revolution, this time against the new rulers class, and once more there are two possibilities: of a victory or a failure. Let us assume that the revolution fails and citizens are enslaved.

The phase of total enslavement. The declassification of citizens at that stage of social development allows rulers to further maximize the sphere of state regulation, without any resistance on the part of citizens. When all spheres of social life are controlled by rulers, the system reaches the state of total enslavement. In that phase of development there are no longer any autonomous spheres of social life

which could be subdued. As the mechanisms of competition for power continue to force a typical ruler to enlarge his or her sphere of regulation, political competition takes place at the cost of those realms of social life which have already been subordinated to other members of the ruling class. This could lead to a destruction of the power system as a whole, so the only way to sustain the political structure are purges. Purges eliminate the surplus of candidates for power and make it possible to once more subdue the social areas freed in that way. At that stage of social development there are periodical waves of terror directed, this time, against the members of the power structure. They interrupt the periods of totalization.

The phase of cyclical declassations. In the stage of enslavement, according to the static principles of the model, there appears a trend to revalorize autonomous social relations. A revolution breaks out and it ends in citizens' defeat because of, among other things, the small number of participants and the resulting advantage of the authorities. Rulers repress the revolting citizens and, in order to prevent a new revolutionary wave, make concessions to the citizens' class, namely, they withdraw from the regulation of selected spheres of social life. Those concessions make it possible for the authorities to break the vicious circle of purges because new spheres of the autonomy of social life are created which, after the stabilization of political rule, can be subjected to control. That happens through the mechanisms of political competition, regardless of the intentions of particular rulers. The global effect of the actions undertaken by particular rulers is the growth of citizens' alienation culminating in an outbreak of another citizens' revolution, this time with a broader social base. The authorities are forced to make even greater concessions. A political society evolves according to the following pattern: a citizens' revolution – declassification – concessions – increasing power regulation – another citizens' revolution with a broader social base – etc.

The phase of cyclical revolutions. As the society awakens, more and more citizens participate in political revolutions. Then, such a massive revolution takes place that rulers, instead of turning to oppression, must initially make concessions big enough to bring about social compromise. At that point, the mechanism of social development changes as well. A political system evolves according to the following

scheme: revolutions—concessions—growing power regulation—a revolution with a broader social base—even greater concessions. The cycle of revolutions is continued until the system has reached the state of class peace in which the level of power regulation becomes acceptable for citizens.

A model of an economic-political society with static economy

In the models mentioned above property and power were analyzed in isolation. Besides, in non-Marxian historical materialism there is a model of a three-class society with rulers, owners, and a people's class. It is also assumed that the level of the means of production is stable and economy does not develop. In that model there is, apart from the class struggle of owners against direct producers, and of citizens against rulers, also the supra-class rivalry between the two classes of oppressors.

The phase of increasing alienation of work and of the diffusion of power. In the initial stage of development the owners class dominates the rulers class. The mechanisms of economic competition bring about economic exploitation. In order to counteract people's revolutionary outbursts, owners overtake some prerogatives of the authorities. That allows for more efficient control and economic exploitation of direct producers. In the long run the trend toward owners overtaking the prerogatives of the state would lead to a rise of an *E*-totalitarian society and a transformation of the class of owners into a double class of owners-rulers. However, in accordance with the isolated theory of property, after a certain level of the alienation of work has been reached, there appears social resistance which transforms into a people's revolution.

The phase of people's revolutions. In an isolated economic society a revolution might transform into a confrontation—in a three-class society, however, it must do that. If the people class wins that confrontation, the society will transform into a *P*-totalitarian system as the revolutionary elite, thanks to the mechanisms of political competition, will take over the control over the means of coercion and production. However, the victory of the people class over the mobilized social resources of the two classes of oppressors is rather unlikely. When suppressing direct producers' revolts, owners rely on the

authorities' assistance. They allow the rulers to suppress employee rebellions and use short-term selective terror but they do not permit direct producers' lasting declassation because too deep an interference on the part of the rulers in the economic relations would go against the owners' economic interest. However, after the terror has subsided, the employee masses regain the ability to revolt and there is another revolution. Social development progresses according to the following scheme: a revolution – short-term political repression and pacification of the society – decreased declassation – another revolution. After a whole series of employee revolutions some owners conclude that only a revision of property relations can bring long-term social peace.

The phase of the evolution of property relations and of the etatization of social life. A revision of property relations entails a division of the owners class into two strata: progressive and conservative. In that way, the authorities free themselves of the chains of property; social life undergoes etatization. Rulers are supported by the weaker category of owners – the conservative one. The growing regulation of the new economic structure makes progressive owners identify themselves more and more with the increasingly resistant citizens class. The growth of citizens' alienation leads to a citizens' revolution.

The phase of a civil revolution. The outcome of that revolution very much depends on the current stage of the phase of the etatization of social life. If the outbreak happens too early, when the new economic sector, including the new owners class, has not been fully formed yet, the revolution will end in a defeat and rulers will take over the means of production and accomplish P-totalitarization of society. If, however, the outbreak happens when most of the social product is being produced in the new property relations, then the revolution can be victorious. As the new revolutionary power is a weaker partner in an alliance with the progressive segment of owners, there is a reduction of the rulers' control of economy. Most barriers which restrict the development of the new economic sector disappear.

A model of an economic-political society with a dynamic economy

In this model, it is assumed that a steady growth of the means of production occurs in a society. The increase of a surplus product depends on the technological progress, which influences the relations

between classes of owners and direct producers, rulers, citizens, and also the supra-class rivalry between rulers and owners.

The phase of increasing alienation of work and of the collapse of power. The owners dominate the rulers in the initial stage of social development. For that reason they can, by way of the mechanisms of economic competition, increase their own profits at the cost of direct producers' income. On a global scale, there is an increase of the alienation of work and, consequently, growing social resistance.

The phase of people's revolution. This resistance transforms into a revolution. In the static model of economy, the owners class had the choice of either calling upon the coercive forces or revising property relations. In a dynamic economy owners have one more option: they can finance a raise of direct producers' remuneration, using the profits derived from the development of productive forces.

The phase of autonomous cyclical development. Initially owners use the easiest method, namely, they request the support of the state to suppress the protests. By trial and error, though, more and more owners realize that suppressing employee protests is not a sustainable solution. One disadvantage of such an approach is that the production process is interrupted. Another is that the rulers gain a pretext for increasing interference in economy. It is much more efficient to preempt employee protests by stimulating the growth of their salaries. There are two benefits of that practice: the owners who do that ensure social peace in their production units and all owners—the class as a whole—can realize a surplus product. Interestingly, in that phase of social development there is a decrease of the alienation of work without a revision of property relations, and a cessation of economic class struggle.

The phase of an economic collapse. Long-term social peace makes the class of direct producers less and less willing to risk mass revolts, in the view of the possibility of losing not only chains but also a car, a summer house, or similar goods. When the direct producers' readiness to protest is lowered, the owners become less willing to increase variable capital. Thereupon, problems with the realization of a surplus product reappear. Increased production means that additional demand begins to surpass the social demand determined by the needs of the state and the direct producers. The economy begins to collapse and the workers'

masses, disarmed by long social peace, are not able to organize a revolution on an ad hoc basis and to restore economic balance by enforcing a raise of salaries.

The phase of the etatization of economic life. Then, the class who have at their disposal the means of coercion come into play. The increased interference of the state in the economic life achieves two aims at the same time: it solves the overproduction crisis and ensures the maximization of power regulation. It assumes the form of the construction of a 'military state' or a 'welfare state'. The progress of the etatization of economy is but one aspect of the general etatization of social life.

The phase of citizens' revolutions. According to the static principles of the theory of power, the increase of power regulation gives rise to growing social resistance. Initially, only marginal sections of the citizens class decide to revolt because, first, the owners class has been deprived of social significance and a real influence on economic processes by way of bureaucratization of economy and, second, the class of direct producers does not have any reasons to revolt as it is satisfied with the level of the alienation of work. Thus, lost citizens' revolutions are not capable of obstructing the totalization of the system while victorious ones only accelerate that process because the mechanisms of a civil loop come into play.

Extensions. That model of the development of the capitalist formation was further concretized. The author examined, among other things, the influence of a victorious workers' revolution, of an evolution of forms of government, and of transformations of social consciousness on the development of a capitalist society (Nowak 1989). In a series of more detailed articles Nowak (1996, 2003, see also: Ciesielski 2013, Zarębski 2003) discussed the methodological status of the prediction of the totalization of capitalism, as well as the problem of the verification and possible falsification of that prediction.

A historical interpretation of models of non-Marxian Historical Materialism

Non-Marxian historical materialism is, in its main conceptual framework, an interpretation of class societies belonging to the European line of development (some examples of its application to the

interpretation of non-European societies history, see: Nowak, Paprzycka 1989; Brzechczyn 2004ab; 2007, Bręgiel-Benedyk 2013, Karczyńska 2013, Rogacz 2016). In the slaveholding formation, the phase of the increasing alienation of work and the collapse of the state has its counterpart in the period of patriarchal slavery, which gradually transformed into classical slavery. Ancient forms of democracy were an expression of the control of power by property in that historical period. When the exploitation of slaves became more severe, there was a series of slave revolutions. Those revolts were suppressed by public authorities but the slaves' persistent resistance enforced an evolution of property relations. In the frame of slavery formation the institution of colonate (*colonatus*) emerged—a prototype of feudal ownerships relations. Owners of great estates settled free people as lease-holders (*colonus*) on their arable lands. After paying the rent, the *coloni* kept the rest of income for themselves. At that time there was a growing bureaucratization of the empire. Its Western part collapsed under attacks of barbarian tribes—a factor neglected in the model - but the Eastern part continued to exist until 1453.

A similar developmental cycle repeated in the feudal formation. After the collapse of the state, the period of early feudalism was a counterpart of the phase of the growth of the alienation of work. At that time peasants became dependent on the lords class. A feudal lord had power over the land—he was the owner of the land used by peasants, over the people—he could dispose of the peasants, and over courts. In early Middle Ages the feudal class wielded political power as it has overtaken many prerogatives of the state.

Technological progress at the end of the 10th century created the conditions for the appearance of a separate, urban economy. As it was much easier to earn money in urban environments at that time, peasants migrated there to improve their living conditions. However, sooner or later the mechanisms of exploitation in both fields of production caused a series of protests of urban and rural people. A wave of such revolts swept over the whole Western Europe between the 14th and the 16th century. They enforced a change in property relations. The social changes brought about proto-capitalist and capitalist relations of production. Thus, the societies of the European civilization, from enslavement, through feudalism, to capitalism, have

been developing in the direction of increasing alienation of work: a hired laborer employed in a capitalist factory is to enjoy greater productive autonomy than a feudal peasant, and a peasant is to enjoy greater productive autonomy than an ancient slave.

The appearance of urban economy, craftsmen's guilds, and then of proto-bourgeoisie allowed power to free itself from the influence of both categories of property. On the institutional level these social processes were expressed by the creation of an absolutist state. The growing bureaucratization of social life led to a series of citizens' revolutions which ended in the overthrowing of government authorities: in the Netherlands in the 16th century, in England in the 17th century, and in France in the 18th century.

That cycle of development was only repeated to a certain degree in the capitalist formation. The dominance of property over power was expressed in the form of government called bourgeoisie democracy which reduced the state to the role of a 'night janitor'. The exploitation of the working class led to a series of worker strikes, the Chartist Movement in England in the 1820s, the Spring of the Nations in 1848–49 in all of Europe, or the Paris Commune in the 1870s in France. However, in contrast to the previous formations, capitalism was the first form of government characterized by constant development of productive forces. Therefore, capitalists were the first owners able to 'bribe' their direct producers by assigning greater variable capital to them. That led, on the one hand, to the cessation of the economic class struggle and, on the other hand, to problems connected with the realization of a surplus product. Here the state helped: it drove economic demand by means of increased economic interventionism and state orders. The economic role of the state grew after the economic crisis of the 1930s. On the institutional level the etatization of social life in Western Europe was expressed in the creation of a 'welfare state'. Ever greater social groups, using benefits from the state, became dependent on state bureaucracy. Marginal parts of the citizens' class revolted against that increasing dependence on the state apparatus. That is how the student occupation protests in 1968 or the pacifist movements in the late 1970s are interpreted in non-Marxian historical materialism. The totalization of capitalism was halted, for a time, by the wave of neoliberalism in the 1980s. However, those counter-trends will

not, according to non-Marxian historical materialism, stop the totalization of the system in which more and more real economic decisions will be made by economic bureaucracy instead of by real owners.

This interpretation of the development of pre-capitalist societies which belonged to the European line of development was supplemented by Krzysztof Brzechczyn (1998, 2009), who analyzed into respectively extended models of this theory the rise of manorial-serf economy in Central Europe. A factor triggering the divergence of development between Central Europe and Western Europe was the shortage of manpower. It worked in two ways. On the one hand, low density of population coupled with the weakening of the power of the state forced the feudal landlords to improve the situation of peasants, which limited the scope of peasant migration to the cities. Consequently, the cities in Central Europe were less numerous than in Western Europe. The underdevelopment of the urban component in Central European states disturbed the balance between the king, the burghers and the nobility. As long as the estate of nobles was weak, the economic development of the cities and the peasantry could continue unobstructed. However, the basic feature of political systems in Hungary, Bohemia and Poland was the domination of nobility in parliamentary institutions. This advantage gave the nobility the necessary influence to enact law and control the activity of the state, which served the interests of the predominant social class. Consequently, this social class could introduce unobstructed the so-called secondary serfdom which made possible the increase of manorial service. These social processes were accompanied by the increase of demand for agricultural products in Western Europe. Above-mentioned factors occurred in all Central European societies. Apart from them, it is possible to distinguish factors characteristic only for the developmental paths of particular societies of this region. Their presence led to an uneven development of the manorial-serf economy in these societies. In Poland, manorial-serf economy appeared in the course of the 16th century, in Hungary in the first half of the 16th century and in Bohemia in the 17th century.

According to Nowak, the basic distinguishing feature of the societies of the European civilization was the separation as well as balance

between classes of rulers, owners, and priests. This balance was seriously disturbed in the history of Russia where the state was the greatest land owner. This led to two attempts at the totalitarization of this society. The first one took place during the rule of Ivan the Terrible when the *pomeshchiki* – the double class of rulers-owners competed with *boyars* – the single class of owners. The second attempt at totalitarization took place during the rule of Peter the Great. It was then that the authorities tried to create industry and manufactures. This totalitarian anomaly caused state feudalism to transform into state capitalism without the stage of free competition. The level of state interventionism in state capitalism was on a par with state interventionism in the ‘more civilized’ contemporary western world. The growth of power regulation led to two victorious citizens’ revolutions in 1917, which, however, as a result of the mechanism of a civil loop, only accelerated the political enslavement of the Russian society. The apparatus of the Bolshevik Party transformed into a triple class of rulers-owners-priests.

The starting point in the conceptualization of real socialism is a dynamic model of power (Nowak 1991) allowing for an interpretation of as various phenomena from the history of the Soviet Union as: the revolution in Kronstadt and peasant revolts (a counterpart of citizens’ revolutions which close the civil loop), the collectivization of farming and the creation of the Gulag archipelago (the phase of enslavement), party purges (a counterpart of the self-enslavement of the authorities), and periodic civil protests: revolts of Gulag prisoners at the beginning of the 1950s, worker strikes in Kryvyi Rih and Novocherkassk in 1963, the national awakening in the Baltic countries at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, and the social activism in the period of Gorbachev’s perestroika.

The creation of a theory which encompasses, primarily, the dynamics of real socialism allowed Nowak to predict, as early as 1980, the fall of real socialism which subsequently lost civil revolutions (Nowak 1980a, 1982a, and the 1987 extended version; see also: Brzechczyn 2010a). Let us add that the fall was a huge surprise for Western sovietologists, as evidenced by the surge of discussions at the beginning of the 1990s in sovietologist journals, in which various authors wondered why western sovietologists had not been able to

predict the fall of real socialism (see e.gr: Burawoy 1992, Connor 1991, Cox 1994, Hollander 1992, Lieven 1994, Strayer 1998).

Summary

The adaptive interpretation of historical materialism developed in the Poznań School of Methodology fits well in the widely understood Marxist revisionism in Poland. Both idealizational methodology and categorial ontology can be seen as basic components leading to revisionist interpretation of historical materialism and dialectics. However, the adaptive interpretation of Marxism did not go beyond the political boundary acceptable to Communist Party. In the first half of the 1970s the creation of the adaptive interpretation of historical materialism proved that Marxism could be developed in an original way and with the use of a modern logical apparatus. The social sciences based on Marxism from the backward East could catch up with the more advanced science in the West. These were the main ideological functions of Marxism developed by Poznań milieu (Nowak 1985 [2011], pp. 590-591). In the second half of the 1970s the generalization of historical materialism leading to the creation of socio-political and socio-cognitive momentums as autonomous spheres of social life could be used in an unacceptable political critique of real socialism. Because authors from the Poznań milieu tended to use very sophisticated hermetical terminology and logical apparatus, they could still pretend that they fulfill ideological functions and be officially published in Poland.

However, the creation of non-Marxian historical materialism definitely went very far beyond the borders set by Party authorities. Namely, in the light of this theory, class divisions in real socialism reached their apogee because one ruling class accumulates the means of coercion, means of production and mass media. An empirical counterpart of this class of triple lords was a party apparatus which rules over the rest of society. This kind of a critique of social reality was unacceptable to Party authorities so books and papers on that theory could only be published only in the underground (On Nowak's involvement in Solidarność movement, see: Brzechczyn 2012). Leszek Nowak, the author of this theory, was imprisoned during the martial law (1981-1982) and dismissed from the university (1984-1989).

The original conceptualization of political power influenced the reception of this theory in official and oppositional circles in Poland as well as in the Western countries (other factors are analysed in Brzechczyn 2008). Namely, in non-Marxian historical materialism the state with its administrative apparatus is seen not only as a committee which manages the interests of bourgeoisie, as posited in Marxism, or a 'night guard' as described in liberalism, or an institution which levels out income inequalities, as is assumed in the social democratic doctrine of a welfare state, or a guardian and warrantor of moral order, as is postulated in the Catholic social science. Political power is considered to be a social form which has its own interests and which generates specific social inequalities. The interpretation of the state accepted in this theory revises the basic ideological intuitions (Marxist, liberal, social-democratic, and conservative) of various theories of state power and is, probably, the most important obstacle on the road to a wider popularization of that approach. It is so because the spread of a social theory is not only contingent upon a correct conceptualization of the social world but also on forming an alliance with the social movements, which creates the need for a certain way of interpreting social life. In 1981-89 the Solidarność movement—with its publications, especially the peripheral ones – was such a social vehicle which made it possible for that theory to become more known.

After 1989, in the era of the intellectual dominance of neoliberalism and of postmodern distrust of meta-narration, the demand for a radical social theory created analytically has significantly decreased, at least in Poland. The crisis of global capitalism in 2008 admittedly created demand in analyses written from the radical class point of view but that demand was satisfied by papers representing the view of orthodox Marxism. They were mostly foreign texts, translated into Polish, and not Polish conceptualizations. Although non-Marxian historical materialism contains interpretations of 2,500 years of the history of societies belonging to the European developmental line, the theory is still less known in the Polish humanities and social science than it deserves to be.

translated by Agnieszka Wróblewicz

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ABSTRACT

FROM INTERPRETATION TO REFUTATION OF MARXISM. ON LESZEK NOWAK'S NON-MARXIAN HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

The aim of this article is to outline the theory of a historical process developed within the framework of the Poznań School of Methodology, mainly by Leszek Nowak and a team of his co-workers. In the first part of the paper, the meta-philosophical and meta-theoretical assumptions of Poznań school are reconstructed and juxtaposed with the relevant assumptions of Western analytical Marxism. In the central part of the paper, the main ideas of adaptive reconstruction of historical materialism and non-Marxian historical materialism are presented. In its final part, some problems of reception of Leszek Nowak's theory of historical process in Polish People's Republic and the Third Republic are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Adaptive interpretation of historical materialism, analytical Marxism, idealizational theory of science, Leszek Nowak, non-Marxian historical materialism, real socialism, communism.

OD INTERPRETOWANIA DO ODRZUCENIA MARKSIZMU. LESZKA NOWAKA NIE-MARKSOWSKI MATERIALIZM HISTORYCZNY

Celem artykułu jest interpretacja teorii procesu historycznego rozwijanej w poznańskiej szkole metodologicznej przez Leszka Nowaka i zespół jego współpracowników. W pierwszej części artykułu przedstawiana metafizyczna i metateoretyczna założenia poznańskiej szkoły metodologicznej, które zestawiane są z założeniami zachodniego marksizmu analitycznego. W drugiej, zasadniczej części artykułu przedstawione są główne idee adaptacyjnej interpretacji materializmu historycznego i nie-Marksowskiego materializmu historycznego, zaś w trzeciej - problemy recepcji teorii procesu historycznego rozwijanej przez Leszka Nowaka w PRL i III RP.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Adaptacyjna interpretacja materializmu historycznego, idealizacyjna teoria nauki, Leszek Nowak, marksizm analityczny, nie-Marksowski materializm historyczny, realny socjalizm, komunizm.

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