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A Sociology Engaged on Behalf of the Polish Society[1]

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In the era of real socialism, which is distant now by a generation, ›engaged sociology‹ (*socjologia zaangażowana*) was an important word, a *Kampfbegriff*. A prominent representative of the official sociology of the period even published a book with that title (Wiatr 1965), but sociologists who were further removed from the ideology and the circles of power did not describe themselves thus, nor were they so called, although they were sensitive to human values and social issues. In order to be an ›engaged sociologist‹ it was not enough to be engaged, it was necessary to be engaged on the set, ›proper‹ side – to profess faith in the official ideals or to join one's work, at least outwardly, in ›building socialism‹. ›Engaged sociologists‹ were thus not sociologists who supported the strikes and social movement of Solidarity, or sociologists developing a ›critical sociology of real socialism‹ – those words belonged to another world.

After the fall of real socialism the term ›engaged sociology‹ nearly disappeared; its expulsion from the language of sociology was a reaction to its earlier ideologization. There is, however, no deeper reason not to use it. Engaged or civic sociology (*socjologia obywatelska*) has a great tradition in Poland, going back to Ludwik Krzywicki (1859–1941) and Stefan Czarnowski (1879–1937), the founding fathers of sociology in this country; if they who practiced it did not so call it, the reason is only that they could not imagine any other kind (Szacki 1995). Now sociology that is conducted on behalf of society and addressed to society is called by the American term ›public sociology‹ (*socjologia publiczna*), which suggests that it contains some novelty that

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needs to be ›grafted on the Polish stock‹, just like innumerable other American practices, solutions, or ideas, from Halloween to the organization of universities.

In this outline I will show, using examples of research, interpretation, and essays, what engaged sociology could do today for society in Poland.

The power of sociologists

»Philosophers« wrote one of them in his youth – Karl Marx – »have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.« In the last quarter-century many social scientists have tried, in various ways, to change Poland. Some have taken part in political activity – they have participated in wielding power. Among them have been those who, operating within the framework of their scientific competence, have indeed changed the world. I am thinking here of economists, and particularly of one, Professor Leszek Balcerowicz, creator of the market reforms of 1989. Other academics, including sociologists, have in general become quickly convinced that the world of power is governed by laws other than those known to them from books and that their knowledge is little used by politicians, who either think it is unsuitable or impractical, or who think they ›know best‹. Other academics decided in time, or not in time, that while dozens of persons could replace them in the role of politician, in their role as researchers and interpreters they were irreplaceable.

Abandoning attempts to change the world by deed does not in the least mean the total relinquishment of such ambitions. Indubitably, academics – Marx included – have had a larger impact on the world not by their acts but through their ideas and words, through ›various interpretations‹ – new interpretations, revisions, and heresies of all kinds tend to be the beginning of great ›material‹ changes. It is not necessary to participate in government in order to change the world, particularly because – as Stanisław Ossowski wrote – »in the sphere of political struggle, victory does not usually involve any Hamlets.« (1957: 89) Leszek Kołakowski expressed the matter aptly in writing that participation in politics required a certain dose of ›blindness‹.

The practice of engaged sociology does not need to consist in the active participation of sociologists in government, or even in assisting with current policies. Politics itself need not to be understood as a domain for acquiring

and wielding power in a state; politics is also the domain of civic concern for the *polis*, the republic, the common good. The place of politics in this sense is the area of public debate, the market for information and ideas, in short, the *agora*, and the addressees of sociologists' activity are the citizens, the political society.

»Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.« This adaptation of Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous thesis concerns, however, only the auditorium: what cannot be said in the department, can and should be said in the marketplace. It is curious that Max Weber (1946), advocate of *Werturteilsfreiheit*, in his famous lecture *Science as a Vocation* expressed the view that it was the ›damned duty‹ of an academic to take a public stance in a political dispute if he knew something germane to the subject. This social hermeneutics, the public interpretation of social experience, is no less important than providing the bases for social engineering or advising leaders, politicians, and activists.

Sociologists most often offer society factual knowledge, the results of research and their own opinions. Such knowledge should by no means be underestimated, as it goes beyond common sense and the independent experience of individual people. But science gives ›life‹ more than positive knowledge; in Weber's words, it also gives ›methods of thinking‹, ›clarity‹, and ›meaning‹. Sociology also has more to offer society.

Method

Sociology, a science whose output people often encounter, could promote scientific thinking in society. The most important thing in science is not accumulated knowledge, but the method by which knowledge is acquired and then corrected – the way of thinking itself. Knowledge becomes outdated – the more rapidly the more it was supposed to be current; the method, however, is unchanging; research techniques alter, but the scientific method is eternal. Therefore, the attempts in Herodutus' *Histories* to explain the Nile's periodic flooding can still be used as a paradigm of scientific research (Cohen, Nagel 1993). The seven essentials of scientific thinking here are:

1. A critical approach to knowledge, the separation of the grain from the chaff (this is precisely what was meant by the Greek word *kritein*); this attitude is the basic element of the scientific tradition.

2. A rational attitude to one's own judgments – as much firmness as there are proofs, as much assertion as there is confirmation – this is the logic of Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz.
3. Universalism – views are not appraised according to their authors, but in accordance with generally accepted tangible criteria, as Robert K. Merton expressed it.
4. Falsifiability – we must not produce theses that can be made to accord with every possible experiment and can be defended indefinitely. This is Karl Popper.
5. »Lack of compliancy in thinking« (Ossowski) – not, today, toward the authorities, but in regard to stereotypes and social pressures, which are sometimes stronger than the authorities.
6. A language combining the signs with the things, serving to describe the world and to communicate, not to obscure the truth and to persuade (the Lvov-Warsaw school of philosophy).
7. Scientific disputes are the road to the truth, and »the critic of my views is a companion on that road« (the physicist Maciej Geller).

These principles are obligatory in the scientific debate and enjoy respect even when they are not respected, which can happen, but is considered to be a deviation from the norm. Discussion in the scientific community could be a model for public debate, and scientists who appear in the *agora* could propagate such a model and push the debate in the direction of rational discussion. Not only in scientific debate, but in the public debate, participants should:

1. Base themselves on sources and credible information; know how to evaluate and differentiate the value of information; differentiate the opinions of experts, based on evidence, from the opinions of quacks.
2. Be responsible for what is said; say what can be proved; do not put forward suppositions as the proven truth or one's own opinions as established fact.
3. Evaluate views on their merits, not according to the affiliation and the actual or assumed orientation and political sentiments of their holders.
4. Avoid vague and irrefutable explanations on the order of conspiracy theories or an all-encompassing scheme.
5. Be courageous in expressing one's own opinion, including an opinion that is incompatible with the dominant views and opinions of one's social environment.

6. Use language to communicate and cooperate, and not for propagandizing, for fighting, or expressing enmity.
7. Remember that the critics of your views are not your enemies, but people who may understand the common good differently and see different roads to it.

Furthermore, during discussions in the *agora*, it is not necessary to be a scientist in order to adhere to scientific principles of public debate; anyone can use them as guides.

In addition to disseminating in general society the principles of scientific thought, sociologists could promote the abilities that allow ever wider circles of the population to make use of the knowledge acquired by the social sciences. The communications sphere is not only filled with garbage, it contains everything, including the products of social research: the results of surveys, statistical data, and archival information. These are used for the purposes of informing and persuading – in this second function they are used to entice the media audience to support various views or programs. Generally, the lay recipients of such information are quite unable to assess its credibility, to differentiate information of varying value, and instead they make generalized judgments on the order of ›numbers lie‹ and ›surveys are manipulated‹, or the opposite – ›censuses don't lie‹ or ›polls can accurately predict election results‹. Sociologists could thus adopt an educational role in this area; they could not only produce and publish data but also teach how it should be used.

In Poland, sociologists and public opinion researchers have done a great deal to teach people that research on a small sample allows extrapolation to the whole society, that not all surveys are equal, and that representative surveys and street polls, telephone polls on small samples and solid research conducted by interview survey should be treated with different degrees of confidence. What is more difficult to teach the recipients of survey information – because there is no algorithm for it – is the interpretation of results, the discovery of their meaning. I will give an example of what such education could look like.

In March 2014, after the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, a research organization, at the request of a television news programme, asked Poles about their readiness to sacrifice their life and health in a situation where their homeland was threatened. 43% of those asked responded that they were ready, while 49% said they were not ready to make such a sacrifice (Gazeta Wyborcza 2014). On this basis, commentators and politicians engaged in

speculations on the subject of Poles' level of patriotism, and even drew conclusions as to the behaviour of Poles in a situation of national danger.

Sociologists might, in this context, remind the public that readiness to ›die for Poland‹ was the subject of one of the first surveys conducted in Europe (Dabi 2009). In the summer of 1939, after Hitler's Germany had occupied what remained of Czechoslovakia after Munich, and after demanding Gdansk (Danzig) of Poland, Jean Stoetzel, a pioneer of survey-taking in France, asked his countrymen, »if Germany tries to take the free city of Danzig, should we attempt to prevent them, and even to use force if need be?« 76 percent of those asked responded yes, 17 percent no, and 7 percent did not have an opinion. This was an opposite result from a survey taken at the end of the previous year, in which 57 percent had approved, and 37 percent had not approved of the Munich Agreement. In answering the question about Gdansk, the respondents were thinking about another, publicly debated, and more emphatic question: *Mourir pour Dantzig?* or *To Die for Danzig?* asked in the title of an article by Marcel Déat in the paper *L'Œuvre*. In spite of Déat's arguments, the French thus appeared ready to ›die for Danzig‹ – it shortly emerged, however, that they were not ready to ›die for France‹ (Paxton 1972).

Sociologists might also remind people that the question ›should one risk one's life in defence of the fatherland?‹ was asked by Stefan Nowak and Anna Pawełczyńska (1962), the pioneers of survey-taking in Poland. In a survey of the worldviews of Warsaw university students in 1958, 82% of students answered yes. Only then, in contrast to 2014, they were asked about their readiness to risk their lives for other ›group values‹ such as human lives (94%), family (83%), religion (42%), a social ideal (32%), etc., and the 82% ready to risk their lives for the fatherland showed the place of the idea in the hierarchy of social values: it was a widely held ideal, but also an easy, ›ritually‹ acknowledged one. When researchers repeated the question in 1961, they observed a general ›axiological indifference‹ toward group values, as the effect of stabilization.

And the moral is that a result has sense only when we can relate it to something – to a public debate, to other research, to other variables, to a theory – but an individual percentage, which cannot be compared to anything, is devoid of sociological meaning. And such a result has absolutely no predictive value.

It is well known that many people have difficulty in understanding basic mathematical concepts and in operating with numbers, particularly large

ones and those relating to phenomena beyond their immediate experience; by analogy to illiteracy, John Paulos (1988) named this phenomenon »innumeracy«. Educating society on the use of statistical data could consist in the struggle against ›numerical illiteracy‹ and on showing the problematic nature of statistical data: particularly data which is collected or presented for the purposes of persuasion.

In the communications sphere in Poland, statistics are continually appearing which are supposed to show the public the scale of various negative phenomena – poverty, abortion, violence against women – or the size of ›minority groups‹, for instance, ethnic groups or homosexual persons. These sizes are often counted or simply announced by organizations which are combating negative phenomena or struggling with discrimination, and are striving to have these phenomena or the situation of minorities recognized as ›social problems‹. Such organizations often present data which increase, or even vastly inflate, the scale of the phenomena or the size of the minority, and sometimes go so far as to provoke ›moral panic‹. In this manner, they sensitize and mobilize public opinion, gain support for legislative changes, or increase contributions to social programmes and their own activities.

If the numbers these organizations and their activists and representatives give to the media were to be believed, then homosexual persons constitute 5% of the population in Poland, or even somewhat more, and 800,000 women every year are ›beaten *and* raped‹. Academic research shows, however, that persons of homosexual orientation constitute only 2–3 percent of Poland's population; research also shows that that 800,000 – or 6% of the surveyed population – was composed of victims of *various* kinds of physical *or* sexual force, and not only beating and rape; victims of *both* kinds of violence constituted only 0.7%, or most probably slightly more, as respondents are not eager to admit such matters (Gruszczyńska 2007: 58–61). The dimensions of violence against women in Poland are doubtless very large, but significantly smaller than is suggested by the organizations fighting against such violence.

Because policies that are protected by various organizations could be contradictory with one another (rivalry for limited resources, striving for contrary values, etc. – for instance, ›life‹ or ›choice‹ in the context of the dispute on the legal acceptability of abortion), these organizations are conducting a dispute over numbers among themselves: Joel Best (2001) called it ›stat wars‹, wars over numbers, by analogy to Star Wars.

A striking example of such a divergence in the statistics is the data for the number of abortions in Poland. The pro-life organizations and milieus, wanting to establish the desired impact of the Act on Family Planning, Protection of the Human Embryo, and Conditions for the Interruption of Pregnancy of 1993, refer to official statistics showing a radical drop in the number of abortions performed in hospitals after the introduction of the act in comparison to the period preceding it – from more than ten thousand (12,000 in 1992) to less than one thousand (782 in 2012). The pro-choice organizations, on the other hand, in requiring the liberalization of the Act claim that abortion is still performed on a massive scale in Poland, only illegally: according to their estimates, from several tens of thousands to as many as 150,000 every year. The point is that one side gives only the number of legal abortions, with the addition of an estimated number of around 10,000 illegal abortions annually, while the other is unable to document its high estimates of the totality of abortions – which is the more striking as the gulf between the two is very wide.

The results of sociologists' research provide a better founded image of phenomena and should contribute to lessening the difference between sides in the stat wars. In 2013, a survey by the Center for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) used the randomized response technique to obviate respondents' unwillingness to reveal intimate and socially condemned behaviours (CBOS 2013; Grabowska 2013). It emerged that abortion is still a fairly common occurrence in Poland: for example, in the group of women aged 25–34, there are approximately 300,000 women in each year group, and 15% of them had had at least one abortion – a number that is completely incompatible with the number of legal abortions registered. But a change is also visible: women who entered reproductive age just before the introduction of the Act (in 1993) ended their pregnancies three times less often than women over 50, who were young when the considerably more liberal legislation of 1956 was still in force. The researchers ascribe the change to a multiplicity of causes, including the moral effect of the Act.

Sociologists appearing in the public sphere could raise the level of the methodological culture, which is today becoming as important as the cultivation of logical thinking has always been.

Ideas

In order for science to explain social phenomena to people, more than just the colloquial language must be used. Colloquial language, although understood by everyone, does not bring into public circulation any new categories or the consciousness of new dependencies. It gives a sense of understanding, but does not allow for deeper explanation. Such clarification requires scientific ideas, the concepts of the social sciences. Scientific concepts are the result of abstraction and refer to the hidden properties of phenomena and to concealed structures. They thereby allow for the hidden properties of researched phenomena to be described, the common ›essences‹ of different-seeming phenomena to be shown, and the connections between seemingly unconnected phenomena to be revealed. The language of the social sciences, however, cannot depart too much from ordinary language. If it diverges so far that it cannot be related to people's *Lebenswelt*, to the experienced world, then sociologists' books will be describing some other reality than the one researched; they will remain incomprehensible to the society in which they were written and will not exert any intellectual or practical influence on it.

In the public debate in Poland such concepts are present and important. The great concepts of mass culture, secularization, civil society, transformation, and post-modernism come from the social sciences, as do ideas of a lower rank: social capital, self-fulfilling prophecies, political capital, the leisure class, the new middle class, a social vacuum, social trauma, post-communist cleavage, social integration, charismatic power, the circulation of the elites, exclusion, anomia, generational justice […] Some of these ideas come from the great sociological tradition, Polish and international, from so far back that their authorship has been erased from the social consciousness – how many commentators using the term ›anomia‹ have heard of Emil Durkheim, for instance? Today, thanks to the media, the conceptual discoveries of sociologists are absorbed into the public language fairly quickly. At the very end of the 1970s, Stefan Nowak (1980) described Polish society as ›a federation of primary groups united in a national community‹, with a ›social vacuum‹ in the middle. Today, the term ›social vacuum‹ occurs in serious social commentary without any additional explanation and increasingly often without the name of its inventor.

The ideas taken from the social sciences already create quite a dense network for the intellectual seizing and domestication of reality. It should

not be expected that scientific concepts will be used on an everyday basis by ›ordinary‹ people, and yet such concepts, the products of intellectual minds, seep through the writings of other sociologists and social commentators and slowly take root in the sphere of social communication and self-knowledge. This process has been well illustrated by Karl Deutsch with the metaphor of a cascade. If, nevertheless, we sense the deficit of scientific ideas in the public discourse, it is because, first, social scientists rather too often prefer to comment on polls than to interpret the world, and second, the public debate in Poland is in general superficial, lacking in profundity, and concentrated not on social ideals, group interests, or social values, but on political games.

In offering society new concepts, sociologists are performing the ›humanist function‹ of their science (Ossowski 1973), which allows people to expand their »sociological imagination« and »to grasp the interdependence of man and society, biography and history, the self and the world« (Mills 1959: 4). Given that many concepts also comprehend the experience of other societies, their introduction to public circulation produces the awareness that some experiences of Polish society are unique, while others are reproducible. Common knowledge, which generalizes individual experience, is easily induced to overrate the exceptional nature of its own society – universal sociological concepts allow one to notice, for example, that Poles are subject to the worldwide shift toward ›post-materialist values‹, and that the growth of Poland's ›precariat‹ has its model and correspondent in many economically well-developed countries. Yet other ideas make it possible to discover that unique aspects of Polish society, for instance, the fall of communism and post-communist cleavage, could be said to have their correspondents in the Reformation, the French Revolution, or the Industrial Revolution and the cleavages to which these gave birth in the history and societies of Western Europe (Grabowska 2004).

Sociological concepts give society something more than the capacity to describe and explain its situation, variety, and transformation. In proposing the concepts by which society can describe itself, sociologists create its identity. More precisely, they co-create it, because society accepts a suggested definition when it is the intellectual elaboration of its own experience. Since in Polish society, for instance, elements of the pre-modern tradition, of the legacy of real socialism, of modernity and post-modernity are mingled together (Ziółkowski 1998), it is hard for Poles to consider themselves a ›post-modern society‹. The same holds true for the phrase ›post-colonial society‹.

Concepts have a performative nature, in that their uses, their speech acts, are not only intended to transfer information, but also to create social facts. Mirosława Marody (2005) noticed that the word ›solidarity‹ was a concept with such a nature and spoke of it thus: during the period of large-scale protests in 1980

»what was happening was given a name that helped to identify the situation and make it adoptable as one's own. Use of the word ›solidarity‹ in itself played an important role at the beginning of the protest and in its spread throughout the whole country. Certain names lay an obligation on us, particularly if they are accompanied by expectations and external support«.

The opposition member, who, inspired by the banner with the word *Solidarity*, suggested this name to the emerging ›independent and self-governing union‹ was not a sociologist, but the creation of another important term from this period, ›self-limiting revolution‹, is ascribed to the sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis (1981, 1983). Her linguistic invention may have contributed to ensuring that the Solidarity revolution was in fact, for a certain time, self-limiting. Zygmunt Bauman's ›liquid modernity‹ is also a concept that projects reality and at least *maintains* its ›liquidity‹.

We know little, unfortunately, about the actual influence of sociological concepts and knowledge on society, and what we do know is more in regard to survey-related knowledge and concepts than from sociology in the strict sense. The impact is, however, deeper than might appear to us. In my work on ›survey sediments‹ (Sułek 2011) I made use of the metaphor, taken from Alfred Schütz' writings, of sedimentation – the slow process whereby small particles settle to the bottom of a receptacle – in order to illustrate how, on the basis of survey information, people's shared and generalized imaginings about their society are created and become public opinion. Anna Giza and her colleagues (2013) in the book *Gabinet luster* (*Hall of Mirrors*) proposed a more far-reaching idea. Society is not a ready entity, which is only awaiting study, a solid receptacle at whose bottom fragments of knowledge settle: It is still emerging from interaction and the ›practices of knowledge‹, including surveys, which do not so much measure and describe society as ›form it in their likeness‹. »This is the agency of polls« admit the authors of *Hall of Mirrors*, in the spirit of Bruno Latour, and indeed, in their book one can find many empirical analyses of such agency.

Meaning

Discovering meaning also consists in showing the place of the part in the whole, the heart in the organism, the motor in the machine. In the case of society and politics it consists of showing events and the decisions of politicians as fragments of projects which they are deliberately or unintentionally creating, of showing the unobvious consequences of public policies, their long-term or unintentional consequences. Social scientists, like few other persons, are called upon to answer large questions such as, »What sort of capitalism, what sort of Poland would be best?«, »Toward what kind of society are we heading?«, »What kind of Poland, what kind of capitalism, and what kind of democracy are we building?«, »How are great social values such as equality, development, and freedom, to accord with the operational requirements of collective life?« Relating policies to – in Weber's words – the ›ultimate *weltanschauliche* position‹ is also the public task of the social sciences. Only the choice of worldview is a matter of values, of axiology, and not of science.

At the 25th anniversary of Poland's liberty, the Center for Public Opinion Research (CBOS 2014) announced the results of its jubilee surveys. In Poland, there is a general conviction (68%) that democracy is a better form of government than any other, and that it was worthwhile to change the political system (71%). At the same time, the number of those who are satisfied with the workings of democracy is not much larger than the number of those who are dissatisfied (48% and 42%) and people often (20–36%) point to ›errors and omissions in the period of transformation‹: the hurried privatization of national assets and their acquisition by politicians, corruption, the lack of lustration and de-communization, excessive social inequality – their common denominator is a sense of unfairness. A journalist is doing well to notice honestly not only one side but also the other. A sociologist could tell society more.

That, for instance, the change of the political system and the new system was accepted at the level of the values then prevailing and those values became the standards according to which real democracy is evaluated. One might also remember Stefan Nowak's (1981) striking explanation of the Solidarity revolution: the working class held values taken from socialist ideology and used them as the basis to criticize real socialism, thus forming a trap for that system, while the workers – children of that system, became its gravediggers. Of course, history won't repeat and the citizens won't

bury democracy, changing it for an authoritarian government, but the observed divergence between axiology and the reality of democracy is the source of the tension which penetrates Poland's public life and those who see that throwing ›paper stones‹, that is, ballots, doesn't help, might want to throw real stones.

Politicians are rarely statesmen and even if they can see what is looming beyond the horizon of the nearest elections, it is rather exceptional for them to make decisions in consideration of the future when it might cost them electoral support today. The sociologist, the demographer, the social policies expert can see further and more clearly. The small number of births and the intensive emigration of young people from Poland most often raise fears of the order of ›who will work for our old age pensions?‹ Such fears are usually formulated by older generations, who are concerned by the prospect of the state's insolvency in regard to their retirements. A demographer would call attention to the less obvious consequences of the slow reversal of the age pyramid.

The long-term effects of the ageing of Polish society, which are little discerned in the political discourse or even in the intellectual discourse, were described thus by Marek Okólski (2013) in a lecture at the University of Warsaw:

»The numerically stable or declining, but at the same time aging, population will create challenges affecting the stability of the economic or political sphere and will require specific technological solutions. The growth of consumer demand will lessen and its structure will be fundamentally changed; human resources will be limited, the organization of work will undergo changes, a massive shift will occur in the employment structure, requiring a re-imagination of the education system, while at the same time the resources of young people, who are by nature mobile and innovative, will decrease, and powerful new interest groups will appear, expressing the special, conservative needs of older people and effecting the system of political powers.«

This lecture bore the title »There is No Wealth Greater than People« which was borrowed from Jean Bodin, who lived in the 16th century.

Sociologists engaged on behalf of society offer it a complete picture. Two outstanding portraitists of Polish society were Adam Podgórecki (1976, 1978) and Stefan Nowak (1980, 1988), and the most well-known picture is Nowak's (1981) essay *The Values and Attitudes of Polish People*. Mirosława Marody (1987) introduced the concept of collective sense as a common value that directs the collective efforts of society and at the same time

constitutes the basis for society's acceptance of government. These texts appeared in newspapers and journals, and were addressed to broader circles than just academia; the thoughts and ideas they contained, such as Nowak's ›social vacuum‹ or Podgórecki's ›dirty community‹, made their way into public circulation. Such views satisfy people's need for sense, the need to grasp the entirety of what is happening around them, to find logic in the historical process. No one should be able to do this better than sociologists.

The two duties of sociologists

The rights of some are usually connected with the duties of others. It is the same in this case. The rights of society to possess accurate information about itself, to be acquainted with ideas that will allow it to have a deeper understanding of the world and to notice the connections between biographies and history and the social structure, find their counterpart in the obligations of social researchers.

One condition for practicing engaged sociology is the freedom of the sciences, and in particular the freedom to choose research topics. Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz (1957) called attention to this fact in his essay *On the Freedom of the Sciences*. But the freedom of which Ajdukiewicz was writing after the fall of Stalinism was freedom from prohibitions, pressures, and limitations, especially those imposed by the authorities. For an engaged sociologist, it is not enough to be free to decide what to study. Sociology must not turn away from society's most important problems and the conditions of its development, and the subjects of social research should correspond with the structure of existing inequality, particularly injustice. Furthermore, the formula that ›one comes to science with questions‹ (not ready answers) is insufficient. Edmund Mokrzycki (1973) answered the question in the title of his article *Does One Come to Science with Questions?* by saying that »the basic task of science is to raise new issues, and not to resolve issues raised elsewhere; it is to formulate questions reaching far beyond what people elsewhere usually ask«, and thus «the social contribution of science begins by asking questions«.

What has not been studied can best be seen from a distance. Before 1989, in the ›socialist society‹, sociology, being organized from above,

could not study government at the supra-local level, and thus sociologists could only give assurances about the role of political institutions in the functioning of the system and the significance for the development of society of changes in the elites. That was clear, but in 1980 it appeared that sociologists also knew little about the other side of the great political conflict – the ›working class‹. Thus Jan Malanowski's revealing book (1984) about Polish workers turned out to be an event. These lacunae of knowledge were among the reasons that sociologists were surprised by the Solidarity revolution (Sułek 2009).

Today as well, sociologists in Poland do not take on certain important subjects, although the government and official censorship does not prevent them from doing so, and moreover there are sociologists who point it out to them. Piotr Gliński (2010), then chairman of the Polish Sociological Association, criticized sociology for neglecting to research important »Polish social issues«, in favour of rather too common »analyses of post-modern culture, analyses in the areas of the sociology of the body, gender, multiculturalism, various types of elite communities, new religious movements, minorities, etc.« Another sociologist, Andrzej Zybertowicz (2003) was already talking in 2000 about the ›blind social sciences‹ and from that time he has been criticizing sociologists for neglecting to study the mechanisms of real power and ›anti-development interest groups‹ which operate behind the façade of democracy.

The choice of research subjects in science depends on many factors – from the paradigm and state of knowledge, through the values held by the researchers, their methodological habits, the scientific environment, access to funds, and the freedom to choose. The two sociologists mentioned above connect the omissions they criticize and the existence of a sphere of ignorance with the entanglement of their colleagues in the present system of power and with their ideologies: »often leftist, or of ›correct‹ provenance«. The influence of political values does not pass anyone by, however: the research preferences of the critics are also not free from the influence of their ideological orientations, particularly as they are activists of the main opposition party, and the first mentioned was even recently its candidate for prime minister. It can thus be seen here how an axiological pluralism promotes researchers' undertaking of a variety of subjects which are important for society.

The second obligation for sociologists who want to be socially active concerns them more closely than the first. Sociologists enjoy freedom of speech, the last of the four freedoms about which Ajdukiewicz wrote, but

those who express themselves *in publicis* as academics should take a certain responsibility upon themselves (see Ossowski 1973: ch. 6; Molęda-Zdziech 2013: 288–309).

First, they should speak within the boundaries of their competence, leaving subjects that are little known to them to other specialists. The Sociologists' Code of Ethics passed by the Polish Sociological Association (2012) speaks on this subject with the greatest of delicacy: »sociologists should themselves set the limits of their own professional competence« (§ 3). Second, the language in which sociologists express themselves in public debate should be the language of sociology, and not only in public debate – sociologists who do not speak in the language of their discipline are not at all entering into their role, which is after all different from the role of politicians, ideologists, and commentators. Third, the views expressed by sociologists should not be more categorical than is allowed by sociological knowledge, and in particular they should not express suppositions and personal opinions in a manner that could suggest they have a basis in social research. Fourth, sociologists should bear in mind that public issues, even burning ones, can be viewed with a cool eye and that while emotions may be enlightening, they can also be blinding. For researchers' public credibility, paradoxically, displaying their own values and social preferences could be more important than the visibility of their academic works; because the former permeate, in various ways, our arguments, it is honest to announce that one is a euro-sceptic, a feminist, or a proponent of Catholic social teaching.

In general: (1) sociology in Poland should be more, and not less, socially engaged, but more on behalf of society than on behalf of the world of power; (2) the social activeness of sociology should develop in various directions, particularly in the direction of its humanist function, and not only of social technology; (3) the postulate of social engagement does not interfere with sociology's calling as a science, and engagement could be engagement which is in the highest degree scientific.

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