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## **Between the Historiography of Science and the Culture of Researcher Communities. On the Forms of Dialogue with the Past in Scientific Communities**

A historian of science who comes from the scientific community of the discipline whose history he studies does not always perceive the boundary between professional historical research into the history of science and upholding community traditions, which are useful even today, e.g. to develop prestige or group identities of these communities. The historian of a specific science, imbued with values characteristic of the scholarly community and the expectations found there for the dialogue with the past, not always was and is able to clearly distinguish between these two roles and narrative orders. It often resulted in transferring into the field of professional historiography of works which should rather belong to mythopoeic and indisputable publications about, for example, a cult of a scientist, anniversaries of institutions, traditions of scientific and professional communities, etc. Quite often no distinction was made between the historical study of the history of a given science and supplying the cultural needs of professional communities which practice that discipline. However, both forms of dialogue with the past serve different purposes.

This phenomenon goes back a long way and its consequence is often creation of myths within the historiography of science. In particular, it is true of distinguished figures, who founded a given scientific discipline or have been important to formation of its ethics. The methodological and historiographical education of a historian of science is quite often limited, and it has been so in the past as well, to selective self-education; hence he has not always been aware that not every form of dialogue with the past is equivalent to the professional practice of the historiography of science. The strongly integrated communities of historians of a given science, related by identity to the scientific environment of that discipline, e.g. the historians

of medicine, tend to understand the practising of the history of the given science as a whole range of forms of dialogue with the past, in which an important place belongs to environmental traditions and their continuation, monumental figures from the past as didactic models for their successors, anniversaries of people and institutions. The methodological awareness of a historian of science merits some attention, particularly so as his research methodology is dominated by views gained during his professional studies, e.g. in medicine or geography, whereas the methodology of historical research is usually learned as opportunity allows, outside of normal curriculum. A lack of orientation in more advanced methodological or historiographical studies, ignorance of trends within the theory of the history of science prevents the historian, and most often representative, of the given knowledge discipline from distinguishing different forms of dialogue with the past and their purposes. He can though, through a perhaps not entirely deliberate practice of various forms of dialogue with the past, supply the manifold cultural needs of his scientific community.

It is this very representation of the scientific community of the discipline whose history is being researched which seems to me fundamental to understanding the attitudes of historians of the given science, who put various forms of dialogue with the past, groundlessly, under a common name of the history of the given science (medicine, chemistry, geography etc.). It is not a matter that such a researcher most often has only a vestigial knowledge of the proper methodology of history, generally limited to the characteristics and criticism of historical sources, as well as a methodological attitude expressed in the belief that the most relevant element of competency of a historian of such a science is the very knowledge of its most recent form. Though it should be granted that some researchers raised this elementary historical methodology and Leopold von Ranke-style thinking to a quite high, professional level, even brushing slightly against some elements of non-classical historiography.<sup>1</sup>

Such an attitude and area of competence bear specific consequences, such as interpretations of past phenomena through a paradigm of the given science contemporary to such a historian and using the definition of truth it paradigm contains. It is most often accompanied by the classical conception of practising history, in the sense given to the terms of classical and non-classical history by Wojciech Wrzosek. Moreover, he referred to the terms of classical and non-classical history as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g.: A. Szarszewski, *Proces medykalizacji szpitali gdańskich, aspekty socjalne, prawne i ekonomiczne (1755–1874)*, Gdańsk 2007.

The seemingly most important theme in the distinction being discussed between the classical and the non-classical approach to the history of science seems to be the attitude toward truth. If the history of a science is founded on the classical understanding, i.e. that which understands truth as a supra-historical value, established as the accordance of thought with the so-called extra-thought reality independent of the former, then the history of science is the history of heading towards that identity or discovering it. The science – recognised reality relation becomes the fundamental problem of the history of science. A reality is considered the reality recognised by a given science if it is described by modern scientific theories and conceptions. Since these, he believes, describe it as it is. In this context, bygone scientific concepts are interpreted either as far from truth, erroneous, of as sensing it, heading towards it, discovering it partially etc.<sup>2</sup>

This passage I approvingly quoted justifies, in a convincing though arguably inadvertent manner, the theoretical connections between a historian of a given science with the researched community related to it. These connections seem understandable if we consider that they provide a sense of identity and theoretical certainty to individual scientific communities by showing rational ways leading to scientific truth, of which they are the unique holders. They allow to avoid theoretical dilemmas, relativistic approaches, disputes over the “true” image of their discipline. Opening a discourse with the past from a modern form of the investigated science, being at the same time a reference point for historical findings, removes the aforementioned “inconveniences.” This way a very important interest of this researcher community is being served, since such practicing of history bonds theoretically together a specific group of researchers, justifies historically the dominating ideal of the given science and its prevailing paradigms, and establishes a community of scientific values as well.

That is what seems to decide that departures from this model of practising the historiography of science are, at least in Polish conditions, extremely rare. Its purpose cannot be accomplished by a historian from outside of the professional circle of the given scientific discipline. At the very best he will be accused of not knowing the modern form of the knowledge discipline whose history he researches into, which form, as was indicated above, is crucial for the discussed conception of the historiography of science. This view is often supported by the argument of “not feeling the spirit” of the given science by people not connected to that circle of researchers. This suggests that it is impossible for a historian from the outside to understand and accept the values being held in that specific scientific community, which have been assimilated by its members in the process of socialization and cannot be just

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<sup>2</sup>W. Wrzosek, *O myśleniu historycznym*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Epigram, Bydgoszcz 2009.

learned. Such a historian does not belong to the given researcher community and therefore its predominant hierarchy of values is not fully understandable to him. He does not have its so-called “silent knowledge” either—therefore he will not serve its “historical” interests. Differences in theoretical background serve only to strengthen this non-acceptance. So if a graduate of historical studies ever gets to this “world of the history of science,” he will inevitably encounter phenomena not included in his curriculum. I do not mean any previously unknown facts, far from it. This clash is not equally strong in every case. Undoubtedly, a professional historian will perceive more discrepancies when he enters a culturally tight and highly hierarchised medical circle than when he has to work in a team of historians of one of the humanities, methodologically close to history.

Ludwig Fleck, whose inspirations for the historiography of medicine seem not to have been fully utilised in the historiography of science, in one of his earlier works (1927), pointed out another aspect, somewhat opposite to the one mentioned above, of the specificity of medical thinking. He wrote that a physician trained in the observation of pathologies will not notice typical phenomena, social ones included, and what is more, due to the nature of his previous professional experience, cannot detect them.<sup>3</sup> This characteristic, even in a weaker version than that mentioned above, may influence the form of the historiography of medicine. It is easy to find in the historiography of medicine, even in the most recent, examples of using modern medical and common knowledge by a physician and aspiring historian of medicine in the process of interpretation of the discoveries of 19<sup>th</sup> century medicine, with no grasp on the social processes of the knowledge/science formation<sup>4</sup> and no perception of some fundamental facts.

In 1896, Deutschmann successfully used ignipuncture to seal off a retinal hole,” wrote one of the historians of medicine. “Even though he was able to cure the condition for some time, he abandoned further research because they contradicted his theoretical assumptions about the pathogenesis of retinal detachment.<sup>5</sup>

There was no conclusion, however, the quoted author ignored the described issue altogether. That historian did not even notice that he touched upon a relationship, highly significant to the history of science, between experience and the theory held by the experimenter in the process

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<sup>3</sup> L. Fleck, *O niektórych swoistych cechach myślenia lekarskiego*, „Archiwum Historii i Filozofii Medycyny oraz Historii Nauk Przyrodniczych,” 1927, t. 6, z. 1, pp. 55-64.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g.: A. Grzybowski, *Polski dorobek naukowy XIX wieku w zakresie badań anatomii, fizjologii oraz patologii siatkówki z uwzględnieniem struktur otaczających*, Poznań 2008.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 159.

of discovery. That, it seems, is Fleck's inability to perceive other phenomena than those in which the researcher was "trained." Perhaps, this could be applied to other branches of the historiography of science. And it is not just the inevitability of using the modern medical paradigm, with all consequence of employing such a procedure, but also the so-called silent knowledge of a physician and his common beliefs.

The historiographical practice outlined here seems to be impervious to external influence. Since theoretical disputes over the history of sciences have no major effect on practice in this discipline, the predominance of the idiographic model coupled with the paradigmatic perspective described above seems, in Polish conditions, unthreatened. Many historians of science more or less formally renounce advanced theoretical interpretations, in a positivistic manner believing them to be unjustified speculations. This form of historiography may therefore lead to theoretical myths in the disciplines whose history it investigates, while its serving primarily the cultural needs of research circles may create historiographical myths. I have already had an opportunity to write on this subject.<sup>6</sup>

The mentioned relations of a historian of a given science with the world of scholars who represent it define the way he practises the historiography of science to a much greater extent than the scope of historical background. I would tend to strengthen this thesis: In the case of a methodology-based conflict, it is not the historical paradigm that would be, and is, the basis of interpretation for the vision of the past of the science. Another thing is that a distinction should be made between the individual historical specialties and their methodology directing research, and the possible conflict should be related to one such specialty. Having analysed the hitherto prevailing nature of Polish historiography, I would have to say this would most likely be one of the currents of classical historiography. It is with them that the described historian of science can enter into a dialogue, because they share some cognitive goals. For the reasons stated by Wojciech Wrzosek,<sup>7</sup> broader acceptance for any of the non-classical currents of historiography is difficult to find in Polish conditions, so in the situation described above any discourse, including negation, is out of the question.

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<sup>6</sup> J. Jeszke, *W poszukiwaniu paradygmatu polskiej historiografii medycznej*, Poznań 2000; *idem, Mity polskiej historiografii nauki*, Warszawa 2007.

<sup>7</sup> „The difficulties in communication between individual discourses about science, which we encounter, among other things, while meeting at seminars and conferences, arise because the categorial orders they establish are not commensurate. In consequence, the worlds of empiry they determined for historical research are different. This fundamental difference is combined with different cognitive expectations. We pose different questions, we want to reveal different things” (W. Wrzosek, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99).

It could be assumed that the legitimacy of conducting historical research and constructing the notion of truth is determined and verified by a specific group of historians of a given specialty and there are no reasons to consider the history of science separately. Such a reason does exist, however—in the case of the history of science, this function is fulfilled by circles external to history and the historian of the given science, carrying its entire methodological baggage, its but their “delegate” for research into the past. It is no wonder then that he is only mildly interested in the methodology of historical research, limiting himself to only the absolutely indispensable, from his point of view, elements of the historical research method. There are more forms, however, of serving the cultural needs of various scientific communities in the dialogue with the past, which, although they are usually labelled as the history of science, accomplish a totally different purpose than the exploration of the ways leading to the knowledge of the natural and social world in the past.

A cultural studies oriented historian of science cannot deny, of course, that the history of science in the form presented here is also a product of the needs of the “world of science” of the given period, and the ideals of science, theories, paradigms, and scientific concepts considered the embodiment of truth, as well as the research practice based on them, are historically changing cultural constructs. Sometimes, however, there is a more or less casual selectivity in this field, which results from the current needs of perception of the protagonists of historical scientific narrations. John Simmons showed it by the example of Andreas Vesalius as follows:

In the twentieth century Andreas Vesalius has been the victim of an interesting and egregious example of character assassination by psychobiography. In 1943, on the five hundredth anniversary of *De fabrica*, the *Bulletin of Medical History* published a special number devoted to Vesalius. Included were the praises of Ludwig Edelmann, for example, who honors Vesalius as wearing the “robe of the humanist.” But from the pen of the psychiatrist Gregory Zilboorg came a quasi-psychoanalytical biography, in which the author analyses Vesalius’s mentality and proves that he was a schizoid man, suffering from pathological depressions, fit to be a butcher. Zilboorg claims that Vesalius “was unable to fight” and “did not react to the problems of his time,” as well as “avoided fighting his opponents.” These views, entirely unsubstantiated, were most likely influenced by the fact that when Zilboorg wrote about Vesalius, the United States were engaged in the Second World War. Italy was their enemy, and so was Germany. Vesalius was born in one country and educated in the other.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> J. Simmons, *100 najwybitniejszych uczonych wszech czasów*, Warszawa 1997, p. 102.

There are more occasional situations which gave rise to works later considered historiographic. Some are bent on charting the “unsurveyed areas,” supplying what was left unsaid in the newest history of science. At the same time, as Andrzej Paczkowski states in the introduction to one of such books, the questions asked “are not simply research questions and do not exist only for a cognitive purpose. They are also questions of the moral of individual people, the professional ethic of the community, state of consciousness of broader social groups (not to say: of the society), of what the past is for them (for us).”<sup>9</sup> The author of this kind of work assumes rather the position of an investigating magistrate, who has a clear thesis he wants to prove no matter the cost, and a special authorisation, because of the current social, political, etc. situation, to pass value judgements, opinions and generalisations. The past is the source of necessary material here. The role of the researcher is pushed to background. The cognitive purpose has to give way to other purposes, such as experiencing a feeling of meting out justice to the victims and the oppressors alike. The research of historical character is to change the present state of a given community, its features, structure (e.g. by replacing the elite of associations, organisations, scientific institutions as unworthy of fulfilling these roles due to the sins of the past). The study of the past itself are instrumental in nature. Obviously, with this kind of practice, when not only the cultural conditions, which formulate research questions and chief theoretical categories, arise outside of historical circles but also the released works are purely instrumental, serving the short-term needs of various researcher circles with some historical background, a question has to be asked if they should be included in the historiography of science and where the borderline is. Though it is undoubtedly possible to talk about some area of dialogue with the past here.

The above include quite a large group of publications on various kinds of occasional anniversaries, jubilees, and similar events commemorating scholarly figures, round anniversaries of the activity of institutions, creative circles. They most often display integrational functions, essential for the community of goals, of values. They are important for the scholarly community as a social group, its cohesion and tightness. Such congresses of jubilees are sometimes given supra-environmental, nationwide importance.<sup>10</sup> While for strictly cognitive purposes they are of limited importance, for the peculiar cultural circle such as the “world of science” they are invaluable. But

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<sup>9</sup> A. Paczkowski, *Przedmowa*, in: M. Wroński, *Zagadka śmierci profesora Mariana Grzybowskiiego*, Warszawa 2007, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g.: J. Cabaj, *Walczyć nauką za sprawę Ojczyzny. Zjazdy ponadrozbiorowe polskich środowisk naukowych i zawodowych jako czynnik integracji narodowej (1869–1914)*, Siedlce 2007.



only few historians of science, while creating such narrations, were inclined to admit to the functionality and inevitable one-sidedness of the approach, more—deliberately, because of the intended functions of such narration, give it priority over the objectivism of a researcher, whatever it means. This culture-creating, but also mythogenic role of such writing is not always realised and sometimes even minimised.

Because of this, the testimony of Adam Wrzosek is unique in this regard, as he presented his distinct attitude in his book on Karol Marcinkowski as follows:

It is difficult to pick up the quill with an equal mind when it comes to write about Karol Marcinkowski. And no wonder, since he is such a remarkable man, and so selflessly connected to the homeland in the dolorous times of its captivity, that when we consider his quiet but very philanthropic activities, his short but excessively deep life, there come inadvertently so many thoughts and so much awe is born at this Spartan and stoic from Sarmatia, and a great social worker as well, that it is not easy to control the too great tension of the feeling, which however a historian must control somehow, lest he falls into a tone of panegyric, unbecoming of him. Certainly, a historian should strive for the greatest objectivity possible in his work! That is granted. But complete objectivity in historical research is an ideal, and ideals are things we can only come close to but never fully attain. And since it is so, a historian, and especially a biographer, cannot be completely objective. Let us not be deluded by appearances, let us not think that it is only thought that leaves its mark on the work of a scholar. For his works almost always mirror not only his brain but also his heart. Moreover, there is no creative human activity, perhaps with the sole exception of mathematical sciences, in which the thought alone is the impulse, or only the feeling. In some disciplines the feeling prevails, in others the thought. ... If it is difficult for any historian to come close to the vital objectivity in his creation, it is infallibly more difficult for the historian of the souls of others, the biographer. ... People who deserve a biography usually have rich, multi-faceted souls, which express themselves in various ways during different periods and events of life. To fully encompass the life of such people, to bring to light the deepest parts of their souls, that is a thing only they can do themselves, since only they can see into the most profound secrets of their own souls. ... I began this work ... above all so that I might present most accurately, as far as I can only achieve, his social opinions and his deeds in the most important times of his life, which have greatly contributed to the rebirth of our nation, and so eventually to the restoration of our independent political existence. Marcinkowski's merits, as the times of his activity recede ever farther into the past, do not dwindle at all, which is the best touchstone of his greatness.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>A. Wrzosek, *Karol Marcinkowski*, t. I, Warszawa 1960, pp. 5-7.



This emotional and lofty message shows the nature of a historiographical phenomenon with accuracy. For the point is the narrative construction of monumental patterns, indispensable to shape, or at least to consolidate the attitudes of the members of a given research/professional circle. The fulfilment of this purpose, not always deliberate, is the most important element here. The scientific achievements of the protagonist of the narration are less important sometimes, what is most important are precisely the desirable attitudes. It is all the more significant that long ranks of scholars who gained international fame have not always been paragons of virtue in various spheres of their lives, even within the “science world” community. The “robe of a scholar” was now and again light years away from the values preferred in these circles, and the themes of some of their lives might become outlines of thriller novels, also when it comes to their scientific activities, in which they would be cast as villains. The failings of the greatest were excused for the sake of their global-scale discoveries. The historiography often proved merciful as well, discreetly overlooking in its images of the past unjustified borrowing of ideas, lethal experiments, self-aggrandisement, unethical competition for scientific priorities, commercial appropriation of collective achievements by individuals, etc. But the science world communities wanted heroes who could replace them. The historiography of science had to deliver them. Hence, in the works on the history of science, there is no short supply of “forgotten discoverers” of monumental traits of character. They are an important element of the culture of the environment of scholars, for, as W. Wrzosek phrased it, “one cannot suspend one’s participation in culture or worshipping its concrete, trade incarnation.”<sup>12</sup>

The picture of historiography shows us though that the environments for which it was created not only did not suspend their “participation in the trade incarnation of culture” but also played their part in the shaping of the ethnocentric image of national historiographies, mainly due to fighting for the so-called national priorities in the world science. In Poland there was a propagator of such attitudes during the interwar period and shortly after the Second World War, Władysław Szumowski. His views, albeit on the history of medicine, were much more universal. “The general education curriculum,” he wrote, “should include the knowledge of how much the fatherland contributed to the progress of medicine.”<sup>13</sup> He also urged:

In general, in questions of priority we should once and for all break with that habit of constantly complaining; instead, we should implement a system of scientific, consistence, and decisive action. ... If some discovery

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<sup>12</sup> W. Wrzosek, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>13</sup> Główna Biblioteka Lekarska, Dział Zbiorów Specjalnych, teka Szumowski, I—877/1.

was in fact made by a Pole, if it was made known to the scientific world at the appropriate time in a congress language, and still the foreigners attribute the priority to someone else, the dispute should be handled by the Bureau des priorités within the Académie Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences.<sup>14</sup>

The national angle of perceiving the development of science includes also a preferential grading system, which attaches a much greater importance to the discoveries made by historians of science belonging to its nation. This phenomenon was noticed by the historians of science. In 1972, Romuald Wiesław Gutt wrote in an article about the studies on the history of medicine, assessing their state at the time, as follows:

Quite often a mythology sneaks by the history of science, such as cults of great names and authorities, or the supposed priority of the whole nations, when that priority existed perhaps only in the world politics or economy, just as “great” people must have made use of the experiences of many nameless co-creators of science, not at all small themselves.<sup>15</sup>

Andrzej K. Wróblewski showed this phenomenon taking the historiography of physics as an example:

If such encyclopaedic publications contained actual data, [he wrote,] they could serve at least as useful compendia. Unfortunately, they contain a lot of errors and also display nationalist bias: Khramov, obviously, overstates the role of Russian and Soviet physicists, so does Hoppe of German ones. French publications overstate the contribution of the French, Anglo-Saxon works exaggerate the role of British and American scholars.<sup>16</sup>

The persistence of these tendencies in the historiography of science indicates their cultural role they fulfil in their national communities. And it is so regardless of pointing out the subjectivity of that phenomenon by some historians of science. In many of the mentioned above situations historiographical myths may arise.

This rootedness must bring up a question of the inevitability of the issues debated by the mentioned currents of historical-scientific writing in the world of communities related to the “world of science.” To what extent, therefore, is it a product of the permanent, cultural values of those communities, and to what extent is it a research problem, consciously formulated by the generations of the historians of science?

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<sup>14</sup> Archiwum Nauki PAN i PAU, Kraków, teka PAU W III—73.

<sup>15</sup> R.W. Gutt, *W sprawie rozwoju badań z zakresu historii nauk medycznych w Polsce*, „Archiwum Historii Medycyny,” 1972, t. XXXV, z. 3, p. 216.

<sup>16</sup> A.K. Wróblewski, *Historia fizyki*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2007, p. VII.

To deepen this question, we should remark that the invoked strategies of creating the historical-scientific narrations are entangled in very diverse cultural strata, which decide the final form of the image of the past. I assume, according to the cultural anthropologists, that the boundaries of cultures may be:

- ... of three-fold nature, as they apply to:
- 1/ internal fields of the given socio-cultural system (religious, political, interpersonal);
  - 2/ local, inter-group, and even personal boundaries and
  - 3/ boundaries of hierarchy and class.<sup>17</sup>

As well as the possibility of crossing those boundaries.

In the considered case the first of the distinctions shall apply, where science will be defined as one of the internal fields for which various forms of dialogue with the past are created, drawing inspiration, however, from other areas of culture, understood here as the “reality of thought.”

One of the more important issues which arise here is the consideration whether, in case of the historiography of science, the principle that a historian of a given science should use its contemporary should not be added to the list of elements of the minimal cultural imputation. Wojciech Wrzosek, the author of the application of the cultural imputation theory to the study of the historiography, sees the classical logical calculus as one of its basic elements. This applies to all historians who research a past culture. As shown above, however, the historian of (a given) science is not typical. He goes further: he sees the modern form of his science as the closest to the truth and shares this belief with the whole scientific community in which he grew up as a specialist (chemist, physician, geographer, etc.). This attitude, concerning the past as well, is not an issue of his choice, methodological thought, theoretical studies, or any similar behaviour. It is a product of a process of socialisation in a specific professional group, which shapes his hierarchy of values, theoretical attitude, silent knowledge, etc. As a result of this process, the specialist starts being considered a member of that research group (of chemists, physicians, geographers, etc.) but not a historian. It is as a member of that circle, but let us repeat—not as a historian, he is somehow delegated, as I have already written, to study its achievements in the past and interpret it from the perspective of cultural, theoretical, as well as short-term needs of that circle.

Does a so culturally situated researcher of the past have a chance to change the theoretical point of view for the interpretation of the past of the

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<sup>17</sup>W.J. Burszta, *Antropologia kultury. Tematy, teorie, interpretacje*, Poznań 1998, p. 46.

acts of cognition, where admittedly the Aristotelian logic is the basis, but the scientific paradigm is the true confession of methodological faith and the Aristotelian conception of truth is an element of silent knowledge? And was Fleck right saying that it is impossible to even show to some scholars other forms of observable reality than that in which they were trained? A positive answer to these question would justify adding to the list of elements of the inevitable cultural imputation, i.e. the necessary cultural baggage with which the researcher of the history of cognition begins his studies, the modern paradigm of his science containing the current standards of rationality, usually perceived as supra-historical.

Personally, I would be inclined to take this very position. My lasting a dozen or so years, kind of “participating” observation of the circle of the historians of medicine has made me aware of the difficulties in the process of communicating ideas, including those theoretical in nature, between researchers professionally prepared for historical studies, who dedicated themselves to the studies of the history of science, and historians representing the “world of medicine.” Yet the problem did not lie in the lack of physical contacts between these groups of the researchers of the past, intellectual limitations preventing the understanding of the research attitudes of the other group, or even the scarcity of common meetings of scientific character. They did not lead, however, to establishing clear channels of communication of ideas.

These difficulties resulted, I think, from the affiliation of both groups of researchers, as a cultural anthropologist would say, to different “internal fields” of the given culture. In this case, to the “world of historians,” well explored by the historians of historiography, and the “world of medicine,” which delegates its representatives to study its own past. To understand the essence of the communication problems occurring between these two partly described “worlds,” one would need to employ the procedures of intercultural communication, which define the “fields of cultural consistency” where the exchange of ideas may take place under certain conditions, as well as those areas where the discrepancy in each of the values, fundamental to either group, is so great it forms an impassable barrier in communication. No community, and communities of scientists are not excluded, will ever accept as its own ideas based on values perceived as false and detrimental to it, yet it is on the foundation of common experience and values that all intercultural communication takes place, in the area of the exchange of scientific ideas as well.

In the case being discussed the “field of cultural consistency” encompasses some areas of research methods, e.g. the criticism of sources and methodology of classical historiography, along with the classical notion of truth it employs.

The culturally oriented non-classical historiography, which considers truth and science to be cultural constructs of a specific age, because of discrepancies in fundamental values, is unacceptable to the representatives of scientific circles who study the past of their disciplines. It is their limited capability for discourse with the representatives of classical historiography and inability to hold it with the circles representing the currents of non-classical historiography that lead me to believe that a “pragmatism of thinking” should be, in the analysed case, added to the set of elements of the minimal cultural imputation. Representatives of the “science world” are not inclined to give up the views and attitudes described above in favour of broadening the area of such discourse. All differences notwithstanding, what we are dealing here with is a certain type of historiography with specific properties, which has its cognitive goals connected to the history of the formation of human knowledge/science.

It is somewhat different when historical-scientific writing features figures of secondary importance for this process, who nevertheless possess traits important for the particular scientific circles. The quoted view of Adam Wrzosek indicates a deliberate action in this matter of historiographers who create their works for the benefit of the cultural needs of their circles. Sometimes the protagonists of the narrations are important because of the effect they had on the group identity, professional interests of the circle, other times because of the role they served in a region, organisation, or national or international structures. An important element of one of the currents of such historiography was to place the main character in a local community, in which he occupied an important role as a leader or a moderniser of social behaviour. The secondary role in science was compensated with local importance. Other times the justification for a historian of a given science taking interest in a figure little known in its history was that he had been a “forerunner,” a “father” of some discovery. A local individuality was being tied to the great science due to premonitions, inspirations which had gone unseen in its world. Works dedicated to such “forgotten forerunners” are many. There could be many more reasons, in any case. To accomplish them, loftiness, monumentalism, even a deliberate creation of social and historiographical myth were condoned. The justification was the social role of such a figure and its effect on the past or contemporary social awareness and attitudes of a given group. It was sometimes associated with the historiographer’s social activity, meant to provide to the protagonist of the narration a proper place in the local community or professional group (eulogies, anniversaries, memorial plaques, street names, occasional publications etc.). Such activities are of a great, not to say fundamental, importance for the culture of a given circle (medical, pharmaceutical, chemical culture etc.) and its coherence.

However, the basic purposes of this kind of forms of dialogue with the past have little in common with the cognition of processes governing the formation of human knowledge in the past.

Is therefore including them, due to certain external similarities, into the historiography of science justified? It seems that it is the nature of the purposes for which the historical studies of this kind were undertaken should decide the placement of the thin line of demarcation between attempts at cognition of the formation of knowledge/science in the past and works which, using historical argumentation, shape the identity and contemporary social role of a group connected to one of the “internal fields of the given social-cultural system.” Here: the given scientific discipline. I also think that the formal affiliation of the protagonist of the narration (figure, group, institution) to that “internal field of the given social system” is not in itself a sufficient condition to include the work dedicated to him/it in the historiography of science. This is not to say that a historian of historiography would not take interest in this kind of historical writing. However, rather to study its role in the history of the culture of the given researcher group or scientific circle than with ambitions to explore some process, even on a micro level, study the world and construct its image in the past. It should be remembered that that “locality” or “regionalism” in science studies serve the particular interests of the given scientific community. They foster its “spirit,” developing its identity but also isolating it from other communities, including groups connected to other “internal fields” of science. That is why historiographers—representatives of those sub-cultures of the “science world”—guard it against attracting the interest of historians from the outside of their circle, accusing them a priori of the inability to understand the “spirit” of their subculture because of its specificity. Being “cultural” strangers they surely cannot help in conducting any useful forms of dialogue with the past, and nobody there has any need for the contestation of the forms practised for decades.

Research questions which a historian of historiography is facing here are therefore concerned with the detailed catalogue of goals which define the character of historiography in the specific group of researchers and related professions. When, of course, the relation of examining culture—examined culture is employed, with all the theoretical implications of this interpretation perspective. This means admitting that the advocates of the “spirit” of the sub-culture are partially right and stipulating limitations in intercultural communication between the examining culture (here: the professional historian of historiography) and the examined culture (here: the community related to the “internal discipline” of science, or, in S. Zamecki’s language, the “subdomain of the science domain”). Using this researcher’s terminology, it



could be said that here there takes place a form of communication between communities related to the history subdomain of the science domain, which occupies itself with professional research into the past, and the medicine (pharmacy, chemistry, geography, pedagogics etc.) subdomain of the science domain interested in its own past.

The “fight for national priorities in science” brings the relationships of scientific communities with the nationwide level of culture. The quoted passages show a motivation for this kind of historical writing. A presence of a world-famous scholar in the national pantheon raises prestige in the world and is important most of all to small nations and those who, remaining in political captivity for decades, “lost” their discoverers to the benefit of countries dominated by other nations, of which they were formally citizens. It does not mean that the great nations would surrender their claims to those “contested” discoverers. Hence lasting for many years, and sometimes passionately conducted, discussions about the national affiliation of such figures. The fight for the so-called priorities is then exceptionally fierce and often lasts for decades. A good example here is the long and unfinished discussion on Polish/German descent of Nicolaus Copernicus. Even the slightest traces of such connections (origins, place of birth, domicile, languages spoken, language of personal papers etc.) are prized, as they can justify such an affiliation. It is thus possible to find the life’s work of world-renowned scholars appropriated by several national currents of the historiography of science. Another property of that “historiographical imperialism” is exaggerating the influence exerted by scholars hailing from the same nation as the historian of science. The example given by A.K. Wróblewski is quite expressive.

The mechanics of the phenomenon being described are not difficult to understand. However, they have little in common with the search for “discoverygenic” processes in the past, where the nationality of the researcher cannot be the main factor to stimulate that phenomenon, and in some cases does not effect it at all. This does not mean that native cultures are unable to endow researchers with values indirectly stimulating his scientific attitudes. Disputes over the national affiliation of a scholar also erupt when he came from a multicultural environment or lived on the border of cultures. Yet even in such a case, the multitude of cultural experiences can only become a potential source of his future scientific achievements but is not conclusive by itself. So the discussions about the ancestral nationality of a scholar can achieve a status of non-scientifically motivated intercultural conflicts, however, they do not explain generally numerous and varied sources of inspiration and reception which shaped his scientific personality, nor the ways leading to breakthrough discoveries. This process is much more



complicated and does not yield to national or ethnic distinctions. That gives rise to a question if this area of historiography, indubitably important for the national, or even general, history of culture, should be included in the history of science. Of course, the question that appears is not if the history of science and its historiography belong to the history of culture, but at which tiers of the latter and within which processes taking place within it, the various forms of the dialogue with the past, conducted by scientific circles, should be considered. The differentiation and exploration of the forms of that dialogue seems to be necessary for the evaluation and popularisation of the history of science in Poland, but also for the professional development of the studies into the history of the historiography of science.

**Between the Historiography of Science and the Culture of Researcher Communities. On the Forms of Dialogue with the Past in Scientific Communities**

*by Jaromir Jeszke*

*Abstract*

Historian of science, which is derived from the scientific discipline research, which examines the history, not always clearly perceived abroad between a professional historical research on the history of science tradition and practice of environmental, useful for building group identity or prestige of this community. The historian of science often makes no distinction between the historical studies on the history of science and the realization of the cultural needs of professional backgrounds, from which he derives. Both forms of dialogue with the past, however, have different objectives. This phenomenon has a long tradition, and its consequence is often shaping historiographical myth in the historiography of science. Training methodologies and historiographical historian of science is often limited to self-selective. I do not know often that not every form of dialogue with the past is a professional practice of historiography of science. Many historians of science practiced all sorts of different forms of dialogue with the past. They do so for various reasons. An important aspect of group traditions, monumental figures of the past as models for his successors teaching, anniversaries of people and institutions.

*Keywords:* historiography of science, culture communities of researchers, communities scientific.