

## THE WARSAW SCHOOL OF THE HISTORIANS OF IDEAS AS A THOUGHT COLLECTIVE: TOGETHER, SEPARATELY<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

It has been a generally accepted usage within Polish scholarship to address the group of historians of ideas active in Warsaw in the 1950s and 1960s as a 'school'. However, the very existence of the Warsaw School of the Historians of Ideas (WSHI) is as debatable today, as it was fifty years ago. Paradoxically enough, there is far less agreement as to the School's existence, than there is regarding its impact on the Polish humanities. Voicing an opinion in this debate, Andrzej Mencwel once said: '[...] [The Warsaw School of the historians of ideas] not only did exist, but was also one of the most important events in the history of the intellectual culture of Poland in the second half of twentieth century'. Thus he made reference to the said ontological dilemma which seems to dominate the debates concerning the WSHI, whereby the underlying idea seems to be that a thing of such an importance cannot be a mere hypostasis. In this article, I am going to put aside the debates concerning the existence of WSHI.<sup>2</sup> Instead, I will focus on the facets that made this community – as WSHI undoubtedly was one – exceptionally influential. For it is much easier to come to an agreement regarding the value of the WSHI's heritage than to offer its precise description.

I would like to explore WSHI as an example of an intellectual collective in the meaning once assigned to this term by Ludwik Fleck.<sup>3</sup> I am not going to argue that Fleck's

<sup>1</sup> The text was previously published in *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 432 (2012). The text has grown out of the research project (Polish Ministry of Science N N116 093539), *The Trajectory of Polish Humanities*. I am using fragments from the project report, authored by Michał Łuczewski (Warsaw University, Institute of Sociology) and myself. I am very thankful to Michał for permission to use those fragments that were prepared by him. I thank sincerely all those who gave interviews for this project whose words I cite or call upon, and for their permission to cite and use their statements. They are Barbara Szacka, Bronisław Baczek, Jerzy Jedlicki, Krzysztof Pomian, Jerzy Szacki and Andrzej Mencwel. I also thank Jerzy Szacki for his valuable comments and corrections.

<sup>2</sup> I have expressed my own opinion in this discussion in the text entitled 'Warszawska szkoła historyków idei – o potrzebie porządku w myśleniu o historii myśli', *Stan Rzeczy* 2 (2012), where I say that one cannot consider WSHI to be an academic school.

<sup>3</sup> Ludwik Fleck, *Powstanie i rozwój fatku naukowego*, trans. M. Tuszkievicz, (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1986).

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theories can explain WSHI's oeuvre and its meaning entirely. I also refrain from marshalling arguments to describe WSHI as a collective as opposed to using other theoretical tools in analyzing this phenomenon (this would be an entirely useless labor). I will try solely to demonstrate that the constitutive elements for a thinking collective, as singled out by Fleck, turned out to be decisive for the part WSHI played and still plays in the Polish humanities. At the same time, however, this collectiveness – resulting from a confluence of objective factors and the purely personal attributes of the members – brought forth an individuation of thinking, resulting in the richness and complexity, but at the same time in a certain alienation of WSHI's achievements. Resorting to Fleck's concept, I will focus on the relationship between those elements which are decidedly communal, those which may hardly be deemed collective, and those which are definitely individual.

The objective that underlies this project is not a purely descriptive one. To present my theses I will use the statements of the representatives and co-founders of WSHI, contained in their publications and works collected in 2010-2012 as part of a research project entitled *The Trajectory of Polish Humanities*, led by Paweł Śpiwak. The goal of this project was to discover the research possibilities of describing and explaining the conditions for the emergence of outstanding scholars in the humanities. We took Fleck's question about how the state of knowledge produced by a community of scholars acts as an intermediary in the cognition of physical reality, conferring a certain style onto the things that reality produces, and we formulated it as a question about the sociogenesis of humanistic interpretation.<sup>4</sup> I will start my discussion of the results of this inquiry with a review of Fleck's most important theses concerning the thought collective, after which I will discuss WSHI as a community in the sense that they shared a style, tradition, fate, teaching and learning, discussion, and finally a mood or an ambient. I will finish by portraying WSHI as a collective of methodical individualists, who, as a group, brought to life the idea of creating outstanding works individually.

## HOW SCHOLARLY COLLECTIVES THINK

The main problem of the comparative epistemology that Ludwik Fleck proposed in 1935 was, 'how a closed and style-permeated system of opinions could arise', around a certain group of scholars.<sup>5</sup> The key criterion here was, in fact, an aesthetic one – the style is recognized by traits that are difficult to perceive and even more difficult to name precisely, while the intensity of these features may vary according to different representatives of the style, and perceiving them is a question of good sense and practice. In general, the

<sup>4</sup> Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, trans. Fred Bradley and Thaddeus J. Trenn (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 38.

<sup>5</sup> Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, 38.

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fact of belonging to the same style calls to mind Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' (*Familienähnlichkeit*), so often evoked to describe a certain kinship, irresistibly calling for the researcher's attention as something exceeding the sum of particular expressions of thought and consolidating them into a single, harmonious whole.<sup>6</sup>

The apparently stylistically homogeneous whole therefore should be placed at the outset of all insight into scientific style. Its coherence does not need to be perceivable for the representative of the style. However, it must be detectable to the researchers who make a style their object of consideration. The order of the whole is, naturally, more difficult to grasp from the inside, whereas from the outside the stylistic intellectual system is always seen as a whole that is closed, finished and petrified.<sup>7</sup> The self-contained nature of the system, as well as the interaction between what is already known, what remains to be learned, and those who are to apprehend it, all go to ensure harmony within the system. But at the same time they also preserve the harmony of illusions, which is quite secure within the confines of a given thought style.<sup>8</sup>

The contours of a research design are clear at this stage. Stepping out from a body of thought, where stylistic unity is conspicuous, we move toward the harmonizing principle of the whole – operating both for us as researchers, governing our inquiries, and for the system as a whole independent of our inquiries. We outline the process of reconciliation of what is already contained in the state of knowledge, with what is a program of knowing in a given style, and with the epistemological procedure itself: with its method and techniques. In this way, we are delineating the exploratory potential of the style. Finally, then we reveal the limits of the style, this time treated as an ordered set of illusions, which set boundaries for knowing, and do not yield to attempts to uproot them. In this way, past, current, and future cognition is connected in a resultative string, influencing individuals who – though they are knowing subjects in a philosophical sense – in the sociological sense are but *loci* of the refined social action that is scientific epistemology. The epistemological actors are not individual scholars, but thought collectives operating with specific thinking styles, 'a community of persons mutually exchanging ideas or maintaining intellectual interaction, [in which there is a] special 'carrier' for the historical development of any field of thought, as well as [a] given stock of knowledge and level of culture.'<sup>9</sup> Fleck emphasizes that the social structure and collective character of scientific activity in any discipline are obvious, 'although here the organization of the humanities is less developed. Any kind of learning is connected with some tradition and society, and words and customs already suffice to form a collective bond.'<sup>10</sup> Wandering thoughts gradually become subjectless

<sup>6</sup> Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, 38.

<sup>7</sup> Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, 38.

<sup>8</sup> Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, 38.

<sup>9</sup> Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, 39.

<sup>10</sup> Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, 42.

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from the perspective of the outside observer, they are enriched with new content through interactions that are superimposed, bit by bit, with the passing of time as the community of scholars becomes a thing of the past.

Fleck uses many seemingly imprecise soft categories in describing the functioning of thought collectives: he speaks of a 'special mood', of 'common understanding and mutual misunderstanding', in which 'a thought structure [*Denkgebilde*] that belongs to neither of them alone' is born.<sup>11</sup> Thanks to this it is possible to study the individual from the point of view of the collective just as well as one can examine the collective from the point of view of the individual.<sup>12</sup> This lack of rigidity means that the conception is notably suitable for describing a community of scholarly humanists in an instance when 'the harmony of the whole' is difficult to specify, indeed especially when both the method and the research program are loosely defined.<sup>13</sup> A uniform style, a community of tradition, learning, words and thoughts – it is here that Fleck locates the socio-genetic aspect of creation in science; it is here, also, that I would like to search for a language to describe the social phenomenon that was WSHI.

### THE ASSIGNED COMMUNITY OF STYLE

WSHI had a unique style, though in keeping with what was said above about the superiority of an outside perspective over the internal, both the existence of WSHI and its stylistic unity are not as obvious for its members as they are for their students and the students of their students. Plainly, this style seems to be the main differentiator of the WSHI circle. Even people willing to agree with Krzysztof Pomian's view – which he expressed in an interview with Michał Łuczewski, as part of the *Trajectory of the Polish Humanities* project in 2011, when he dubbed the issue of the existence of the school an uninteresting problem – do not question its stylistic unity. Even less likely to agree with Pomian are the second generation proponents of the WSHI thesis, such as Andrzej Kołakowski or Andrzej Mencwel. The latter from an outside perspective saw and indeed sees the obvious and 'extremely clear whole' of the personal-institutional constellation. Even if it would be too bold to identify this style with a specific worldview, as does the same author who was, after all, both a student and scholar of WSHI, from an outside perspective the stylistic unity turns out to be undisputed.

What was, then, so special about the style of WSHI? This should not be confused with unity in the object of WSHI inquiry. The difficulty to claim unity of method in turn is

<sup>11</sup> Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, 44.

<sup>12</sup> Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, 42.

<sup>13</sup> See Paweł Rojek, 'Jak była zrobiona tartusko-moskiewska szkoła semiotyczna?', *Stan Rzeczy* 2 (2012).

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exemplified in, for instance, the confusion of the question of empathic 'understanding' in the historiography of thought.<sup>14</sup> The WSHI style expresses itself in a specific research approach, however, as Paweł Śpiewak stated, this approach in fact resulted from a theoretical option leading to methodological choices.<sup>15</sup> The common traits of WSHI were: a certain understanding of history, of the subject and the relationship between them, as well as the research attitude; sometimes defined as 'programmatic'.<sup>16</sup> The motivation of WSHI to construct historical consciousness, enhanced by a sociological analysis of historical mystification, did not have an exclusively Marxist provenance and survived longer than the fascination with Marxism. However, it did not result from reflection, negotiation or collective consideration, but rather had the character of compliance or convergence of scholarly intuitions which were never explicitly stated. Thus the members of WSHI wrote as if there was only one methodological canon, clear to all and beyond the need of introduction. It simply did not seem necessary to spell it out.<sup>17</sup> As Bronisław Baczko wrote:

I cannot remember, but I might be wrong, if we ever practiced methodology in our institution. In the institute, and also in my seminar, we often devoted whole meetings to reporting on new books, domestic, but also foreign, to which access was impeded... But I don't remember a seminar entirely on methodological subjects. So those who say that we have some kind of common methodology must reconstruct it themselves... If a certain common agenda appeared – after all, methodology is formed mainly on the level of an agenda – then it appeared rather spontaneously, through conversations, through cohabitation, due to the fact that we belonged to the same generation. (BB)<sup>18</sup>

This reluctance to treat methodology as an important subject and the resulting restraint in formulating methodological programs, is, in my opinion, the most legible manifestation of one common trait of the WSHI intellectual style: its escapism. In this text, I am deliberately putting the political issues and the relationship of WSHI members to Marxism aside. Nevertheless, I am positive that their escapism reached much deeper

<sup>14</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *Idee i ludzie: Próba autobiografii* (Warsaw: IHN PAN, 2010), 95.

<sup>15</sup> Paweł Śpiewak, 'W pół drogi: Warszawska Szkoła Historyków Idei', *Więź* *Bond* 5 (1981), 42. Also available in translation in this journal, 111-124.

<sup>16</sup> Ryszard Sitek, *Warszawska szkoła historii idei: między historią a teraźniejszością* (Warsaw: Scholar, 2000), 105.

<sup>17</sup> See Bucholc, 'Warszawska szkoła historyków idei – o potrzebie porządku w myśleniu o historii myśli'.

<sup>18</sup> Letters in parentheses refer to the interviews carried out as part of the *Trajectory of the Polish Humanities* project. Printed quotations are cited in the footnotes, however statements without any notation come from the discussion on WSHI which opens issue 3 (2012) of 'Przegląd humanistyczny' (p. 5-37). Citations from interviews are differentiated with italics.

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than their revisionism, and that it was not only a question of their relationship to Marxist orthodoxy. In order to understand this one should look at WSHI as a community of destiny.

### COMMUNITY OF DESTINY, COMMUNITY OF TRADITION

Ryszard Sitek rightly noted that the destinies of the WSHI members prompt the reflection that philosophical greatness can occasionally flourish despite miserable times, whereas the good times for philosophers are not necessarily equally good for philosophy.<sup>19</sup> As a matter of fact, after a close examination, it usually turns out that in these 'miserable times', there is a 'social moment' which determines the possibilities of the emergence and assimilation of a great work, without which this work, great as it is, would be about as useless as Leonardo da Vinci's flying machines.<sup>20</sup> Even a person, who can be considered a victim of the epoch and who has died in oblivion, can still be deemed to have landed in the right time, if we still do remember him or her today.<sup>21</sup>

Miserable times have the advantage of revealing, with great clarity, that which determines the class of a scholar, namely his or her passion. Max Weber, the author of probably the deepest analysis ever written about the intricate interdependence between passion, humility and discipline in science, wrote:

Only by strict specialization can the scientific worker become fully conscious, for once and perhaps never again in his lifetime, that he has achieved something that will endure. A really definitive and good accomplishment is today always a specialized accomplishment. And whoever lacks the capacity to put on blinders, so to speak, and to come up to the idea that the fate of his soul depends upon whether or not he makes the correct conjecture at this passage of this manuscript may as well stay away from science... Without this strange intoxication, ridiculed by every outsider; without this passion... you have no calling for science and you should do something else.<sup>22</sup>

In this apology of passion, Weber depicts a person who cannot be torn away from studying: nothing distracts him nor leads him astray from the once chosen path. A true

<sup>19</sup> Ryszard Sitek, "Ach, gdzie są niegdysiejsze śniegi...," czyli o osobliwościach polskiej powojennej filozofii – raz jeszcze, *Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki* 4/25 (2009), 257-258.

<sup>20</sup> See Fleck, *Genesis and Development*, 42.

<sup>21</sup> Just like Mozart in Elias' study of the sociogenesis of genius, see Norbert Elias, *Mozart: Portrait of a Genius* trans. Michael Schröter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* trans. and eds. Hans Heinrich Gerth and Charles Wright Mills (Oxford UP, 1946), 132.

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scholar is always, to a certain degree, a virtuoso of persistence, for passion forces asceticism. An ascetic must in turn rely on his or her internal strength. However, it is undeniably easier to direct passion towards abstraction in a time when material reality does not offer too many attractive footholds. As the satisfaction of vital needs was turning out to be neither very engaging nor particularly rewarding, it was easier to satisfy spiritual needs.

Jerzy Jedlicki, in an interview with Joanna Wawrzyniak in 2011 as part of the *Trajectories of the Polish Humanities* project, talked about the hard times of occupation, and about the bad period of the first months after the Warsaw Uprising and deportation from Warsaw. He mentioned the difficulties that he (and his milieu) had to grapple with in the first post-war years. He stressed, however, that he had at that time, and still has, the distinct feeling that there were also people around him who were in a worse situation. Life was difficult for everyone in that period, which made getting through the lean times easier. Depending on the level of expectations, hard times can become bearable, and modest needs allow one to avoid concentration on material problems and settle for the extremely modest salary available to academics at different times.

Perhaps this ascetic everydayness is also responsible for a different trait within the WSHI style, namely that its members carried their passions not only towards abstractions in the philosophical sense, but also in the social sense; in other words, towards questions only interesting for very specific recipients. Topics far from the mainstream were taken up with passion, which in turn awoke the passion of their readers. Exemplary of this process are, undoubtedly, all the books which 'attracted the attention of a wider group of Polish humanists and came to be accepted (mainly by Polish philology students from Maria Janion's and the IBL PAN circle) as representative of the milieu called 'the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas.'<sup>23</sup> These were, namely, Andrzej Walicki's *Conservative Utopia*, Bronisław Baczko's *Loneliness and Community*, Jerzy Szacki's *Counterrevolutionary Paradoxes*, and particularly Leszek Kołakowski's *Religious Consciousness and Church Ties: A Study of Irreligious Christianity in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*. The school's topic could appear far from reality: such topics were not even prohibited – they were, by virtue of their content, not public and apparently uninteresting.

The subject itself was at that time pretty extraordinary... Our issues at that time were different and I do not remember even one, not only discussion, but even conversation, in which religion would show up as an experience and not as a subject. On the other hand, it must be noted that we were not atheists; fanatic free thinkers, exclusively involved with the fight against 'ignorance and superstition', had no place here. But why indeed would we really care about 'the study of irreligious Christianity in the 17<sup>th</sup> century', as intimated in the subtitle of Kołakowski's work? Even the very names of specific heresies, doctrines and sects sounded so exotic, like the names of the Amazonian tribes described in *Tristes Tropiques*, which was equally popular at that time. But the work

<sup>23</sup> Walicki, *Idee i ludzie*, 92.

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of Kołakowski was closer to us than that of Levi-Strauss. And I myself was sucked into it with a truly fierce pertinacity.<sup>24</sup>

The work lived its own life and was overfilled with pertinent contents. One can surmise, of course, that Kołakowski's work was so topical thanks to a peculiar interpretive key, one today bereft of attractiveness: 'This book, one must remember, was read as a story about a camouflaged argument between Marxist heterodoxy and orthodoxy. Today, perhaps three hundred historians of religious thought can read it and make some use of it, and for them Kołakowski may have moved their scholarship forward by a centimeter.'<sup>25</sup> These words are a beautiful homage to the accomplishment that holds its ground even without ideological flavors and – as Weber would say – is truly lasting exactly because it is narrow and specialized. However, these words also show well the paradoxical nature of dealing with this type of obscure subject by a philosopher who was – as Krzysztof Michalski recognized – 'the wisest in our village'.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps it was a manifestation of what Szacki called 'the escape from a doctrine towards history'. Perhaps Marcin Poręba rightly observes that this escapism – more than anything else – took away an opportunity for WSHI to occupy a more prominent place in world philosophy:

For a while now already, I have the impression that for various reasons, I would say partly historical, in some sense this is a formation of a lost opportunity. What do I have in mind? Not only the outside factors, which limited its influence and in an unnatural way interrupted it, before the students were trained in full. I have in mind also the choices made by the philosophers from this formation themselves. The choices went here in the direction of research on interesting things, but however belonging to the past of thinking in a situation when it was possible to create something that would be a voice in the discussion of European philosophy, in my opinion, which would be at least on the same level as the French, German or British voice.

Its emergence was after all, as Sitek wrote, the result of a specific opportunism, relying on the fact that the members of WSHI were looking for enclaves of relative independence, they were searching for a terrain to practice a science free from ideological pressure, and such a method of practicing it which would subject them to a relatively low risk of coercion.<sup>27</sup> However, through such an escape into the past, WSHI members

<sup>24</sup> Andrzej Mencwel, *Nauczyciele i przyjaciele*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Krzysztof Michalski, 'Zrozumieć przemijanie. Rozmowa w redakcji kwartalnika "Kronos"', in Krzysztof Michalski, *Zrozumieć przemijanie* (Warszawa: Fundacja Augusta hrabiego Cieszkowskiego, 2011), 18.

<sup>26</sup> Michalski, 'Zrozumieć przemijanie', 18.

<sup>27</sup> Sitek, *Warszawska szkoła historii idei*, 27.



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and students, also those not from intelligentsia families, participated in a very strange way within the European intellectual tradition, including the Polish, which they were accustomed to treat with an existential seriousness usually befitting the most paramount issues of the present. After the Second World War this familiarity with tradition was enhanced by the fact that the new generation of scholars landed in a desolate and depopulated academic world. In these times there was no other option but teaching – and learning – without complexes. As Krzysztof Pomian said in an interview as part of the *Trajectory...* project, it was a time when in the post-war reality young academic teachers simply learned on the go.

Courage in learning bore the fruit of readiness to take on difficult challenges, to which the members of WSHI had a certain tendency, it is true, even before they came to the university – they all recall their intellectual achievements from the period before they entered college as far from average. During their studies, the disposition to meet challenges came in handy mainly in their struggle with foreign languages. Jerzy Szacki remembers:

In general, it was necessary to apply oneself in seminar papers. For example, I really had trouble with Gunnar Myrdal... I received an assignment to summarize the book, which was about 600 or 700 pages long, and in addition it was in English, a language I did not know. But then there was no discussion, nobody asked me: 'Can you read English? Or maybe French?...' I had to read. At the beginning, it was tough because every other word required a look up in the dictionary, but in the end it picked up speed. Anyway, how many words did a guy like Myrdal use, he was, after all, a Swede.<sup>28</sup> (JS)

Scholarship was not the only thing that occupied the researchers in those years formative for their future intellectuality. A scholarly career was connected, in particular in the case of candidates from the Institute for the Education of Scientific Cadres (IKKN), with political engagement and accession to the official Marxist doctrine. These three aspects of activity mutually conditioned each other (though there were various levels of intensity and authenticity of engagement).<sup>29</sup> The relationship between science and politics – at

<sup>28</sup> This style of work with a foreign language text was carried on anyhow also in the didactic practice of the representatives of WSHI themselves. Andrzej Mencwel talked about it in an interview.

<sup>29</sup> As Jerzy Niecikowski said in the discussion published in this issue *Przełqđ Humanistyczny* 3 (2012): 'With regard to the Warsaw School, for me the category of revisionism is convincing because after all, its main representatives had a Marxist-Stalinist past. It assures me of the existence of the school and the existence of certain common assumptions. Of course with a reservation regarding Professor Walicki, who fits into the category only in its wide sense, not biographically because he was not a dogmatic Stalinist in the past. But Baczko and Kołakowski were, they believed in those dogmas, Kroński – I do not know. Sometimes it seems to me that he practiced ketman because it's hard for me to believe that he believed in all that. Because they undoubtedly believed.'

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various intensities with different WSHI representatives – proceeded in general through Marxism and Leninism as well as through attempts to turn them into practice.

In order to, let me put it this way, increase the pulse of ideological or political life, the ever stronger efforts of the leadership started, who wanted to make not only learned Marxists but also activists out of us. Various local missions thus began. Let's say: [there is] a change in prices – go out and explain to the people why this is necessary. Stalin died – go out and comfort people. (JS)

In the case of a milieu such as WSHI, the generational community of destiny resulted in a certain type of 'community of faith' (internal or only externalized), permeating beyond the circle of scholarly issues into the political sphere, and from philosophical and political interests escalating into a life path choice. It is fair to presume that the social and political engagement could over time influence their scholarly interests, leading them to scientific questions more attached to 'actual life'. This escapist tendency, augmenting in parallel to the intensifying feeling of discord between political practice, official ideology, and intellectual needs, could be in large part responsible for the failure of the WSHI project and similar milieus as institutional scientific schools *sensu stricto*.

The description of the emancipation process in the narrations of our scholars illustrates the specifically liberating role of the European intellectual tradition and meaning of participation in it, bereft of complexes. While passing towards concrete issues from the history of ideas, it was necessary to be able to resign from narrowly, dogmatically understood Marxism, because it showed itself to be useless: holding on to its assumptions would mean refraining from asking new questions.

But when I turned to Rousseau, Marxism was simply not useful for me. There was not a single solid Marxist book about Rousseau. To cram Rousseau into the class struggle somehow did not work: he refused... I did not have something to call upon nor could I budge him an inch. So Rousseau helped me tremendously in my intellectual emancipation from Marxism.

Intellectual emancipation went hand in hand with the liberation of limits on the freedom of thought and discussion. For the contemporary Polish scholar, it may be amazing that the WSHI members recall their student and doctoral years as a space marked by freedom of discussion, teaching and learning which shaped their thinking and teaching habits for the rest of their lives.

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## COMMUNITY OF TEACHING AND DISCUSSION

WSHI, which acted as a 'gateway' to the world of interdisciplinary humanities based on intellectual dispositions, and not on methods or research areas, showed itself to be a milieu and a collective of education and thinking, where the practice of science was not necessarily done collaboratively (in the sense of 'teamwork'). In the structure of this collective there existed, of course, prized positions. Such a status was enjoyed (or occasionally enjoyed) for various reasons, by Adam Schaff, Tadeusz Kroński, Stanisław Ossowski, Nina Assorodobraj-Kula, but also, less obviously, by Tadeusz Kotarbiński or Władysław Tatarkiewicz. Institutions in the form of IKKN, the Philosophy Institute of the University of Warsaw (UW), as well as the library at the Institute, helped create a favorable context. As Jerzy Szacki stated, '*only Schaff could have come up with IKKN*'.

Schaff imagined the institute in such a way... that it was supposed to be a scientific institute, while being a party one. At the beginning it was quite sad, but to some degree sensible: almost billeted, we were studying the hard texts of various authors, in incredible amounts, to the point of madness. Of course we read Marx's *Capital*, but also Hegel, Locke and so on – we were learning the standard history of philosophy. It was an awful lot, in the first year there was also like a cheder, as Leszek Kołakowski usually called it. (JS)

The 'cheder' method of teaching was realized through specific tutoring. A good base of Western literature made available to the students at IKKN effectively protected them against all complexes, and the organization of international exchanges also acted favorably in this matter.<sup>30</sup> Such trips were, as it turns out, important not only for the purpose of making some contacts abroad and with the scholarly mainstream, but also for strengthening ties within the group.

Jerzy Jedlicki, in an interview given as part of the *Trajectory...* project, assigned great meaning to the large scholarly expedition of 30 Polish humanists to France, organized on the wave of the thaw in summer 1956. The trip lasted six weeks and bore the fruit – in the case of Jerzy Jedlicki, but also others – of life-long relationships, sometimes even friendships. Today, the list of members of the group is quite impressive: Leszek Kołakowski, Bronisław Baczko, Maria Janion, Jan Strzelecki, Stefan Nowak. The ties between the participants of this expedition remained lasting. Jerzy Jedlicki recalls the rapprochement that formed between him and Kołakowski, whom he had only known superficially before, and also the friendships and intellectual agreements with Janion, Strzelecki and Maria Żmigrodzka.

Schaff was rather more of an organizer than a teacher; his scholarly qualifications were questionable. Kołakowski did not value Schaff highly. Baczko did not consider him

<sup>30</sup> Sitek, *Warszawska szkoła historii idei*, 57.

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as an important reference point either, and the generation of the WSHI students clearly already had a negative opinion of him. However, he did manage to create a milieu in which didactically and intellectually fertile relations were formed.

The opinion regarding some other personages in the orbit of WSHI seems to be far more positive. Nina Assorodobraj holds an important place in this circle. Barbara Szacka recalls:

She was connected to the leftist movement before the war, and during the war she joined PPR [Polish Workers Party]. She was a wise and noble person, and having a strong political position, she could maintain substantial intellectual independence. I suspect that more or less consciously she searched for subjects that allowed her to avoid ideological pressure and [pursue] honest scholarly analysis. She occupied herself with the Enlightenment and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the socio-political thought of the Polish Democratic Society (Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie). (BS)

The most important 'tutors' and leaders of the young colleagues were, however, Tadeusz Kroński (whose status as the Teacher is, nevertheless, doubtful) and Bronisław Baczko. In the ideological development of WSHI, Kroński played a key role because he directly affected its two main characters: Baczko and Kołakowski. In the eyes of people holding less central positions in the group, Kołakowski was a special student of Kroński and in some measure he inherited certain of his characteristics. In fact, Kroński was an unusual character – Czesław Miłosz gave us the well-known picture of the force of his paradoxical personality in his *Captive Mind* (1953). Leszek Kołakowski wrote:

After all, we spent time with him in everyday friendship, all of us not only learned from him, but we irreversibly soaked up his way of assimilating the world, we all became, in some degree, 'Kroński-ites'.<sup>31</sup>

Aside from the 'Kroński-ites' there were also 'Baczko-ites'. Jerzy Szacki says of these times:

The role of Baczko was based on the fact that he functioned, you could say, as a confessor. Meaning that he carried on conversations with me on any possible subject. I actually don't recall if we particularly talked a lot about the dissertation topic, however I remember perfectly some very long conversations on the subject of Ukraine, [Ivan] Michurin, the state of biological research, and similar things.

Baczko, as a person of great precision, demanded much from his interlocutors (because often there were conversations carried on in the

<sup>31</sup> In Tadeusz Kroński, *Rozważania wokół Hegla*, (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1960), 498-499.

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company of two or three people)... He was a conscientious advisor and educator, who at least once a week devoted two or three hours to us, meaning also Adam Sikora and Paweł Beylin. The latter caused him after all the most – you could say – problems in training because he was particularly skeptical... These conversations were extremely useful, though the discussions were generally concerned with current readings and they were truly various. One can say that there was not very much sociology, but philosophy and politics – a lot... Such direct and intense scholarly guardianship should be practiced in relation to every student. At Oxford, one worked in exactly this style. (JS)

Over time, Baczko and Kołakowski became ever more important for the dynamics of the intellectual movement. The former brought Andrzej Walicki to cooperate with IKKN.

The intellectual climate also warmed up, slowly at the beginning, but markedly. I took advantage of this in 1954 in discussions with Bronisław Baczko, the influential representative of IKKN, who took up contact with me... For my own use, I formulated, a year later, the following life plan: 'Become a respected specialist and maintain myself as a *popuchik* [Rus. fellow-traveler] of Baczko *et consortes*, expanding the frameworks built by them'. After the attainment of this position I intended to pass to the 'Chałasiński tactic', i.e., a frontal attack on those same precepts of Stalin's version of Marxism, to which the IKKN milieu was still closely tied.<sup>32</sup>

This process showed that, with time, the members of the WSHI circle began to influence its further development themselves. They did not have to rely anymore on Schaff or Assorodobraj, they built – as we would say to today – an ever wider network. Jerzy Szacki joined them later. He was already at that time – in Jerzy Jedlicki's opinion expressed in an interview as part of the *Trajectory...* project – the most outstanding of his colleagues and came closest to the leaders of the circle. The rest of its members were – as Jedlicki recalls – rather modest scholars, but lively group ties existed throughout the whole circle.

Our interlocutors devoted much attention to the prevailing atmosphere during their time as undergraduate and doctoral students at university. Strong ties were born there not only between students, but also among adjuncts and professors. Szacki remembers the atmosphere of cooperation in the following manner:

It was a completely different type of relationship, an incomparably closer familiarity – beyond a few exceptions – than at today's universities. Anyway it applied not only to professors with whom one worked in their own department. I remember from the period of my studies – and one must take into account that

<sup>32</sup> Walicki, *Idee i ludzie*, 42.

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I was in no way a student who spent his whole life at the university – there were many contemporary professors both from history and philosophy that I knew personally. Yes, it looked completely different. There were also various classes which convened in quite miniature groups... It was a completely different system of studies: one had to attend a certain number of seminars and lectures, which came to more or less seven hours a week, so very little in comparison to today's apportionment. There were also 7-8 exams which one had to take at any time in the course of 3-4 years. Some of these exams were monstrous with regard to the amount of material. All the same however, preparing for them absolutely demanded direct contact with professors. Students often took advantage of the possibility for conversations and consultations. (JS)

Krzysztof Pomian, in an interview given for the *Trajectory...* project, recalls that his generation had truly good teachers, from whom he lists, among others: Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Klemens Szaniawski, and Marian Przełęcki. It would seem that their own flavor contributed to the teaching far more than the official ideology of Marxism-Leninism. On the one hand, therefore, the Lwów-Warsaw School influenced the representatives of WSHI, but on the other [the School] became an object of an ideological (and one can also say emancipatory) attack from Baczek and Leszek Kołakowski, and also from Schaff and Kroński. According to Andrzej Kołakowski, on this occasion there arose the myth of the Lwów-Warsaw School: invented by those belligerent Marxists who, in order to appear effective, were forced to retouch reality somewhat.<sup>33</sup> This severe conflict became an important turning point and without doubt an inglorious page in the biography of those engaged in the school. However, despite this ideological (and generational) altercation with the pre-war professorate, this same professorate was, in large part, responsible for educating its adversaries.

The seminars of Baczek, Assorodobraj, Ossowski, and somewhat less, Schaff, were the centers of discussion and cooperative thinking. Our interlocutors recall the division of labor, self-reliance of participants, the large thematic dispersion of lectures as well as the effective process of connecting the interest in the tradition of Polish thought with a constant absorption of scholarly achievements from across the world, without any leniency for incompetence or lack of preparation. No trace of provincialism is to be seen (which to a certain degree was confirmed by the later careers of WSHI representatives abroad). Jerzy Szacki thus recalls Stanisław Ossowski's seminar:

It was a seminar in the full sense of that word. I was, in the end, only at three of his seminars, but I remember that none of them had a single subject. The dispersion of the issues was incredible. On the one hand there was, for example,

<sup>33</sup> Andrzej Kołakowski, 'Interpretacje i sytuacje mityczne (krytyka tzw. Szkoły lwowsko-warszawskiej w polskiej myśli marksistowskiej I połowy lat osiemdziesiątych)', *Zdanie* 9 (1980), 70.

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a lot of Bible and its analysis from the point of view of the social situations described in it, and it is in this regard, as it was in all others, that the book could not be exhausted. Ossowski was uncannily fluent in this subject matter. On the other hand, let's say, we would discuss the issue of racism in the United States... There were also such topics like the interpretation of The Divine Comedy with which Stefan Nowak was occupied. His master's thesis, if I remember correctly, was in fact about Dante.

Practically, every issue you can imagine from the history of culture could be encountered there. I encountered Karl Mannheim for the first time there; Jan Strzelecki was writing his master's thesis on him... Of course, this was a bit too difficult. The difficulty was that, due to the thematic dispersion, it was not necessarily easy to realize what purpose it served and to establish if there was some guiding principle in it. This guiding principle undoubtedly existed, as can be seen in the works of Ossowski, when he makes various illusions to comparative historical research... However, for a student, a person who had just passed his high school exams, it was really not easy. (JS)

Seminars and discussions at the institutional meetings took on the character of an individual cooperative occurring among friends. In other words, the meetings were open and their atmosphere was – sometimes ruthlessly – critical. This kind of environment was promoted by the community of university life which, in the mind of our subjects, largely was generational in character ('it was *a few years give or take*' (BB)), although it must be remembered that in the period just after the war, the generation was understood a little differently than it is now: 'it was *characteristic for this post-war period that the generations had mixed a bit. Because one war generation had almost vanished*' (BB). Co-participation in the process of teaching and learning was the most important element of this 'being a school', and in the first post-war generation of Polish humanists it took on the character of 'mutual self-teaching'.

In a certain sense, I learned more from Leszek [Kołakowski] or from Tadeusz [Kroński] than from my university professors. But I cannot say that Leszek was my teacher because that is simply too funny: Leszek was my dearest friend, from whom I learned so much, though he was not my teacher. Therefore we were somewhat in a vacuum, deprived of intellectual authorities... We were missing something in life, but also it was our intellectual opportunity of which we were completely unaware. So there was some self-teaching in this. Anyway we started a little late because we were all a little delayed by the war. And afterwards by the first post-war years. (BB)

The intellectual opportunity that Baczkowski is speaking of was undoubtedly the freedom given to the union of a scholarly community in its spiritual and interactive

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dimension, lacking precise norms relating to the very content, terms and form of intellectual work. This suggestion could seem surprising, considering that we are speaking of Stalinist times. However, from the statements of our subjects, a picture emerges of a community in which ideological baggage did not at all veil the common aspiration to intellectual culture, dominating above ideological and political categories at least in the sphere of everyday practice. It seems that inasmuch as interpersonal and interactive factors (also in the character of the 'climate' or 'atmosphere' of various key places, such as Krakowskie Przedmieście 3 in Warsaw) played an important role in the trajectories of the destiny of our subjects, their institutional belonging, formal affiliation or relations of submission and domination were relatively less meaningful in the process of their education and their intellectual work (though, of course, not necessarily in case of their careers). Of course, it would be much more difficult to even talk about their participation in organized research teams. This does not change the fact that intellectual tasks could be divided up arbitrarily, as Schaff did for his advisees.<sup>34</sup> It would be misleading to refer to a group of scholars as a team, unless the results of individual members are added up at some point into cooperative work that brings profit; the central planning of assignments alone is not enough. In any case, students of WSHI, such as Andrzej Mencwel, recall the openness of the university at that time, the possibility of participation in any seminars and classes in any department, with a light load of obligatory courses. When the ideal of interdisciplinarity and self-development was realized, it brought about amazing results during miserable times.

### **THE METHODOLOGY OF INDIVIDUALISTS**

All the members of WSHI could thus be characterized by a readiness for intellectual quests extending beyond the borders of fields and departments. It resulted in the absence of a general plan which, in turn, brought about self-reliance, loneliness, and sometimes also a singularity in their developmental path. In an uncommon way, the community of learning and thinking (together with its institutional dimension, embodied at least in the IKKN) was combined with individual distinctiveness in the achievement of scholarly goals. It resulted in an eclecticism that would amaze a contemporary university student. Jerzy Szacki recalls his own academic curriculum:

<sup>34</sup> Jerzy Niecikowski noticed the 'central planning' of subjects by Schaff and later Baczeko in a statement at the seminar *Warsaw School of the History of Ideas*, which took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2012 in the Jewish Historical Institute as part of the research project *The Warsaw School of the History of Ideas and its meaning for the Polish Humanities* led by Andrzej Gniazdowski and financed by the National Program for the Development of the Humanities (11H 11 01818).



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Witold Kula studied economic history. It was a very interesting class, in large part sociological. He was not an economic historian with narrow interests. Aside from that I went to Schaff's seminar for one year. I went also to Stanisław Herbst's seminar in the history department, a little bit to Małowist's. I was in fact simply looking around. For instance, I made it to Bardach's class in the Law department... It took me a long time to sift through the extremely varied literatures that were truly not necessary for me, professionally speaking, though of course everything, with time, comes in handy somehow. A person who really wants to do something, however, should concentrate incomparably more. While it always seemed to me – quite unwisely – that I have enough time for everything and in the end I will know what is interesting in philosophy, the history of literature or painting. Everything was done in the style of a dilettante, but in this way I spent hours, days and weeks.

It resulted partly from the fact that I did not join in the work with an exact plan of what I was going to do. I did not know what I would do, I did not know what would interest me. In general, I can admit that I was really mainly searching for what was interesting, not what was useful. (JS)

Curiosity sometimes led to spectacular versatility: Pomian for example was interested in archaeology, mathematics, physics, logic, ancient languages, and in addition he was writing about the philosophy of Sartre and attended seminars in military history. In turn, Jedlicki recalls how he connected his historical interests with philosophical, philological and sociological interests, which was also in some measure characteristic for WSHI.

The haphazard nature [of interests and studies] often lead to fortuitousness. Pomian's interest in Swieżawski and Baczko's interest in Rousseau resulted partly from such fortuities of self-education. Our interlocutors stress in this context the exceptionality of Andrzej Walicki, who from the beginning carried out a clear research program. The interests of the rest evolved – unlike Walicki's, who through his whole life focused on Russia, Poland and Marxism. Even Baczko, who never abandoned 18<sup>th</sup> century France, treated his own interests rather as a 'sticking point' for the problem than as the realization of a prior laid research plan:

Andrzej Walicki is much more systematic and programmatic. When one reads his autobiography, it's visible that he has a certain idea which he is constantly realizing. I did not have that. It seems to me that Leszek did not have that either. Anyhow, it's visible how Leszek's interests have changed. I got stuck in the 18th century because this epoch fascinates me even today. But this is certainly a big difference in comparison to Andrzej, his style of thinking and a certain programmatic approach. When one reads Andrzej's works on Russians and about Poles, it's visible that the same person wrote it. It is the same approach. (BB)

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Jerzy Szacki made a similar comparison:

I did not go to university with a big project in mind which I wanted to complete in life. Sometimes it happens. Andrzej Walicki was someone like that, from a young age he knew perfectly what his calling in life was, what his plan for study would be. He knew when to take on Russian philosophy, which period, when to then take on Polish philosophy and so on. He had a plan. I did not have a plan; it was quite an extensive search in a blindfold. (JS)

This fondness for freedom and haphazard scholarly choices were connected with the question of teaching duties, particularly in those curricula in which the most important elements were seminars and course lectures. Our interlocutors are in agreement that Baczek was an ideal educator, tutor and examiner, but the rest did not really enjoy the pedagogical work. Pomian in an interview given as part of the *Trajectory...* project, recalls what an ideal examiner and academic teacher Baczek was, from whom, as Pomian says, he learned a lot about academic teaching. He remarks, however, that his students and colleagues, particularly Kołakowski, generally did not share this passion for teaching, though of course much depended on the kind of students who gathered at the seminars.

Szacki also admits that he had little enthusiasm for teaching (though his *magnum opus*, *The History of Sociological Thought*, actually arose from his course lectures).

I am not a fan of teaching. I never liked it. I made do with it as I could, but it did not give me any particular joy. It was rather something that had to be done. On the other hand, my own work and also the miscellaneous things that are not really tied to university work truly drew me in. (JS)

Letting oneself be led by intellectual predilections resulted in differences between the representatives of WSHI, reaching deeply into the field of research choices and approaches, which additionally discouraged eventual attempts at a standardizing of their method. In any case, not so much weight was attached to methodological issues than is today. Andrzej Walicki says:

Looking back from the other side of my life, after the passing of so many years, I think, at bottom, I worked according to my own convictions, I cited only that which suited me, pretending from time to time that I drew some inspiration from great methodologists. I truly did not learn the understanding of ideas from phenomenologists and hermeneutists, but somehow it was different, more intuitive.

Perhaps this approach helped the WSHI scholars manifest the gift in creating a specific research approach, and not simply in its correct and meticulous implementation. The generational community, community of conversation, of interaction and of lecture was prior to any kind of program.

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## CONCLUSION

The main questions which we posed to ourselves in the inquiry of the trajectory of the Polish humanities, concerned the relationship between the individual and societal conditions of outstanding creation. Using the case of WSHI as one of the most important intellectual milieus of post-war Poland, one can say that Fleck's conception of the thought collective seemingly summarizes well the nexus of both kinds of factors.

WSHI undoubtedly was made up of 'a large number of criss-crossing circles', differentiating themselves according to the degree of their initiation (in this case rather: according to the intensity of engagement and entanglement), the sum of which decided on the hermeticism of the milieu.<sup>35</sup> These circles stretched beyond the divisions of disciplines and institutions, across methodological, objective, and even political lines. WSHI also had both its elite (we cite above the statements of its representatives) and its extremely select masses', it had its own coryphaei and acolytes.<sup>36</sup> Due to the dismantling of WSHI, it is impossible to predict in which of the possible directions described by Fleck – democracy, conservatism, and ossification – the group could have gone, had it carried on into the future.

On the subject of 'intracollective' relations, 'a sociable mood', undoubtedly was born in WSHI; it was 'immediately perceivable after a few sentences', making possible a true understanding in which 'none of the once proposed questions can fundamentally be left without an answer', and at least without a long discussion.<sup>37</sup> The cooperative mood leads to a 'strengthening of the value of thought'<sup>38</sup> – and indeed, WSHI members attached a large importance (incomparably larger, it seems, than we do today) to their mutual views, works and publications, to internal discussion and polemics. The meticulousness with which, after so many years, Kołakowski, Walicki, Szacki and Pomian recollect their time in the circle, can testify to that kind of attitude. The exchange of thoughts left behind lasting traces in memory and shaped a style of work, though it seems that it did not significantly influence the upshot of this exchange. This 'intracollective exchange of thoughts *ipso sociologico facto*... leads to a strengthening of a thought structure', of which separateness is best visible from the outside.<sup>39</sup>

The specificity of a thought style of a collective is accentuated in its fullest when confronted with other, alternative styles. Students and creators usually do not work alone, but they group together and connect.<sup>40</sup> Randall Collins – the author of an innovative

<sup>35</sup> Fleck, *Powstanie i rozwój*, 138.

<sup>36</sup> Fleck, *Powstanie i rozwój*, 139.

<sup>37</sup> Fleck, *Powstanie i rozwój*, 139.

<sup>38</sup> Fleck, *Powstanie i rozwój*, 143.

<sup>39</sup> Fleck, *Powstanie i rozwój*, 139.

<sup>40</sup> See Stanisław Ossowski, *O osobliwościach nauk społecznych* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1983); Florian Znaniecki, *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge*, (New Brunswick-Oxford: Transaction Books, 1986).

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work on the social roots of philosophy – in his *law of small numbers* claims that in any given period, there are in any respective area three to seven such intellectually creative, innovative and inspiring milieus.<sup>41</sup> WSHI maintained relations with all the important intellectual centers in the country, of which, a part was equally being born at more or less the same time: [they included] the Lwów-Warsaw school and its heirs, the milieu at the Institute of Literary Research (IBL) at the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), the school of Polish economic historians, and the milieu at the Catholic University in Lublin (KUL). Here is not the place to describe the relations between the above mentioned milieus (along with the relationship of WSHI to foreign styles, such as phenomenology, existentialism, Brentano's circle, neo-positivism or neo-Thomism). However, it seems that in the case of WSHI there existed really only two styles with which it could be juxtaposed: the style of the KUL milieu and that of the Lwów-Warsaw school. The milieus of IBL and WSHI coexisted but they rarely engaged in an exchange of critical views.

In keeping with Fleck's predictions, 'the bigger the difference between two thought styles, the less the exchange of thought.'<sup>42</sup> WSHI built its separateness on a non-ideological polemic with competing styles, and its specificity is best evidenced by the fact that – aside from the student years – intellectual exchanges with those outside the school almost never happened. WSHI flourished as a separate and self-standing milieu, in the same way as its members remained apart inside the milieu. I would argue that – following Fleck's reasoning – the people connected with WSHI created not as much a school, as simply a beneficial and serendipitous 'social moment', thanks to which the individual, separate, and personal creativity of each one of them could flourish and reverberate.<sup>43</sup> Conceivably, this separateness of creative processes indeed prompts some present-day intellectuals to consider the books of WSHI to be – though 'excellent' – out of date and impossible to absorb for today's reader.<sup>44</sup>

In our analysis of the development of members of WSHI, what comes to the fore is their dynamic, continuous development and the originality of their respective paths. However, this was not a realization of a plan, but a chain of choices made, whenever possible (upon achieving scholarly independence) in isolation from official and institutional factors. This resulted in a specific intellectual escapism that drew their attention to problems distant from the contemporary reality, as well as a separateness of thought within the collective. This then, most probably, facilitated the dissolution of WSHI, and at the same time consolidated the impression its outstanding members exerted on their own students. The freedom of thought, the strong connection with tradition and the ability to place the

<sup>41</sup> See Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Belknap, 1998).

<sup>42</sup> Fleck, *Powstanie i rozwój*, 142.

<sup>43</sup> Fleck, *Powstanie i rozwój*, 142.

<sup>44</sup> Michalski, 'Zrozumieć przemijanie. Rozmowa w redakcji kwartalnika "Kronos"', 17.

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achievements of the Polish humanities within the European and global context also merit attention. Especially that in their case, the methods, manner and means of constructing a research topic and its formulation were completely authentic, characteristic, and original because they were unregulated. This characteristic scholarly 'inner-directedness' was accompanied by strong relations of critique, discussion and polemics, but also a lively, mutual interest in creativity and an intense aspiration toward new frameworks and new problems both in the history of philosophy and in literary and historical research.

The outstanding scholars that are the focus of our research are not natural born geniuses; they were people who took advantage of the opportunities to choose and to go down an original path in depressing times. Today's times – though they are probably not quite so miserable – still seem less than fortunate for the humanities. If our research was to suggest how to stimulate the development of the humanities so that a group of people similar to WSHI could emerge within current intellectual life, it seems that the three key terms here are: freedom, choice, and passion. Freedom is a question of rules governing scholarly education and careers. To make choices, one must embolden and train young humanists to be independent. Passion should not be suppressed by administrative rigors which – though morally less severe than political pressures – can in practice be bothersome and demotivating. It seems that the less one has to deal with some kind of measurability and comparability with others, the less pressure there is to accomplish the work; and the more honest and responsible the critique allowing for the quality of work to improve. Less competitiveness and more discussion could increase the chance of future constellations of outstanding humanists appearing in present-day scholarship.

TRANSLATED BY Zachary Mazur AND Agata Tumiłowicz