

# ARCHIVE

## BACK TO FUTURE'S PAST: ANDRZEJ SICIŃSKI'S SCIENTIFIC FUTUROLOGY

*The future is on the defensive today. It is as if we had unwittingly adopted one of concluding theses of Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, which states: "That the sun will rise to-morrow, is a hypothesis; and that means that we do not know whether it will rise."<sup>1</sup> While we know increasingly more and with ever greater precision thanks to drawing on increasingly exact calculations of when the sun will extinguish and life on Earth will cease (although it is now clear that this will most probably happen much sooner for other, far more human reasons), it is as if it is becoming increasingly difficult to construct credible visions of the future – the exception being catastrophic ones. The currently popular conception of the Anthropocene is one such example. It is defined as a new, ongoing geological (sub)era that began around 200 years ago (its age is the subject of debate), in which human beings have caused changes in the functioning of the natural environment so deep and destructive on a global scale that they will lead to the imminent and irreversible (self-)destruction of the species.<sup>2</sup>*

*Retrospection, however, is enjoying ever greater success – at least quantitatively, so to speak, since there is little evidence of quality. It is typical of our part of Europe, and certainly of Poland, that great emotions have been aroused recently in debates about the past, over the form and content of historical exhibitions and museums, over the location and design of memorials, about scripts of remembrance, and about historical films. Meanwhile, among the most performatively-oriented specialists there have been debates over the cut of uniforms and the shapes of soldiers' buttons in, for example,*

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. Charles K. Ogden et al. (London, 1922), 87 (thesis 6.36311).

<sup>2</sup> Among the wealth of literature on the subject, particularly notable in this context is the compact volume by the American journalist Roy Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization* (San Francisco, CA, 2015). As the title suggests, the author outlines a programme for a radical humanities that would not guarantee immortality but would allow us to await the end of human civilization with dignity.

the Battle of Warsaw in 1920 or, what has proven even more important, the types of weapons used by the 'cursed soldiers' (Pol.: żołnierze wyklęci). Polish historiography is more popular now among the men and women 'on the street', to use a metaphor once suggested by historian Marcin Kula,<sup>3</sup> than it has been for a long time. It is not necessary to be an advocate of hydraulic theories of the transmission of social energies in order to be able to pose the reasonable question: does the growing popularity of the past in some way compensate – on the level of the collective unconscious – the lack of clear ideas of the future? Beyond, of course, the construction of yet another memorial or museum, organizing a new anniversary or another so-called historical reconstruction. Among serious memory theorists who have suggested such a correlation it is perhaps enough to mention here the name of Pierre Nora.

This contemporary turn towards the past becomes even more evident when we explore speculations on the subject of the future from several decades ago. The text presented below is one such case, and a particular one at that, because it is an academic text. It is all the more interesting because it comes from the social sciences, namely from sociology and, to be even more precise, from cultural sociology – rather than from robotics.

Andrzej Siciński's essay is treated here as an example representative of such studies on the future that enjoyed great popularity at the time it was written and published (the mid-1970s). This was the case not only in Poland but also in several other socialist countries where future studies took on institutionalized academic form. Thus, for example, the Poland 2000 Research and Forecasting Committee<sup>4</sup> organized a Forecasting Summer School in 1972 for participants from socialist countries. The person in charge of this project was Andrzej Siciński, who at the time led the Department of Social Forecasting at the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of Philosophy and Sociology. The summer school resulted in an edited volume titled *Problemy diagnozowania w krajach socjalistycznych (Problems of diagnosis in socialist countries)*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Marcin Kula, 'Historia wyszła na ulice', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, liii, 3 (2009), 3–15.

<sup>4</sup> The Committee was founded in 1969 within the structures of the Polish Academy of Sciences. In the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology it worked in close collaboration with the Centre for Social Forecasting led by Andrzej Siciński. In 1989, the Committee changed its name to Poland in the 21st Century Forecasting Committee, before becoming the Poland 2000 Plus Forecasting Committee, which is the name that, formally, still applies today.

<sup>5</sup> Edited by Andrzej Siciński, Géza Kovács and Vladimir I. Staroverov (Wrocław, 1975).

The book's Marxist-Leninist rhetoric might deter readers today, as authors from the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Poland, Romania and Hungary attempted to outdo each other. However, the volume might also be treated as something more than a study in futurological newspeak. It can be read as an attempt at providing a theoretical and methodological outline of scientific research on the future. Such studies would later be applied in social planning and to particular sociotechnical activities.<sup>6</sup> The future, quite clearly, seemed to be in our own hands (and minds) back then.

Beyond the theoretical deliberations that Siciński initiated and undertook in that period, he also conducted empirical research that was large-scale and international in scope. I have in mind the research project titled 'The image of the world in the year 2000' that was conducted under the auspices of UNESCO's Vienna-based European Coordination Centre for Research and Documentation in the Social Sciences, led at the time by the Polish Marxist philosopher Adam Schaff.<sup>7</sup> Siciński was previously responsible for the Polish contribution to research on 'The image of a disarmed world', a project that enabled him to become acquainted with the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, who led the Oslo Institute of Peace Studies. In 1966, Siciński and Galtung launched their 'futurological' study involving eight countries (initially fourteen were planned), namely Czechoslovakia, Finland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain and Yugoslavia, with India and Japan later joining in. The research was based on questionnaires, with the surveys featuring over 200 questions answered by around 9,000 people in total. The main focus was on establishing the extent of social optimism/pessimism in relation to visions of the future, compared according to several variables, including a division into Eastern and Western countries. The results were published in an extensive volume that Siciński co-edited with Helmut Ornauer, Håkan Wiberg, and Galtung.<sup>8</sup> Siciński contributed an extensive typology of attitudes pertaining to those surveyed that took into account their views, positions and expectations in respect of the future. The research did not foresee the collapse of communism, although the findings have proven

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<sup>6</sup> Andrzej Podgórecki (ed.), *Socjotechnika*, 2 vols. (Warszawa, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> The history of this research is placed in the context of the ups and downs of postwar Polish sociology by Jacek Kurczewski, 'Obraz świata w roku 2000 i co z tego wynikało', in Piotr Gliński and Artur Kościański (eds.), *Siciński i socjologia* (Warszawa, 2009), 67–84.

<sup>8</sup> Helmut Ornauer, Håkan Wiberg, Andrzej Siciński, and Johan Galtung (eds.), *Images of the World in the Year 2000: A Comparative Ten-nation study* (The Hague and Mouton-Atlantic Highlands, NY, 1976).

highly accurate in diagnosing the direction of civilizational change. Those with a greater interest can turn to the texts from that period. The aim here has been to provide an outline of the intellectual and institutional context of Siciński's futurology.

The text presented here is taken from a book that marked the culmination of this stage in Siciński's research. It is written in the style of a freeform essay, rather than being saturated in the figures and graphs typical of sociological reports. Socialist society is the framework within which Siciński presents cultural change. As probably all sociologists of that period were, Siciński was mistaken on this issue. On more detailed points, some of his diagnoses and prognoses have proven quite accurate, in particular those concerning tensions between growing consumption and the realization of 'higher' cultural values at both the individual and collective level, particularly the national. Siciński draws on the above-mentioned forecasting research at many points in the analysis, while also giving an indication of his broader research interests.

Following his futurological period, Siciński launched what we would today call interdisciplinary qualitative research into lifestyles at the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, something that was highly innovative at the time.<sup>9</sup> This research was put on hold for a period during the rise of the Solidarity movement and subsequent martial law. After 1989, the Centre for Lifestyle Research that he led became the Centre for Civil Society that still exists today. The essay presented here anticipated both of these fields of research, although only lifestyle research was mentioned explicitly. What is evident, however, is the particular voluntarism that would come to distinguish

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<sup>9</sup> The theoretical and methodological conceptions applied in these studies have been the subject of many texts, including several books, the most important of which are: Andrzej Siciński (ed.), *Styl życia. Koncepcje i propozycje* (Warszawa, 1976); *idem* (ed.), *Styl życia. Przemiany we współczesnej Polsce* (Warszawa, 1978); *idem* (ed.), *Problemy teoretyczne i metodologiczne badań stylu życia* (Warszawa, 1980). The innovative qualitative empirical studies were conducted among 72 worker and intelligentia families in four Polish towns and cities. They involved creating a 'file' for each respondent family that included interviews with family members, detailed field notes, questionnaires with personal details, photographs, and, in some cases, materials from family archives. This rich empirical material has only been partially processed, starting some years after the completion of the research. The most significant published study to feature findings from them is: *idem* (ed.), *Style życia w miastach polskich u progu kryzysu* (Warszawa, 1988). A few years ago the Qualitative Data Archive at the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of Philosophy and Sociology processed the original research data and made it available at <http://www.adj.ifispan.pl/katalog-1> (registration required; accessed: 2 July 2017).

his thinking in subsequent years. His conception of lifestyle ultimately saw it as a matter of individual and group choice, which was potentially, at least on the existential level, free. Citizenship was a certain form of conscious engagement in public affairs and, as such, also a matter of choosing particular values. We thus see that while Siciński abandoned wide-ranging and generalizing futurological speculation once the fashion for this had passed (and its ideological framework collapsed), he never ceased believing that the future, both at the individual and collective level, remained, to a significant degree, in our hands. His was a strongly humanist yet sociologically weak faith.

The fact that the collection of Siciński's essays that summarized his various research interests, published in 2002 by his home Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, ends with an interview where he addresses his activities in the underground Home Army, the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, and then later in Solidarność (Solidarity), as he searched for a way to realize the values that he proclaimed, is only superficially paradoxical.<sup>10</sup> This biographical knowledge makes it easier to understand both his visions of the future and also the belief that connected them, namely that the past and future are bound by the particular elemental continuity of human nature. This is something that is far from obvious today. The current crisis in cultural studies originates, perhaps, in the fact that the humanities and social sciences have come to doubt deeply in the human being and human culture. These fields have little (of interest) to say on the subject of 'posthuman' culture. Andrzej Siciński was, in this respect, an undoubtedly old school humanist – one who, unlike so many today, was oriented towards the future.\*

trans. Paul Vickers

Piotr Filipkowski

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<sup>10</sup> Andrzej Siciński, *Styl życia, kultura, wybór. Szkice* (Biblioteka Studiów Socjologicznych, 5; Warszawa, 2002), 223–30 ('Aneks').

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Andrzej Siciński

## THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF POLISH CULTURE

*... the past exists exclusively in the present,  
while the present is both a transformed, updated  
past as well as a nascent future.*

Stefan Czarnowski, [The past and  
the present in culture]<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

... The concept of 'culture' is, as we know, ambivalent. In these studies, it is understood in its *narrower* sense, i.e. as the sphere of satisfying what are known as higher needs, so intellectual and aesthetic demands, and also as the sphere of recreation.

This narrower concept of culture is applied here on multiple occasions, primarily in relation to the issue of 'lifestyle', which constitutes an element of a broader, anthropological approach to culture. Here lifestyle is understood as the scope and form of an individual's everyday activities, particularly in relation to his or her social status, i.e. what manifests a person's social standing and is seen as typical of such a position in society. ...

Hopefully the development of Polish culture will be accompanied by developments in theoretical reflection and a growth in research on cultural issues. If this proves to be the case, then it could soon, perhaps, become possible to conduct similar research on the basis of broader scientific material.

The problems discussed in this book primarily concern the future of our culture, as well as the present; or, to put it more simply: the

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<sup>1</sup> Stefan Czarnowski, 'Dawność a terażniejszość w kulturze', in *idem*, *Dzieła*, I (Warszawa, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> This is an abridged version of the introduction to the volume in which the essay translated below appeared: Andrzej Siciński, *Dziś i jutro kultury polskiej* (Warszawa, 1975).

present in relation to the future. We do not explore changes that have taken place in previous years, in particular those huge cultural achievements of the past thirty years. ...

After all, the presence in our times of the products of the cultural achievements up to now and their importance for the future are, following Stefan Czarnowski's theory quoted above, incontrovertible.

It is worth highlighting that the future-related arguments presented in this work are not of a 'futurological' nature, if this is the right term to describe certain visions of the future. Instead, they offer a 'prognostic' perspective,<sup>3</sup> i.e. one that attempts to establish the most important tendencies and factors that will affect the future direction and speed of changes, with a particular focus on accounting for the degree to which these factors can be *manipulated*. From this perspective, forecasts ought to be considered both in close relation to the aims of development as well as in conjunction with programmes and plans.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, this book explores questions related to the future of Polish culture, its *tomorrow* (i.e. the next quarter century), in the context of the current developmental conditions, while also taking into account activities that are essential *today* from the perspective of such development.

The author believes that this book primarily addresses cultural activists, planners and researchers investigating culture. The questions explored here will perhaps, however, also prove relevant to a broader audience who, after all, also ought to participate in discussions on the subject of the perspectives for the development of Polish culture.

## GENERAL TENDENCIES IN CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

### Opening remarks

Predictions relating to cultural developments constitute only a very small part of the burgeoning 'futurological' literature. And this part is less radical, less 'visionary', than thought connected to many other fields (including, for example, technology and the environment).

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<sup>3</sup> See foreword to the volume: Andrzej Raźniewski and Andrzej Siciński (eds.), *Studia z prognostyki społecznej* (Warszawa, 1972) [Author's footnote].

<sup>4</sup> See Andrzej Siciński, 'Prognozowanie a planowanie', *Biuletyn Komitetu "Polska 2000"*, no. 3 (1973): Andrzej Raźniewski and Andrzej Siciński (eds.), *Elementy metodologii prognozowania społecznego* [Author's footnote].



The reason for this is clear: it is relatively easier to understand and have an impact upon the world around us, or indeed even control its development, than to establish the laws of our own development and the laws shaping our activities, while also consciously directing such behaviour – hence the difference in possibilities for predicting the future. While creating a detailed outline of cultural development would seem to be a fruitless task given the fragility and uncertainty of its foundations, it would, however, be possible to conduct an analysis of the tendencies in such development together with the particular opportunities and dangers that such tendencies seem to present.

In all prognostic studies it is worth reflecting upon those aspects of the field under investigation that are expected to undergo substantial changes, while also exploring which phenomena in the period under investigation are unlikely to be subject to significant transformation. For the purposes of this investigation, we are working on the assumption that in the future period that interests us – up to the year 2000, or, more generally speaking, up to the first years of the next century – the human psyche and personality will not undergo significant transformation. We thus assume, among other things, that by that time there will be no evidence, on a mass scale, of psychological (and social) consequences resulting from the predicted future achievements in the fields of medicine, genetics, biology and pharmacology, etc. We assume that there will be no developments that would, for example, multiply human memory capabilities, develop human intelligence beyond its current levels, extend the human lifetime beyond its current upper limits, enable remote control over human thought, or create new types of symbioses between the human mind and machines, etc. Without making these or similar assumptions (or, indeed, the assumption that in the period in question there will not be a global military conflict) any forecast would be pointless. We can, though, justifiably investigate developmental tendencies in human culture, yet it is impossible to predict what will be the nature of a 'posthuman' culture.

What will be the decisive factors in Poland's socio-cultural transformation? The answer to this question might seem banal: we believe that a fundamental role will be played by economic and technological development. While the degree of progress achieved both in our country as well as in more economically developed countries is indeed significant in the realm of emancipating humans from the demands of heavy, destructive labour, which in turn liberates humans from

the pressure of satisfying 'basic' needs, it is, however, necessary to recognize that this is essentially a preliminary stage on the road towards liberating the broad masses from economic factors' domination over both individual and group existence. The full potential embodied in cultural choices emerges only once a certain 'social minimum' has been surpassed.

Economic and technological transformations indeed constitute an essential precondition of cultural development, but they alone are insufficient. A principle catalyst of cultural development are clashes and competition between ideals, trends and values. Diversity of directions and aspirations is not only an indicator of the richness of a culture, but also determines whether or not it can blossom. In an ethnically homogenous society like Poland's, characterized by a high degree of social integration and consensus on the general principles and general aims of socialist ideology, differentiation mechanisms are and will continue to be connected to diverse systems of values, worldviews, attitudes and professional points of view, etc. The apparently socially-beneficial complete homogenization of attitudes and views (which, in any case, is practically impossible to achieve) would in fact entail the absence of any form of cultural development.

#### TRANSFORMATIONS OF LIFESTYLE

*The multiplicity of lifestyles.* As mentioned above, reducing the pressure exerted by economic factors entails (alongside other social phenomena) typical consequences in the realm of the formation of the 'lifestyles' of particular individuals and social groups.

A particularly significant tendency has become evident: the weakening (or indeed disappearance) of differences between the lifestyles of people belonging to various classes and social strata while a concomitant individualization of lifestyles – despite the influence of mass media and mass-market production – increases the differentiation of members of the same classes and strata. In other words, lifestyle becomes to an ever greater degree and increasingly often a consequence of choice, while being increasingly less marked by the 'pre-determined' (by birth or place of residence) features of social status. Of particular significance here is, of course, the development of education. Passing the threshold of the second stage of the revolution in education (i.e. making secondary education universal), which is predicted to occur

in Poland in the late 1980s and has already been achieved in other countries, but especially passing the threshold of the third stage, namely universalization of higher education, is guaranteed to construct a common intellectual foundation for choosing among a variety of lifestyles.

It would of course be nonsensical to expect the full individualization of lifestyles and complete freedom of choice: this would mean that social bonds, and indeed society itself, had collapsed. Lifestyle serves to provide individuals with a guide to living, creating the frames for self-expression and making it easier to take decisions in everyday life, while also enabling other people to ascribe a social identity to an individual, predict that individual's behaviour, and position him or her within their system of values. The individualization of choices does not mean that each person will represent a different lifestyle but that access to a particular lifestyle and thus adapting to those who already accept it will increasingly become a matter of choice rather than vital necessity. It is also to be expected that the current trend of the proliferation of lifestyles will continue.

It is also worth highlighting a significant regularity in the differentiation of lifestyles: the declining significance of the dimension of *distance* (both in the sense of spatial distancing and in the sense of social 'distances') and the concomitant rise in significance of the *temporal* dimension. The well-known anthropologist Margaret Mead has formulated a thesis on the transition of the culture of the most highly developed countries not only from a *postfigurative phase* (where children learn the majority of behavioural models and values from older generations – and primarily from their forebears), which is typical of ancient cultures and towards a *cofigurative phase* (where both children and adults learn from their peers), but even towards what she sees as a future-oriented *prefigurative phase* (where adults learn from their own children).<sup>5</sup> While Mead may have formulated her thesis too stringently, it nevertheless highlights convincingly the situation that contemporary societies find themselves in as the fast pace of change affecting living conditions brings in train such quick transformations of value systems (and, what follows, changes in

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<sup>5</sup> Margaret Mead, *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap* (Garden City, NY, 1970); the Polish edition of this now classic text was first published in 2000 by PWN (Polish Scientific Publishers) in a translation by Jacek Hołówka.

behaviour and lifestyle) that it is not only subsequent generations (grandparents, parents, children) that are significantly differentiated according to these aspects, but the very concept of 'peers' acquires an ever narrower scope. It is also worth adding that each subsequent generation must conduct reassessments during its own lifetime and modify a previous lifestyle – thus creating an entirely new situation that differs even from relatively recent periods when the value system and lifestyle adopted once and for all (in childhood) underwent only insignificant modification in the course of a person's lifetime.

The prospect of the differentiation of lifestyles raises the question of factors that can play a fundamental role in this process once belonging to a social class and stratum loses its current significance. One answer that is sometimes given stresses the significance of differentiation that is related to the type of work done (with particular emphasis on the contemporary differentiation of lifestyles among people in different professions). This factor is highly unlikely to become less significant for a substantial period of time to come. However, there is another process that should not be overlooked: the growth of leisure time. While this does not lead to a proportional rise in the amount of free time, it is to be expected that this process will in future lead to a relative decline in significance of professional differentiation in shaping the entirety of an individual's lifestyle, meaning that the influence of activities not linked to work will increase. Such activities, among others, will almost certainly become one of the determinants of new social divisions.

The tendencies outlined thus far might, on the one hand, result in cultural transformations that could be assessed positively in light of today's prevalent values systems, while leading, on the other hand, to undesirable changes. The opportunities created by such tendencies require increasing the possibility of finding a lifestyle that is most suitable for an individual while also increasing the opportunities available for what is known as self-expression or self-realization. The dangers to be considered include fears of social disintegration, alienation, identity problems, dehumanization of life, and subordination to organizational structures. Both the opportunities and dangers are based in more than speculation – their symptoms are already evident, to a greater or lesser degree, in some contemporary societies.

It will almost certainly be a variety of factors that determine the extent to which those opportunities entailing negative consequences

will become reality, with those factors including cultural heritage as manifested in, among other things, something termed 'the national character', which is deemed to determine many preferences and choices. What might prove decisive, however, could be the matter of the existence – or nonexistence – of common national objectives as expressed through a particular ideology. In light of this, it seems that socialist societies, with their egalitarian ideology, national aims, and ideals of international community, should find themselves in a particularly strong position in relation to coming transformations.

It should also be noted that the prospects of cultural transformation discussed here are relevant only to developed countries, since only they are in a position to overcome the economic barriers that determine the ability to reach the aforementioned 'cultural minimum'. In the year 2000, no more than one third of humanity will inhabit such countries. This will create new global tensions; how they are resolved will shape the future of both developing and developed nations alike.

*Types of lifestyle.* It is not easy to define what the lifestyles of the future will look like. It can be assumed that some of them will not differ greatly from some lifestyles that already exist today. Others will develop around new opportunities created by technology – particularly perhaps developments in mass media. Household video recorders, holography, computers for service provision, recreation and education, as well as other technological possibilities that seem fantastical from today's perspective – all of these elements could contribute to the formation of new forms of interests and activities. New lifestyles will almost certainly develop in relation to these new opportunities. It is often stressed, after all, that certain lifestyles can be of a decidedly 'consumerist' nature, with prestige acquired from consumption for consumption's sake. On the other hand, the total negation of consumerist values in favour of creative attitudes cannot be ruled out.

It can be safely assumed that new principles for the differentiation of lifestyle types will emerge in future. We might consider, for example, the 'settled' type and its opposite, the 'nomadic' lifestyle. The emerging tendencies in technological development suggest that in the year 2000 (and all the more so beyond that date) it will be possible to remain in contact with the entire world without leaving one's home – ranging from finding information to 'remote participation' in almost everything that will take place on our planet. Not only will the opportunities for and attractiveness of nomadic wandering of the Earth multiply, but

there will also be new modes of tourism (to the depths of the oceans and, in the more distant future, into space). The basic division between lifestyles could well be drawn along the lines of a liking and disliking for movement. Both of these basic lifestyles (as well as intermediate forms combining elements of both), in conjunction with different forms of social integration, will favour the formation of new personality types. This mode of differentiation will, we predict, become one of the central problems that future society will face.

The third division that we hypothesize will form a principle of the differentiation of future lifestyles could be the division into lifestyles where either private life (and activities related to it) are dominant or, alternatively, where social activism and engagement in public life prevail.

It is also possible for other principles of the differentiation of lifestyles to emerge, which are difficult to predict today.

It is also to be expected that alongside lifestyles matching norms that enjoy broad social acceptance there will also be certain asocial 'styles' within the culture of the future. Modern technology could result in some of these lifestyles becoming particularly dangerous for society as a whole.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENCE, LITERATURE AND ART

So far we have considered developmental prospects according to certain aspects of a broadly-defined culture. In light of this we ask: what expectations are placed on the role of science and art, so those phenomena that are defined as 'culture' in a narrower sense of the word?

The way science functions in contemporary culture is more complex than is sometimes assumed. Generally speaking, there is only very superficial awareness of its significance for contemporary economic and technological development. The role of science as a factor in organizing and rationalizing the entirety of social life is also appreciated, but there is less awareness of the myths that have come to surround science today, with the myth of its omnipotence at the very top of the list. The belief in the unlimited possibilities of science and the unlimited potential of humans armed with contemporary scientific knowledge leads to particular misunderstandings and disenchantment. In situations where many fundamental questions that people pose lack scientific answers; where it turns out that a still inseparable aspect of

human existence – namely its end, death – remains something that is not a result of a doctor's negligence but something still as unavoidable as ever, albeit sometimes deferrable; or in other analogous situations, not least the impossibility of fundamentally altering the human psyche in order to make it adapt to changing living conditions – in such situations conflicts emerge between the myth of the unlimited potential of science and its actual scope, thus provoking frustrations. This sometimes leads to an almost complete negation of the role of scientific thought and turning instead to mysticism, 'esoteric knowledge', and occultism (phenomena evident to a significant degree among certain social groups even in the United States). It is to be expected that the further development of scientific research on the one hand, and the rise in educational levels on the other, together with modifications to education processes (moving towards providing an education in applying information rather than merely remembering it), could lead to increases in the actual degree to which social existence is rationalized. Indications of rebellion against scientific thought among certain social groups should not be ruled out, particularly because it is difficult to reliably foresee today how scientific thought could develop in future.

Equally, forecasting the directions of development in the 'content' of literary works, the visual arts, music, etc. makes little sense. At most, we could suggest that the tendency towards the integration and mixing of traditionally separate artistic fields will continue or even strengthen (this is already evident in happenings, 'light and sound' shows, and sound installations). We believe that it is at the limits of particular art forms and in the combination of multiple forms that new aesthetic experiences will emerge.

A more daring prediction is that in the more distant future, beyond the year 2000, a form enabling the integrated synchronous multisensorial impact of art will emerge (the most primitive vision of such a form involves imagining a space for encountering 'integrated art').

Certain prognoses can also be made as to the social function of art. Above all it is to be expected that the future will bring significant developments in popularizing creative activities. This assumption seems to be justified on the condition (which is just one among many) that the two above-mentioned tendencies are taken into account: increasing levels of education and increasing amounts of free time (although these factors do not *automatically* lead to the popularization of culture – this is a problem that we shall discuss in the following

two chapters<sup>6</sup>). It should be noted, however, that there is nothing to suggest that the division into 'creativity for others' and 'creativity for itself' will disappear, at least not from the perspective applied here. While the latter will incorporate ever larger groups of people, it will not at the same time eliminate the professional creativity of writers and artists.

Both types of creativity will employ new technologies, thus constituting an extension of contemporary mass media.

It is predicted that the differentiation of lifestyles will be reflected in the differentiation of styles of artistic creativity. It does not seem to be the case that literature or the visual arts will be able to discover in the future, as it is foreseen here, a universal language that will appeal to people ascribing to various value systems, who thus recognize a variety of means of expression and diverse symbols. This may give rise to a new form of regionalism or even to a new type of broadly-understood 'folk culture'.

Such fears associated with the prospects of cultural development (with culture understood here in its narrower definition) have been expressed on numerous occasions already. Mass culture, for example, which has become widespread today and will continue to exist in 2000, has been accused of promoting kitsch, blurring the lines between that which is considered to be of higher and lower value, and generating vulgar tastes. Critical analysis and research on cultural development have shown that these are not, however, inevitable, innate traits of 'mass culture' (even if they are sometimes evident). Fears previously expressed that the 'image' will completely dominate culture at the expense of the 'word', and the printed word above all, have proven unfounded. The differentiation of lifestyles alongside the differentiation of the functions of various modes of mass media have generally proven to be mutually complementary.

The prospects for cultural development that can be predicted today create opportunities for simultaneous cultural diversification, enrichment and better adaptation to the needs of various individuals. However, the realization of this potential will not occur automatically but requires people's conscious effort.

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<sup>6</sup> This refers to two further essays in the volume that opens with the essay translated here. The essays are 'Przemiany uczestnictwa w kulturze w perspektywie Polski roku 2000'; 'Przemiany kulturalne a rozwój oświaty'.



## THE PROSPECTS OF THE 'CULTURAL PHASE'

The leading political authorities have taken an interest in the problems of Poland's cultural development since the very beginnings of the postwar People's Republic of Poland. Indeed, even under occupation these problems constituted a central issue in discussions over the model that the new state would adopt.

In practice, however, the socio-economic policies in the first quarter century of People's Poland did not always take into account cultural questions to a satisfactory degree, although great strides forward had undoubtedly been taken, particularly in the realm of the popularization culture. In the document 'Prognoses for the development of Polish culture to 1990' one of the guiding statements reads:

Throughout the almost thirty-year existence of People's Poland, the basic objectives of socialist cultural revolution have been achieved in Poland. The working masses have taken ownership of an all-national culture, one whose dominant value system is built on socialist ideals. The leading ideological-political force in this cultural system is the Marxist-Leninist party, the organizer and patron is the people's state, while the crucial social group that sets the mould is the working class.

What we are interested in here, primarily, are the *prospects* for Poland's cultural development. They should be at the centre of our attention if our intention is not only to overcome the existing delays as quickly as possible but also to create conditions for developing Polish culture to the extent that it can become a globally-significant culture capable of making an authentic and original contribution to world culture.

*The phases of the formation of the socialist system.* In this context, we would like to outline the following, perhaps controversial, thesis: we argue that Poland in the 1990s could have the opportunity to enter a new phase in shaping the socialist system – namely a phase that could be termed *the cultural phase*. This phase has been preceded by three others: firstly, by the *political* phase, which from 1944 was founded upon revolutionary transformations of the political system, the value system, and of the structure of Polish society. This was followed by the *political-economic* phase (1950–5) and the *economic* phase (1956–70). Their main achievements were the formation of a material basis for the socialist system, laying the foundations for the

economic development of socialist society. Since 1971 a *socio-economic* phase has been in place, which, alongside even quicker economic development – particularly in the realm of the transition from an extensive to an intensive economy – has placed particular emphasis on the development of social infrastructure, raising standards of living, and improving the population’s living conditions.

It should also be noted that political, economic, social and cultural problems have been and remain elements in the development of People’s Poland throughout its existence. We argue that what has changed, however, is the intensity of these issues in particular periods and this is what determined our proposed periodization. Likewise, moving into the future, the political, economic and social aspects will cease to be of importance, particularly in relation to the construction of a “second Poland”.<sup>7</sup> What should and could increase, however, is the role of the country’s cultural development.

Let us quote a statement from the deputy prime minister and minister of culture and art on this subject:

Culture employs different measurement standards than, for example, technology. There can be manifestations of cultural crudeness in economically highly-developed countries and vice versa. Of course, this should not lead to the conclusion that a highly-developed culture can compensate for a weak economy. The programme of the PZPR [the Polish United Workers’ Party] that has been put into effect over the entire thirty years of People’s Poland’s existence, and which we have intensified particularly since the Party’s Sixth Plenum, also emphasises to an equal extent the need for quick economic, technological and cultural development – thus improving our material existence while at the same time enriching our spiritual life.

It is in this aim, among other things, that we find the superiority of socialism over capitalism, where culture, to a large extent, is dominated by the rules of the market and thus what often becomes common knowledge is not that which is truly valuable, but that which can be sold to the mass market.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The call to build a “second Poland” was a propaganda slogan employed by the regime of Edward Gierek after he became First Secretary of the Polish United Workers’ Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*) in December 1970. The slogan sought to encourage support, particularly among young people, for economic reforms that promised to improve living standards, consumption, access to apartments, etc.

<sup>8</sup> “Aby powstawały nowe dzieła ...” Rozmowa z Józefem Tejchmą, członkiem Biura Politycznego KC PZPR, wiceprezesem Rady Ministrów, ministrem kultury i sztuki’, *Kultura*, 25 (573) (9 June 1974) [Author’s footnote].

So, what will typify the fourth stage foreseen here? We believe that the central focus will be on forming a value system and shaping interhuman relations, while also creating the best possible conditions for self-realization and a satisfying life for individuals, as well as ensuring cultural institutions' self-management. It will thus constitute a phase of *qualitative* development that also covers the realm of artistic developments.

On the macrosocial level, this would mean a certain subordination of economic and political decisions to the goals of educational and cultural development, while economics and politics would be assessed on the basis of cultural facts.

The development of education has, after all, already embarked on a new path. While today the need to educate modern workers for the national economy prevails, in the *cultural phase* the education of the citizen and the person will be emphasized.

Let us be clear: we do not believe that the criteria of cultural development will become the sole criteria upon which decisions of national significance will be judged. Instead, we believe that in the subsequent phase of development of the socialist system no decisions will be taken, even if there are strong economic arguments in their favour, that conflict with the criteria necessary for cultural development. We thus expect that towards the end of the present century Poland will be sufficiently wealthy to ensure that attainments in the fields of culture, education, and social morality, will be deemed matters of the highest order, while ensuring that Poland will be a leading global player in these fields. And this will apply not only in national politics but also to all of society. The broad social masses will come to take an interest in constructing their own lifestyles.

By assuming that the *cultural phase* will begin around 1990, we do not seek to suggest that challenges emerging as a result of cultural development should not be given priority over social policy today. On the contrary: the expectation that they will take priority after 1990 means that today's decisions should be judged with the needs of a new, and none-too-distant, phase of constructing the socialist system in mind, thus leading society to consider whether the preparations being made for this qualitatively different situation are suitable and sufficient.

What arguments do we have to support this prediction of a *cultural phase*? We believe that this prediction is supported by foreseeing the requirements for the country's further development, or, more generally

speaking, the requirements connected to ensuring progress in shaping the socialist system and to the potential that our country has, or in 1990 will have, at its disposal.

*Cultural development as a precondition for shaping socio-economic development in its entirety.* In writing about the requirements for cultural development what we envision above all is – and this is something that many studies have shown, including the famous study *Civilization at the Crossroads* by the Czechoslovak research team led by Radovan Richta<sup>9</sup> – that the specificity of the scientific-technological revolution ensures that all economic and social progress is achieved through a combination of practice and theoretical thought, so through the direct connection of technology and science. A precondition for the effective functioning of such a system is a high level of education and culture throughout society. The fruits of labour, its efficiency and social utility depend upon this.

Let us also draw attention to the fact that a society's increasing prosperity, which is something that we too will experience, increasing amounts of time free of employment, alongside technological development and the expansion of institutions related to social life, will together ensure that our country will experience accelerated growth in the scope for choosing lifestyles that reflect the psychological disposition and abilities of the individual. A significant task for a broadly-understood cultural policy (which also includes the activities of educational institutions) will be educating people in the 'art of decision making', including aspects such as demonstrating the complexity and multidimensional nature of phenomena, providing reliable information, and also developing the ability to apply information. The rapid increase in the education levels of Polish society should always be borne in mind. It will be around 1980 when people with at least secondary education will form the numerical majority in Poland. Thus it is the duty of cultural institutions and cultural policy today already not only to satisfy to the greatest extent possible cultural needs but also to develop them. Such demands, in contrast to material needs, do not always develop spontaneously. It would be, simply put, not only a failure of cultural policy but also a brake on the entire development

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<sup>9</sup> Radovan Richta *et al.* [research team], *Civilization at the crossroads: Social and human implications of the scientific and technological revolution* (White Plains, NY, 1969) [Author's footnote].

of the country if the growth in living standards in Poland were not accompanied by even quicker cultural development.

And, finally, a relevant, considered and dynamic cultural policy could, we believe, prevent certain threats to society that accompany the development of countries entering a period of social-technological revolution. We have in mind a whole complex of issues, from among which we will now present a selection.

As a result of the powerful stimulation and satisfaction of consumerist demands (alongside a certain tendency towards chasing economic success) together with concomitant accelerated technological development, the *dehumanization* of society becomes a real danger. This can be prevented primarily through the education system (one subordinated in future to the requirements of cultural development instead of the current focus on personnel requirements). This tendency can be and should be counteracted by a policy aiming at shaping a system of values that is in accordance with the principle of social *egalitarianism* – i.e. social and cultural policy that favours the development and use of each person's individual potential – as a fundamental criterion of social prestige. Such policy should also aim at replacing the hierarchical differentiation of society with functional differentiation. And it should also propose recognizing the consumption of material goods as a means of realizing aims and aspirations – both individual and collective (while giving priority to collective objectives) – rather than framing it as an object of such aspirations.

Another danger that has often been discussed recently is the *destruction of the environment*. This is only partly a technological issue; thus without an appropriate cultural policy, little can be achieved in the realm of ecology. What we have in mind is both the fact that successful environmental protection can only be achieved when it becomes a *value* for all of society – since only then will an exploitative attitude towards the environment be effaced – as well as the dependency of models of consumption on attitudes towards culture. Certain models, namely those that treat consumption as a matter of status and not utility, promote the wasting of resources and contribute significantly to a degree of environmental pollution and destruction that cannot be justified according to biological or social needs.

*Transgenerational disintegration* is a matter seemingly distant to us. It should be borne in mind, however, that rapid growth in educational levels among the young generations, as well as the significant migration

from rural to urban areas that we can expect, could become factors that hinder communication between people belonging to different generations. Cultural policy must take into account this genuine danger.

The problem of transgenerational relations is, after all, just one aspect of more general phenomena connected to the speed and scope of ongoing and future transformations. One of their negative consequences could be the disruption of certain particularly crucial mechanisms of individuals' socialization and of social bonds, among other things. Counteracting *social pathologies* resulting from the disruption of such mechanisms is very expensive, not only economically but also, and above all, socially (not to mention that it is sometimes ineffective). To repeat: preventing the emergence of such phenomena could become an object of a conscious cultural policy.

The expectations attached to cultural development, or to those fields that can develop successfully only on the condition that a certain cultural level is attained, deserves more attention here. However, what seems to be more important right now is to attempt to demonstrate that the needs evident in this realm are also accompanied, we believe, by *opportunities* that our country can make the most of, provided that it invests sufficient effort in ensuring the development of such opportunities.

One outcome of these opportunities could be the formation of a new Polish 'cultural personality'. Let us cite Aldona Jawłowska's interesting essay on this theme, 'Model osobowości kulturalnej w rozwiniętym społeczeństwie socjalistycznym' [Model of cultural personality in developed socialist societies]. She writes:

We understand cultural personality to mean fixed states of consciousness and fixed dispositions accepted by the individual and reinforced during processes of acculturation which together with other components construct the entire personality structure. We work on the assumption that social development will be accompanied by a relative growth in significance of the cultural components over other mechanisms regulating behaviour and that these components will exert greater influence on the totality of motivations and aspirations. It is thus possible that the 'cultural being' will in future become a symbol that is as representative of this period as *homo oeconomicus* or *homo faber* have been until recently.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Aldona Jawłowska, typescript for the Forecasting Committee of the Ministry of Culture and Art [Author's footnote].

*Cultural development – an opportunity for the socialist system.* It seems that the previous epoch caused us to clearly underestimate the developmental potential of the socialist system. It was only around 1973/4 that efforts have been made to reverse this tendency.

There are only two matters that we wish to mention at this juncture – and these matters are already generally well-known, yet still need to be emphasized in the context of our discussion here.

The first of these is the matter of Polish society's *value system*, in particular the high level of social prestige attached to cultural values in our society (which manifests itself in the prestige of education, among other things). There is undoubtedly in Polish society a broad acceptance of the principles of social egalitarianism. And, finally, to add another example, as numerous studies show, compared to other countries there is in Poland a much higher level of interest in 'serious' content (in, for example, the mass media) and in social and cultural issues. Such a situation means cultural policy has great potential. Most commonly, cultural policy will initiate activities that are expected and desired by society, which is not necessarily the case in other spheres of socio-economic life. In stressing, above, the need to take steps to prepare for the *cultural phase* today already, we envisioned above all the necessity of retaining the current position of cultural questions in the value system of Polish society. It would be hard to think of a greater failing than becoming a society of 'socialist prosperity' while at the same time finding that cultural needs had been extinguished.

The second problem has already been indicated here. We have in mind the chances for cultural policy stemming from the *planned nature of the socialist economy*. The opportunities given by this often arouse envy among cultural activists in Western countries. And still it is a matter here of potential that has not been fully realized.

The first steps in this direction have already been taken. The foundations are being laid for an economics of culture with the activities of various departments and institutions in the realm of culture now being coordinated, likewise in the legislative sphere. The pay of cultural sector employees has been raised. A database of academic research on cultural activities has been established. What is still required, however, is devising new indicators of cultural development (and it goes without saying that statistical studies of culture must be improved). All of these actions can be considered as the first steps to be taken on a path towards creating a system for managing culture.

Such a system will grant the state the ability to take a leading role in the cultural sphere.

In writing about the leading role of the state, what we have envisioned are coordinating functions – not replacing social initiative or spontaneous actions with administrative decrees.

Those whose future ideals envision the state as a kindly benefactor guaranteeing a wealth of all kinds of material resources while taking responsibility for all aspects of cultural development fail to understand the mechanisms of cultural development. The laws of development in the cultural realm are different: the most important factor in this kind of development is the transition of ever greater sections of society from a status of ‘objects’ of cultural actions (the stage of ‘popularizing’ culture) and towards a status of subjects, who are not only active ‘participants’ in culture but also possess agency in choosing cultural values, while likewise taking responsibility for all aspects of cultural development.

Stimulating positive attitudes towards creative experimentation and forming an individual path towards national development; having ambitions to make the most of the opportunities afforded in this realm by socialist rule; aspiring to search for new solutions and forms of collective life, complete with new developmental directions; and, finally, having an original, progressive direction in artistic creation will all be preconditions necessary for ensuring the success of the *cultural phase*. Only then will our culture acquire global significance, since its development will be inspired by ambitions to demonstrate ‘leadership’ in the sphere of organizing social existence – always in accordance with the principles of socialist humanism, but only once it has liberated itself from current tendencies, imitative snobbery, and the desire to ‘catch up’ with Western societies.

*trans. Paul Vickers*

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