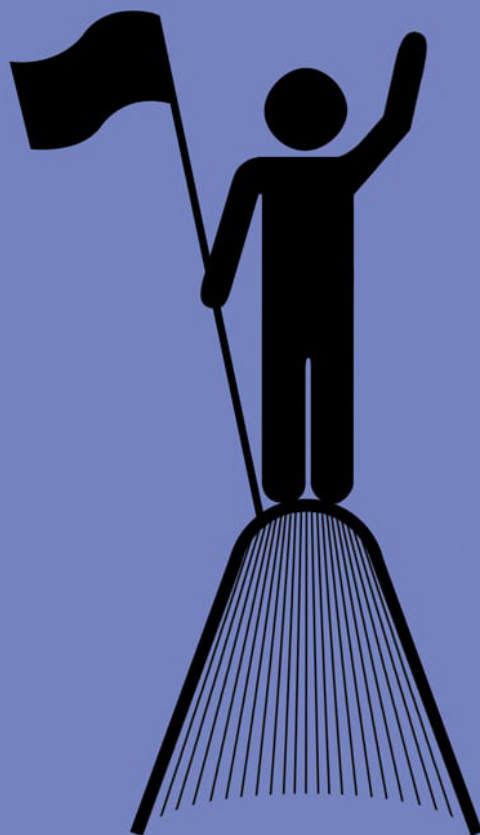


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SOCIAL THEORY: CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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/// NEW SOCIOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP

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CREATIVE INTERCHANGE: NAVIGATING POLARISATIONS IN ACADEMIA

THE ETHICS OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

THEOLOGY OF PROF. MICHAEL D. KENNEDY'S BODY

WAR, TRAUMA, RESILIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

ACADEMIC LEADERS OF THE PRESENT AND THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE*

Michał Łuczewski
University of Warsaw

Florian Znaniecki laid the groundwork for the field of academic leadership. His pioneering research encompassed worldwide comparative studies, extensive empirical research on academic leaders, and a theoretical framework presented in his two classic books: *The Man of the Present and the Civilization of the Future* (Znaniecki [1934] 2001, *Ludzie terażniejsi i cywilizacja przyszłości*) and *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* (Znaniecki 1940). Between 1931 and 1933, he embarked on a grand project titled “Education and Social Change” for Teachers College of Columbia University. He aimed to surpass the scope of his monumental work, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Thomas & Znaniecki 1918–1920), and the project involved the analysis of over 1,300 biographies, with an additional 60 case studies of educational institutions. Znaniecki (1998) envisioned this new project as the foundation for his proposed “school of leaders” at Columbia University – the first of its kind in the US and potentially worldwide. Although his project remained unfinished, Znaniecki’s work defined the essence of the field of academic leadership, which grapples with the crucial polarity between leadership theory and leadership practice (see Johnson 2020).

* I would like to express my gratitude to Jakub Motrenko, Filip Łapiński, Piotr Czekierda, Anna Giza-Poleszczuk, Jakub Szydelski, Elżbieta Hałas, Karolina Bialecka, Marcin Mochocki, Charlie Palmgren, and Michał Kaczmarczyk for their contributions to the preparation of this issue of *State of Affairs*, including this article. Any errors or omissions are solely my responsibility.

/// Znaniecki and Integral Leadership

Throughout his long career, which spanned disciplines, continents, and eras in twentieth-century scholarship, Florian Znaniecki stressed the vital role of academic leaders, especially sociologists, in whose hands – he thought – lay the fate not only of the universities of the future but also of civilisation itself. In *The Man of the Present and the Civilization of the Future*, he invited the reader to

imagine a university professor who aspires to go beyond the limitations of personal research and its dissemination. This professor envisions establishing a permanent creative group with several dozen colleagues. Let's assume that the professor wants this group to stop disseminating minor "contributions" intended to demonstrate the scientific rigour of their work and break free from the sterile "pedagogical" practice of presenting students with textbook excerpts of "certain," "predetermined" knowledge. Let's assume that, instead of merely checking if students have assimilated this pre-digested information, the professor wants to mobilise this group to tackle a grand and unexplored scientific endeavour together. This task would have unforeseen results and demand years of creative collaboration, free from external constraints and material concerns. The professor wants to fulfil the pedagogical function by involving students in this project, nurturing their creative aspirations and scientific ideals. (Znaniecki [1934] 2001: 292, own trans.)

Znaniecki was certainly such a professor. However, he contended that transformational academic leadership of this type was (almost) impossible within the context of contemporary societies, as peer and societal pressures would stifle academic freedom and creativity. Constrained by the power of the systems they operate within, visionary professors could not possibly realise their aspirations:

A normal society doesn't even need to defend itself against such possibilities. It understands that normal people "in positions of authority" wouldn't even consider such ideas. At most, they might voice them out loud or in writing, perhaps wishing for someone to somehow bring them to life. Society knows that even if a supernormal deviant in office took these ideas seriously, they would find no

active assistance while surrounded by normal people. They might receive symbolic support at best, but this too would disappear if they lost their position, as their supporters would be intimidated by the threat of a similar fate. Finally, even if, by an extraordinary stroke of luck, the deviant found active help and began to realize their idea, the project would become a travesty of the initial intention. Surrounded by normal people in positions of authority and within a normal environment, the creative current would dissipate, swallowed by the sand. (Znaniński [1934] 2001: 294)

Znaniński saw the only possibility for transformational academic leadership that could herald a new civilisation among “deviants with an unconventional course of life who know how to assemble a team of not quite normal supporters.” He claimed that only they could “bring essentially new and significant creative ideas to life, on a larger or smaller scale, and with varying degrees of success” (Znaniński [1934] 2001: 294).

This issue of *State of Affairs* stems from the largest project on academic leadership undertaken in Poland since 1989, which was inspired by Znaniński’s work. The bulk of our research was conducted in 2023 and 2024, thanks to the generous support of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Łukasiewicz Research Network. Our goal was to identify academic leaders of the kind Znaniński envisioned and to articulate their struggles and wisdom, polarisations and polarities. Drawing on the autobiographical method originated and developed by Znaniński, and sharing his contention that personal documents are the royal path to understanding people (as we can see reality through their perspective, i.e., with the humanistic coefficient), we conducted 36 in-depth biographical interviews with Polish academic leaders and international experts. This material was then supplemented by three biographies of scholars, written at our invitation, as well as four focus group interviews (FGIs). Among the distinguished scholars and professors who wrote the personal documents we collected, Znaniński would certainly find those “deviants with an unconventional course of life who know how to assemble a team of not quite normal supporters.”

Our research on leadership was translated into a series of intensive leadership trainings. During the course of the project, we trained 25 leadership groups from 10 top Polish universities (around 20 people per group) for a total of 10 days (8 days for the Academic Leadership Development Programme; 2 days for the Polarity Management Programme). We in-

cluded a very diverse group of participants from mainstream universities (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the University of Gdańsk, Jagiellonian University), art schools (Łódź Film School), medical universities (the Medical University of Lublin), private universities (SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw), technology universities (AGH University of Kraków), life sciences universities (Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences), religious universities (the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków), and military universities (the Polish Naval Academy in Gdynia). This makes the project both the largest action research in Poland, as well as the most significant single bottom-up intervention in the Polish academic system.

To conclude the project, in June 2024 we conducted a final FGI. The participants, representing leadership groups we had trained, reflected on their experience during the trainings. The novelty of the of the leadership training was that the participants were representatives of three groups – administration, management, and teachers/researchers – that seldom have an opportunity to get to know and understand one another’s outlooks. As one of the participants recalled,

we created a balanced team. It was the first time in the history of this department that when talking about all our troubles, we heard the same desires in the thoughts and statements of other members, which made us understand each other better. [...] The energy that has been generated in our group has been truly inspiring. (WR)

As we wanted to move beyond intellectual considerations, we asked the participants to use their power of imagination and to compare academia to the four elements of nature. The most pessimistic interviewee observed, “Due to the changes happening and the nature of our work at the university, I put out fires and handle the dirty work that no one else wants to do” (RC). However, the rest were a bit more optimistic: “I don’t see any fire hazard for now” (RZ). Another participant compared academia to water: “Fire is an element that unequivocally signifies destruction. It’s true that many things regenerate afterwards. However, despite water’s potential for destruction, we don’t perceive it as being as destructive as fire” (ZA). Yet another mentioned earth, which – he worried – together with water makes for “a swamp” (JK). Ultimately, the vision of the university of the present was far from optimistic. However, this negative perspective called for a new generation of leaders of the future who could master the fire, water,

earth, and air of the university. Ultimately, a leader was described as someone who can leverage these crucial polarities: “Being a leader means being flexible in pursuit of your goals. It’s like being in the flow, which conveys a sense of being fluid and adaptable” (JK).

Importantly, Znaniecki offered a holistic theory of academic leadership to guide “supernormal deviants.” As a sociologist, he reconstructed the field in which leaders operate (i.e., groups, organisations, societies, civilisations); as a (social) psychologist, he addressed the social roles of leaders; and as a philosopher of values, he asked the question, “What is leadership for?” Through this approach, he developed a theory of leadership, which (a) addresses all three fundamental facets of leadership – the scene of leadership (where), the person of the leader (who), and the purpose of leadership (why; see Anderson & Adams 2015; Forman & Ross 2013; Putz & Raynor 2005) – (b) is informed by particular scholarly traditions and empirical research (see also Graves 1974; Beck 2006), and (c) draws on spiritual and ethical sources (Znaniecki 1998, [1934] 2001; see also Ross et al. 2005; John Paul II 1987; Benedict XVI 2009; Francis 2015). In contrast to partial theories of leadership, Znaniecki offered what can be called an integral theory of leadership. The goal of this issue of *State of Affairs* is to present and develop such a theory. In the first and second sections, which are devoted to the scene of leadership, we focus on Ukraine and Poland, respectively. The third section contains biographies of scholar-practitioners who embody in their own ways extreme polarities of leadership. Last but not least, the fourth section describes the values that contemporary universities need.

/// Academic Leadership in Central Eastern Europe

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, which began on 24 February 2022, has garnered global attention. In the first section, Anna Abram, head of the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology at Cambridge University, offers an analysis of spiritual leadership, using Volodymyr Zelensky as a case study. Another distinguished author, Mykhailo Dymyd, a spiritual leader engaged in the Ukrainian fight for independence and one of the founders of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, shares a meditation on the death of his son: Artemii, a 27-year-old volunteer soldier, was killed by a Russian mortar near Kherson in June 2022. Both contributions combine intellectual and spiritual perspectives on the war in Ukraine. The leadership scene is often a scene of drama (Bennis & Thomas 2002).

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the question of spirituality and leadership appears only in the time of war. In our final FGI, EL pointed out that initially her training group expected a focus on technical skills (communication tools, problem-solving, team-building), but eventually the training turned out to be a transformative exercise:

We were not ready to open up. It was difficult. We worked in teams with people we didn't know. The difficulty for us was also that these trainings were every two weeks for two days. In fact, a formula where we would get together in one place for a week or a few days would be much, much more effective. [...] However, it was really informative, and we came out with the feeling that everyone got something new for themselves as a human being and a leader, not just a training participant who came, listened, took notes, and left. What is happening right now [...] is that we created bonds, professional relationships that are underpinned by a bit of an emotional relationship. [...] This daily contact is simpler; communication is easier.

In the final instance, EL affirmed that, although her training group was not prepared for a deep experience, “the training led to spiritual development.” Similarly, AG opined, “this training was a transformative, developmental programme. It simply touched such layers of the human being that even so-called soft skills training could not touch.”

In the second section, we address the problem of polarisations in Polish academic leadership, which – as in Znaniecki's times – make leadership almost impossible. Three waves of changes in the Polish academic system form the context for Michał Łuczewski's and Piotr Czekierda's articles on the challenges of academic leadership in Poland (see also Fingas et al. 2024; Giza 2019, 2021; Kwiek 2016):

1. **The educational boom (1989–2007):** This long phase involved an ever-increasing access to higher education and a rising overall level of education, often accompanied by commercialisation.
2. **The Barbara Kudrycka reform (2007–2017):** This reform aimed to bridge the gap between higher education and labour market needs.
3. **The Jarosław Gowin reform (2018–present):** This reform emphasised academic excellence and aimed to integrate Polish universities into the global scientific race.

However, each reform introduced new challenges and prioritised different values, criteria, and measures, which impacted resource allocation (both human and financial). As one of our interviewees pointed out, there's a constant "wind" of change in universities: "Governments come and change everything; one administration after another comes and changes everything; rectors come and change everything. They win support for their vision, not continuing the vision of their predecessors" (RZ).

As a consequence, universities grapple with the tension between adhering to these new metrics and fulfilling their traditional mission of nurturing the academy's ethos (see Cardona & Rey 2008). This tension relates to the conflict between material infrastructure and spirituality (Giza 2019: 151–170), or between a manager, on the one hand, and a priest/artist on the other (Hatch et al. 2009). In academia, the managerial approach focuses on administrative efficiency and effectiveness – that is, service, process, and resource management – to ensure conditions for achieving the university's goals. Conversely, spiritually informed leadership emphasises recognising the university's vocation – its unique, irreplaceable mission – and caring for the university's values and the people who share these values. Leveraging the tension between these approaches requires conscious effort.

This tension between material infrastructure and spirituality refers to other fundamental polarities, such as the tension between contemplation and action, or being and becoming. These tensions will be exacerbated, as further reforms seem inevitable for Polish higher education systems, given the need of universities to adapt to the evolving local socio-economic context and global academic landscape. As an example of the growing awareness of the need for academic leadership in Central Eastern Europe, the recent Strategy of the University of Warsaw (UW) for 2023–2032 employs the term "leader" extensively. The goal is to be a "leader of good practices," a "leader of didactic innovation," and a "city, regional, and national leader." The document emphasises developing leadership competencies among university employees to achieve these goals (see Kwiek 2016; Fingas et al. 2024; Senat Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 2023: 52).

/// How To Be a (Global) Academic Leader

Inspired by Znaniecki's (1920, [1934] 2001) emphasis on the importance of biographical documents to understand academic leadership (see also Suny & Kennedy 2001), the third section delves into the inner lives of academic leaders. We believe that a close examination of their biographies

and the moments when their leadership qualities emerged holds significant value for understanding how leaders develop. We present three case studies of global academic leaders with ties to Central Eastern Europe:

- Michael D. Kennedy, a leading American sociologist specialising in cultural sociology with a special focus on Poland and the region.
- Marc Gopin, a co-founder of the field of peace and conflict studies with family roots in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.
- Martin Seligman, the founder of positive psychology, who, through his students and followers, has heavily influenced the field of psychology in Poland.

These authors are globally recognised scholar-practitioners. As a counterpart to these established voices, we present a group discussion by young researchers from the University of Warsaw and Heidelberg University. Active beyond academia, they all exemplify the diversity of leadership styles and life-orientations (see Atkins 1982; Katcher & Pasternak 2003). This section addresses the reflexivity of scholar-practitioners, as we discovered that it was the crucial element of academic leadership. In our final FGI, one of the interviewees articulated the essence of reflexivity (BCh), focusing on four leadership components:

First, the energy to take action. In my opinion, a leader without energy simply cannot function effectively. Second, a vision to move in a specific direction. A clear vision prevents aimless wandering and provides direction. Third, the courage to carry out these actions. The courage to make decisions and take action is crucial. Fourth, sincerity and authenticity. Genuine transparency and authenticity are essential at all levels of personality. [...] However, I believe that these four qualities that I'm identifying here, and building them up with competence, are extremely important. Because what good is it if I'm brave but I can't communicate effectively? What good is it if I'm authentic but I can't convey my sincere messages to my team in the right way? What good is it if I have a lot of energy but I don't have the competence to manage it in a way that prevents burnout? Or so that I don't push my team too hard or not hard enough. And again, what good is it if I have a vision but it's disconnected from reality, if it's not in any way aligned with the current situation, if it's not based on research, evidence, and knowledge?

To explore the inner lives of the scholars, we adopted a multifaceted approach. For Marc Gopin, the process began with an autobiographical piece. This was then subjected to peer review before receiving additional commentary from Tory Baucum. Following a similar trajectory, Michael D. Kennedy's autobiographical work underwent review and further discussion with Warsaw and Heidelberg students. With Martin Seligman, the existence of an autobiographical book (Seligman 2018) provided a springboard for our interview, which was further enriched by commentary from Marc Gopin. Last but not least, young scholars: Jakub Szydelski, Marcin Mochocki, Filip Dankiewicz, Szymon Chlebowicz (Warsaw) and Anna-Larisa Hoffmann (Heidelberg), could build their reflections in engagement with Kennedy, as well as Gopin and Seligman. It is in this way that we facilitated "creative interchange" – a concept championed by Henry Nelson Wieman (1946, 1958; Palmgren 2008) – between texts and authors. Wieman, a distinguished American thinker whose work was the subject of Martin Luther King Jr.'s doctoral dissertation, argued that "only by creative interchange is it possible for the individual to become self-critical and self-esteeming because in this way he learns what others think of him and thus becomes conscious of himself" (Wieman 1958: 26).

The motif of self-reflection and creativity is evident in the authors' contributions. These contributions also serve as powerful testimonies to their personal and intellectual transformations. Similar to "novelistic conversion" experienced by great novelists (Girard 1965), these scholars experienced what can be called "scholarly conversion." In famous passages from *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, Girard described the conversion as "a reconciliation between the individual and the world, between man and the sacred. The multiple universe of passion decomposes and returns to simplicity. Novelistic conversion calls to mind the *analysis* [unravelling] of the Greeks and the Christian rebirth" (Girard 1965: 308). It doesn't have to be a religious conversion, though. This is how Girard described the effects of conversion on the level of individual experience:

Deception gives way to truth, anguish to remembrance, agitation to repose, hatred to love, humiliation to humility, mediated desire to autonomy, deviated transcendency to vertical transcendency. [...] The hero triumphs in defeat; he triumphs because he is at the end of his resources; for the first time he has to look his despair and his nothingness in the face. But this look which he has dreaded, which is the death of pride, is his salvation. The conclusions of all

the novels are reminiscent of an oriental tale in which the hero is clinging by his finger-tips to the edge of a cliff; exhausted, the hero finally lets himself fall into the abyss. He expects to smash against the rocks below but instead he is supported by the air: the law of gravity is annulled. (Girard 1965: 294)

We can find elements of such a conversion in the accounts of scholar-practitioners. For instance, Marc Gopin found solace and healing from war trauma through intellectual exploration and the power of compassionate reasoning. Similarly, Kennedy's journey took him from social activism to a focus on the sociology (or even the theology) of the body, incorporating elements of mindfulness. Seligman's path was one of transformation, emerging from depression to become a champion of optimism. Among young researchers, Hoffmann was somewhat hesitant to call her transformation a "spiritual journey," yet she resonated deeply with Kennedy's, Gopin's, and Seligman's experiences of "novelistic conversion" (Girard 1965), which reminded her of the profound "personal change" she is undergoing. They all could draw strength and wisdom from life's trials and polarities. These challenges, which were often associated with suffering, were like a fire that purified and strengthened metal (Bennis & Thomas 2002: 18).

Diverse backgrounds, career stages, and disciplines notwithstanding, these scholars share a common thread of resilience and hope. Remarkably, while Martin Seligman echoes Julian of Norwich's reassuring words, "Thou shalt not be overcome," one of the young scholars invokes the empowering spirit of the civil rights movement with the motto "We shall overcome," a phrase popularised by Martin Luther King Jr. from a gospel song. For her part, Hoffmann's notion of being "in a state of personal change" is reminiscent of the Christian concept of living *in statu conversionis* and *in statu viatoris*. This convergence aligns with René Girard's observation that even secular novelists, like Marcel Proust, turn to religious motifs to convey a sense of "vertical transcendency," offering solace against the spectre of mortality and the promise of renewal. Girard contends that such symbolism, often dismissed as decorative or apologetic, serves as a profound indicator of conversion (Girard 1965: 305–311).

A final element of the authors' scholarly conversion is that it consists of two parallel movements, conveyed by the Greek terms *metanoia* and *epistrophe*. *Metanoia* implies moving forward, changing direction, transformation, and rebirth, while *epistrophe* suggests a return to oneself and to one's sources. Accordingly, in conversations with students, Michael D. Kennedy

situates his newfound contemplative disposition in his Catholic roots; in a dialogue with Michał Łuczewski and Piotr Czekierda, Martin Seligman acknowledges that the project of prospective sciences is indebted to biblical prophets; and in response to Seligman, Marc Gopin traces his notion of compassionate reasoning – based on the latest advancements in neuroscience – back to Judaism. In this way, their transformations embody both forward movement and a return to their roots, creating a spiral of conversion – progressing while continually revisiting and deepening their foundational beliefs. To elucidate the process of scholarly conversion, we can draw on Girard’s concept of psychic elements as internalised models we have imitated. This view of the human psyche aligns with sociological perspectives on diverse social roles (Znaniecki 1940) and psychological notions of parts, sub-minds or subpersonalities as developed by Internal Family Systems model (Schwartz & Falconer 2017; Schwartz & Sweezy 2019). Each part has a propensity for extremes, transforming strengths into weaknesses (Katcher & Pasternak 2003: 24). For instance, a supportive leader might neglect their values, an adaptable leader might become manipulative, a controlling leader might become overly domineering, and a prudent leader might resist innovation (Atkins 1982; Katcher and Pasternak 2003).

In harmony with traditions of spiritual wisdom, the Internal Family Systems model posits that the psyche is not merely a collection of parts but is centred around a core Self. When parts lack connection to the Self, they engage in power struggles and veer off course (Schwartz & Sweezy 2019: 43). The Self is the wellspring of creativity, confidence, courage, clarity, curiosity, compassion, calm, and connectedness, embodying what Edwin Friedman (2017) terms “non-anxious presence.” From this vantage point, conversion entails shifting from being guided by extreme parts to being led by the Self. Only by transitioning from part-driven to Self-led can leaders move from depression, burnout, and survival mode to well-being, flourishing, and a higher purpose (Briggs & Reiss 2021; Seligman 2011). Our authors’ work consistently demonstrates this shift as a fusion of intellectual, therapeutic, and spiritual dimensions.

/// What Is Academic Leadership For?

The fourth, concluding section focuses on the future of academia through the contributions of scholars who navigate between local and global perspectives. Jerzy Kociatkiewicz and Monika Kostera, leveraging their extensive international experience in management scholarship, present

a vision for universities that transcends narrow metrics and bureaucratic paradigms. For her part, Elżbieta Ciżewska-Martyńska, a philosopher and sociologist, envisions universities rooted in the virtue of hope. Finally, Jonathan Dronsfield, an artist-philosopher from the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague, concludes the section by emphasising responsibility as a guiding principle for future academia. These scholars thus move beyond mere academic management to good academic management and indeed integral academic leadership (see Adair 2005). They do not aim at nostalgic contemplation of the traditional ethos of the university. Rather, they aim to make use of the polarity between traditional and modern ethos.

The traditional university ethos prioritises values such as hope, goodness, truth, faith, love, and charity. It emphasises trust and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge through relationships between mentors and students. From this perspective, the leader's inner life is more important than advanced project management skills. The critics of the modern academic ethos fear universities are becoming corporations focused solely on churning out quick, cheap specialists for the job market. The new university model threatens massification, a loss of prestige, and a capitulation to economic pressures (Rembierz 2019).

Each university and each academic leader must make a value-based choice of which model they want to serve and also decide whether they can creatively manage the tension between these two ethos. If it is not possible to combine tradition with modernity, then the university will be in danger of falling into the shadow of both. Tradition deprived of modern standards will slip into incoherency, and universities will again be characterised by elitism, exclusivity, and closure to diversity. Without reference to market mechanisms, the university's financial stability will be threatened, and employees will lose an important criterion for judging the quality of their work. On the other hand, modern standards deprived of the old ethos will quickly lead to soulless relationships at the university, egoism, a shortened time perspective (focus on the here and now), and an instrumental approach to employees. The university needs to combine the best elements of both the traditional and modern ethos (Fingas et al. 2024). In this vein, Florian Znaniecki (1963) defined leadership as the creative reorganisation of systems that navigates the chasm between rigid conservatism and reckless radicalism, fostering dynamic organisations grounded in "new shared values, novel cultural action patterns, and fresh relationships of functional interdependence." Znaniecki highlighted the collaborative essence of this endeavour, necessitating the concerted efforts of "active leaders and grow-

ing circles of their followers” (Znaniiecki 1963: 359–360). He concluded that in-depth case studies of creative reorganisation are paramount for comprehending the evolution of culture as such (Znaniiecki 1963: 371).

The spiritual concept of scholarly conversion and the sociological notion of creative reorganisation find their most apt expression in Wieman’s (1948: 58) concept of creative interchange, encompassing four core elements. Aligned with this framework, this issue aimed to cultivate (a) authentic interaction among authors and commentators, (b) appreciative understanding, that is, valuing and affirming others’ viewpoints, (c) creative integration of others’ ideas into the broader perspective of integral leadership, and (d) ongoing transformation, personal change, and indeed (scholarly) conversion. Both project participants and our authors experienced the fruits of creative interchange as manifested in joy and awe (Gopin), optimism and hope (Seligman), friendship and human connection (Baucum), gratitude and love (Kennedy), or appreciation and authenticity (Hoffmann). By embracing these values, leaders can maintain their course and unearth the profound fulfilment derived from contributing to something “greater than themselves,” as Kociatkiewicz and Kostera aptly phrase it.

We aspire for our readers to likewise encounter the transformative power of creative interchange, joining the “growing circles” of active academic leaders assembled for this issue. If Znaniiecki’s assertion that academic leadership underpins leadership more broadly holds true, then the implications of this work are far-reaching. By exemplifying rather than merely theorising about academic leadership, we aim to contribute to a new sociology of leadership.

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**ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP
IN THE TIME OF WAR**

LEADERSHIP: SPIRITUAL, ETHICAL, OR BOTH?*

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/// Introduction

There are numerous synonyms and terms associated with leadership. We talk about leaders as influencers, planters, governors, managers, directors, principals, executives, and presidents. The word “leader” comes from the Old English word “lædan” meaning “to go before as a guide” (Oxford English Dictionary n.d.). It was first used in English in the fourteenth century to describe a person in charge. In Greek, the word “episcopos” is used to denote the idea of being in charge (see Bible Hub n.d.; WordSense n.d.). The exact translation of this word is probably an overseer or someone who surveys from the top. To survey is to examine the condition of something or to query in order to understand or collect data. The notion of leadership belongs to the language of hierarchy of roles and powers with the leader being in the top. The hierarchical model of leadership is practised in most secular (business, academia, army, or healthcare) and religious (ecclesial) set-ups and organisations. Historically, most leaders, especially military, political, social, and religious (with a few exceptions), were men. Leadership was related to generalship. The art of leading the army was called

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“strategy” (in Greek “stratos” means “army” and “agein” means “to lead”; Merriam-Webster Dictionary n.d.). The military language spread into our contemporary organisational vocabulary with strategies for leadership and winning or losing leadership contests.

Ancient texts on leadership were usually associated with warfare or the *polis* (running the city-state). In the Renaissance, some elaborate suggestions on how to practise political leadership were presented in Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (see Machiavelli 2017). Machiavelli’s advice to the governor of Florence is to use manipulative tactics in order to make the people of Florence submissive to him, with fear being at the heart of this advice: “As long as you are doing them good, they are entirely yours: they’ll offer you their blood, their property, their lives, and their children – as long as there is no immediate prospect of their having to make good on these offerings; but when that changes, they’ll turn against you” (Machiavelli 2017: 36). Using contemporary categories, this style of leadership could be labelled as “manipulative” leadership. The literature on leadership mentions other styles. At the time of writing this paper (June 2022), an online search showed that there were over 60,000 books on leadership on www.amazon.co.uk (Amazon n.d.).

Chris Lowney in his book *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450 Year Old Company that Changed the World* (2003) captures well the key characteristics of “great” leadership: being self-aware, heroic, ingenious, and loving. Lowney, an ex-member of the Society of Jesus, who later served as Managing Director of JP Morgan and worked in leadership positions in several other organisations, brings Ignatius of Loyola into his model of leadership. There are other types of leadership mentioned in the contemporary leadership discourse, such as “virtuous leadership,” with emphasis on virtues of justice, fidelity, temperance, and courage as character traits of the virtuous leader. Amongst the virtuous appear Mahatma Ghandi, Winston Churchill, and Nelson Mandela, as well as the social figures of Martin Luther King and Mother Theresa, religious authorities, including St John Paul II, Dalai Lama, and Pope Francis, as well as business personalities, such as Bill Gates. Other types of leadership include “authentic and positive leadership” with emphasis on such traits as self-awareness and self-improvement, openness, transparency, and optimism; “social responsibility leadership” or “servant leadership,” which see the leader as someone who is not ruling over people but rather is responsible for their well-being with a sense of privilege to serve the people and humility as the measure of leadership.¹ Luk Bouckaert and

¹ A good summary of the notion of leadership and how it evolved can be found in J. Thomas Wren’s *The Leader’s Companion: Insights on Leadership Through the Ages* (1995). Models of leadership

Steven C. Van den Heuvel in their edited volume *Servant Leadership, Social Entrepreneurship and the Will to Serve: Spiritual Foundations and Business Applications* (2019) show how inspiring social and economic leaders are capable of transforming conflictual human settlements into collaborative and caring human communities. Crucial to this approach is the “will to serve.” Jesus and Moses are often referred to when discussing the servant leadership model. There are other types including “corporate social responsibility,” “transforming” and “moral management” leadership as well as styles of leadership based on religious charisms, such as those of the already mentioned Ignatian (Jesuit) or Benedictine, Vincentian, Carmelite, and Franciscan orders.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in detail with any of the above approaches. The brief survey of meanings, styles, and types of leadership suggests that the idea of “leadership” is not straightforward. There is a plurality of perspectives on leadership and the term itself is ambiguous. This paper, mindful of the ambiguity and plurality imbedded in the discourse of leadership, will focus on two key dimensions of leadership, namely ethics and spirituality. It will argue that leadership which makes a positive impact on or difference to the lives of individuals and communities needs to be ethically solid and spiritually sound. This study recognises the different sets of values and personal characteristics that leadership scholars (from a variety of disciplines) and educators see as necessary for leading well and making positive impact. A good deal of literature on leadership and training opportunities for leaders contains explicit references to “ethics” and “spirituality.” However, it is not always clear what the writers mean by these terms and how exactly they see the relationship between spirituality and ethics. The first part of the paper, while reviewing a small sample of approaches, aims to identify the problem. The second part attempts to address it by offering some conceptual clarifications. The third and final part proposes a tentative framework for thinking more constructively about impactful leadership that is both ethical and spiritual. The paper is based on the premise that impactful leadership needs to be practical. “Practical” here means rooted in reality and experience and applicable to concrete situations. To illustrate the latter, a reference to the Russian military aggression in Ukraine and President Volodymyr Zelensky’s leadership in handling it will be made. The proposed approach is deliberately broad so that some fundamental points relevant to the theory and practice of impactful leadership can be captured.

are discussed in Lynn G. Beck and Joseph Murphy’s edited volume *Ethics in Educational Leadership Programs: Emerging Models* (1997).

/// Spirituality and Ethics in Leadership Theory, Training, and Practice

Madhumita Chatterji and Laszlo Zsolnai in their *Ethical Leadership: Indian and European Spiritual Approaches* (2015) propose a spiritually grounded approach to ethical leadership. While the authors do not define “ethics” and “spirituality,” they are clear on what values are necessary for leading a business in an ethical way. They suggest these values are spiritual and include “self-regulation,” “care,” and “transcendence.” When addressing goals and objectives of business, Chatterji and Zsolnai stress the importance of these values especially for ecological, future-respecting, and pro-social ways of doing business. They argue for the inclusion of philosophy as of equal importance to economics and politics in training business leaders. It is rare to appeal to transcendence as a value in leadership but for Chatterji and Zsolnai this value is crucial. They argue that unless business leaders see themselves as part of a larger universe and recognise that they have extended responsibility, including care for the natural world, they cannot authentically subscribe to ethical leadership. Chatterji and Zsolnai are unique in appealing to spirituality in this way. Others who evoke “spiritual leadership” in the context of organisations or corporate business see spirituality in a somewhat lighter way, focusing primarily on wellness of the employees and practices such as mindfulness (paying attention to the present moment in a non-judgemental way), diversity celebrations, personal crisis management or bereavement programmes. While these practices are not irrelevant to spiritual leadership, they do not cover the spiritual meaning and the potential of impactful leadership. Those who endorse servant or transpersonal models of leadership refer to something deeper, in line with the approach of Chatterji and Zsolnai. Robert Greenleaf, who coined the term “servant leadership” in his *The Servant as Leader*, suggests that “[t]he Servant-Leader is servant first” (1977: 7). Greenleaf explains that the concept is rooted in the deep desire to serve and is tested by the following set of questions: “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed?” (1977: 7). It seems that the important aspect of spiritually rooted leadership (servant, transpersonal, or similar) is to focus on the other rather than the leader in a way that encourages, values, and empowers the other. It is more than simply creating a performance-enhancing culture so common in business and increasingly

present in academia. It is closer to what Bouckaert, in his chapter “Why Do We Need a Spiritual-Based Theory of Leadership?” (2015), explores in relation to “deep change.” Bouckaert draws from Eastern and Western religious traditions as sources of wisdom and an aid in ethical discernment. While he makes a compelling ethical case for “a spiritual-based theory of leadership” and the inclusion of spirituality in management and decision-making processes, he does not explain what needs to happen in practice so that spirituality and ethics genuinely underpin the culture of leadership.

Those who emphasise the importance of ethics in leadership aim at providing practical guidance for leaders. Not many ethical leadership scholars engage deeply with ethical theory. There are some exceptions, such as Amalia Amaya, whose work is grounded in virtue ethics, in particular Linda Zagzebski’s *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (2017). In her “Exemplarism, Virtue and Ethical Leadership in International Organisations,” Amaya (2020) argues that for leadership to be ethical, moral virtues have to be connected to intellectual and communicative virtues as well as managerial and political abilities.² However, the growing field of organisational ethics is dominated by empirical approaches and rather reductionist views of ethics. Many of the studies claim to measure values and suggest methods for creating ethical leadership.³ Some of the approaches could be considered as bordering with moralising or even unethical (in a disciplinary sense of ethics rather than as a moral judgement) by a typical ethicist (including the author of this paper). In short, ethical leadership is not always perceived and articulated in an ethically sound or inspiring way. It is almost as if “ethical leadership” – and in some cases “spiritual leadership” too – were new buzz terms or trends. Companies and corporations need to be seen as investing in ethical leadership and are considered superior if they capitalise on spiritual leadership.

What exactly is the problem? Scholars of organisational ethics who write about ethical leadership tend to view ethics as either legalistic, empirical, or mechanistic. Regarding the latter, they seem to start with the premise that we learn what to do and how to behave largely by observing

² For other virtue approaches to leadership, see Caldwell et al. 2015; Cameron 2011; Flynn 2008.

³ See, e.g., Archie B. Carroll’s “Ethical Leadership: From Moral Manager to Moral Leader” (2003: 7–17). Archie lists seven habits of highly moral leaders: (1) moral leaders have strong ethical character; (2) moral leaders have a passion; (3) moral leaders are morally proactive; (4) moral leaders are stakeholder inclusive; (5) moral leaders have an obsession with fairness; (6) moral leaders are principled decision makers; (7) moral leaders integrate ethics wisdom with management wisdom and a mix of core character traits, which include integrity, fairness, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, patience, excellence, forgiveness, empathy, altruistic love, self-determination values, purpose, motivation, drive (intense will), power, energy, courage, resilience, and aspiration.

and following the example of other people. While this line of thinking is not problematic and it is even in line with the Aristotelian perspective on learning virtue, it is overly optimistic to presume that the people at the top of organisations can be trained to be ethical role models; that others will follow their examples; that companies will engage with ethics by creating codes of ethics; and that ethical climate in the organisation will flourish. A system known by the acronym CELMS, which stands for “corporate ethical leadership management system,” is used for training top executives to become ethical leaders (Trevino et al. 2000: 128).

While role models and moral exemplars are important, creating an ethical climate in an organisation or society in general is much more complex. Being a moral person or a moral community requires much greater awareness of human agency and what goodness, rightness, badness, wrongness, freedom, and other relevant ethical issues involve. The most the moral leader or manager can do is to inspire and to be accountable for all they do. Even organisations known for subscribing to a solid teaching on moral matters do not always embody their own teaching. Catholic schools and universities all over the world are frequently presented as examples of ethical leadership, both in terms having good leaders (head teachers, principals, and other staff) and in the way they inspire their pupils and students to practise values and commitments in line with Catholic social thought (CST). Yet, as Gerald J. Beyer argues in his *Just Universities: Catholic Social Teaching Confronts Corporatized Higher Education* (2021), many Catholic educational institutions (Beyer refers to the United States) fail to embody CST in their campus policies and practices. He claims that the corporatisation of the university has infected US higher education with hyper-individualistic models and practices that hinder the ability of Catholic institutions to create an environment filled with bedrock values and principles of CST. This suggests that fostering a genuine ethical culture rooted in spirituality is not easy even in institutions that are familiar, at least in theory, with what ethical leadership involves. So, what could potentially help in addressing the emerging gaps and lacks: the gap between theory of ethical leadership and its practice (Beyer’s point), the lack of spirituality in ethical leadership theory (Bouckaert and Greenleaf), the gap in seeing ethics and spirituality as connected even if distinct (Chatterji and Zsolnai), and the lack of a solid ethical and spiritual (grounded in wisdom tradition as well as contemporary inter-disciplinary approaches)? The next section of the paper attempts to illuminate the meanings of ethics and spirituality and the relationship between them in order to address implicitly some of the above gaps and lacks.

/// Spirituality and Ethics: Conceptual Clarifications

Both spirituality and ethics are concerned with ways of living. They are like two sides of the same coin, albeit each side is different. Broadly speaking, ethics involves understanding what is right and wrong, and good and bad, as well as living in the light of this understanding. Spirituality has something to do with transcendence (Chatterji and Zsolnai) or the move “beyond the realm of mere things [...] into the innermost structure of reality” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace n.d.: 128). Human beings access this reality by getting in touch with what Patrick Hannon calls “more than meets the eye” (2004) and engaging in practices that fulfil this search. As noted earlier, scholars who refer to spiritual or ethical leadership do not often explain what exactly they mean by spirituality and ethics. First, it is important to recognise that there are good and bad spiritualities and there are good and bad spiritual leaders. Adolf Hitler was considered a spiritual leader. President Vladimir Putin as well as the Patriarch of Moscow, Kirill, are considered as such. After all, if the data is correct, approximately 65% of Russians are supporting military actions in Ukraine and believe in the spiritual quest the country is undertaking (Yaffa 2022). There are other leaders responsible for invasion, including the military commanders who order killings as well as the soldiers responsible for atrocities. Many of them believe that their actions are morally justified. There are 90 million believers under Patriarch Kirill, with 40,000 clergymen, who are considered to be spiritual leaders, of whom only 223 signed the petition for peace and objected to what Patriarch Kirill sees as Russia’s duty to cleanse Russian Orthodoxy of “forces of evil that are hostile to the unity of Russian people and Church” (Matthews 2022: 124). How do we connect the points on ethical leadership in the earlier part of this paper to this concrete reality of war? There are no easy and short answers except for suggesting that each context, in peace or war times, in the field of business or military action, can tell us something important about leadership, be it ethical or spiritual or neither.

There are studies that deal with distinctions between ethics and spirituality as academic discourses and morality and practised spirituality as lived experiences. These are relatively recent studies as for a long time ethics and spirituality had not been seen as partners. In the Christian tradition the gap between the two can be traced back to the sixth century AD and then to the Council of Trent, when moral theology and ethics got disconnected from their theological roots and linked with (canon) law.⁴

⁴ For a summary of historical studies, see Keenan 2002, 2004; Abram 2020.

The handbooks of moral theology seldom referred to spirituality, nor did Christian spirituality discourse have any serious engagement with the study of ethics. It had been almost impossible to find in a theological dictionary an entry that would seriously speak about morality and spirituality as linked with each other. When they did speak, as in the case of *A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, the tone was predominantly critical and not helpful towards establishing a positive relationship. An entry in this particular publication is entitled “Mysticism and Ethics,” most of which reads as a disapproval of mysticism and presents ethics as superior to it. Philosophical works, such as John Cottingham’s *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value* (2005) or Pierre Hadot’s *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (1995), are rare examples of attempts to bridge spirituality and philosophical ethics. “Christian Spirituality and Theological Ethics” by William Spohn in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (2005: 269–285) and Richard Gula’s *The Call to Holiness* (2003) are two of the finest theological examples of integrating both spirituality and ethics. Gula makes a useful distinction when he suggests that spirituality is the “wellspring of the moral life” and that “[m]orality reveals one’s spirituality” (2003: 37). This could mean that what as leaders (and human beings) we do, how we live, how we relate to each other at work and home, how we relate to ourselves as well as to the rest of the world reveals how we are internally. Our external behaviour reveals what we value.

This approach to ethics and spirituality appears different from what we have been considering in the earlier section. It touches on something more fundamental. It seems that until we address some of these fundamental points related to worldviews, values, goals, and perspectives, we cannot talk meaningfully about impactful leadership. Not only secular models of ethical leadership could benefit from greater engagements with ethics and spirituality. The tendency to see ethics and spirituality as disconnected is still familiar even within Catholic thinking. For example, CST, which is a strand of Catholic social ethics, could be more engaged with spirituality. Spirituality can illuminate regions of human experience such as personal (or internal) formation, perception, interpretation, motivation, imagination, discernment and attunement. None of these regions explicitly feature in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, or even Pope Francis’s encyclicals, for example *Laudato si’* or *Fratelli tutti*. More space is given to them in moral philosophy and psychology (especially its psychoanalytic strand).

Spirituality can safeguard the notion of ethical leadership from being viewed predominantly as a code of ethics to be inculcated through

(a rather mechanistic as in CELMS) training of moral leaders, while ethics can safeguard spiritual leadership from becoming an isolated pursuit removed from genuine solidarity (including with the poor, as is stressed by the principal of the preferential option for the poor) or social justice concerns and reduced to training in mindfulness. While the Christian spiritual tradition defends the legitimacy of a certain partiality towards oneself (by promoting such practices as examination and formation of conscience or contemplation) and the dedication of time and resources for self-improvement (spiritual direction or retreats), the Christian ethical tradition encourages us to see everyone as a neighbour to be loved. These two strands of the Christian tradition express a healthy balance between the importance of self-formation and concern for the other, without falling into impartialist tendencies that dominate some contemporary ethical discussions (for example, forms of utilitarianism). Cottingham reminds us that the territory of morality covers both interpersonal relations (how we treat our fellow human beings) and what he calls “intra-personal ethical formation – with the individual’s journey towards self-knowledge, self-development, and harmonious living” (2010: 66).

The inclusion of spiritual formation in training for ethical leadership or ethics in training for spiritual leadership or spiritual and ethical formation in impactful leadership could potentially be transformative for both individuals and communities. Theoretical studies of this proposition could only enhance the discourse of organisational ethics and strengthen or even transform leadership theory. Cottingham argues that while the two domains (impartial treatment of others and self-development) are distinct, they are connected: “one might reasonably suppose that individuals whose inner moral life has been enriched by self-reflection, and who have made progress towards psychological maturity, will manifest this growth among other things in their attitudes and relations to others” (2010: 66).

On the basis of what has been explored so far, I want to argue that impactful leadership needs to involve both partialist and impartialist domains, each illuminated by ethics and spirituality. Uncovering the depths of human nature as part of leadership training can only boost the understanding of organisational or communal workings. This point is explored by James Keenan in his “D’Arcy Lectures” at Campion Hall, Oxford, especially in his study of vulnerability and recognition (see at the YouTube channel of Campion Hall, Oxford, 2022). There are other themes that are relevant to the project of linking ethics with spirituality for the sake of impactful leadership. We shall turn to them next.

/// Impactful Leadership: A Tentative Framework

If we agree that spirituality involves the recognition that there are values such as truth or freedom that we have not created but to which we are called to respond and these values cannot be owned by anyone, any group or nation state, then the framework for impactful leadership needs to have space for addressing these big themes. There are resources (practices or spiritual exercises) in the Christian and other spiritual traditions that can help with occasional self-emptying from preconceptions, detaching from sentimental distortions of the other, oneself, history, and the sacred. Practices of introspection and inner purification might not be appealing to everyone on a leadership training pathway but without openness to inner movements and shifts from inauthenticity to authenticity, from self-absorption to self-transcendence, there is no personal growth and genuine service to others. Failure to be open to such shifts and to recognise the ultimate value, to free oneself from preconceptions, attachments, bias, and various destructive forces risks confusing spirituality with indoctrination and manipulation. We see the consequences of the latter in the Russian military action in Ukraine.

Impactful leadership requires openness to ultimate realities without manipulating them into ego-centred versions of these realities. This is not easy to practise as human beings (individually and collectively) can be mistaken about what these realities really are. Still, the desire to be open to them, overcome stagnation, and envision integration and transformation in the self and society are all part of the spiritual quest and conditions of ethical leadership. There are five key elements which are essential for the study and practice of impactful leadership. What is offered here is no more than a *tentative* framework for thinking and developing further our understanding of impactful leadership.

First, impactful leadership is conditioned by the quality and depth of moral and spiritual formation of the leader. The aim of such a formation is to expand self-awareness and gain a greater self-knowledge. It is a process (rather than a set of one-off training opportunities) of engaging in practices that foster a better understanding of one's strengths and weaknesses, operational values, one's relationship to the ultimate value, one's biases and limitations. The process involves constant checking and questioning one's beliefs (about oneself and the rest of the world), reviewing attitudes and commitments. Moral and spiritual self-awareness encompass acceptance of one's vulnerability where vulnerability is understood not as a liability

but as part of being human. In Scott Pelley's "60 Minutes" interview President Zelensky made a poignant observation about himself: "I am not the strongest warrior but I am not going to leave [...]. This is my choice and I can't do any other way" (in Ukrainian, see Pelley 2022; for a summary in English, see 60 Minutes 2022). Ten months of the Russian military invasion in Ukraine have shown not only Zelensky's leadership skills but also a high degree of self-knowledge. It is hard to speculate about his spiritual and ethical formation but it is clear that both as a man and a leader he has proven himself to be someone who has a deep internal life and a positive relationship with himself as well as those around him. Pelley remarked: "the moment Zelensky told his people that he refused to flee, Ukrainians refused to fall" (60 Minutes 2022). This suggests that self-awareness and authentic action make an impact on others.

Secondly, impactful leadership is conditioned by a similar awareness of others (their strengths, weaknesses, recognition of their vulnerability and hopes). It is not based on dominance but on the recognition of mutuality, inter-dependence, shared humanity, and relationality. It seems, so far, that President Zelensky's success is his ability to relate to people as they are. Perhaps his training as an actor has enabled him to develop his imagination and learn to enter into the minds and characters of others, fictional or real. In the interview with Pelley mentioned above, the listener can feel Zelensky's suffering after he visited Bucha (see BBC News 2022). His words – "I saw death, just death, simply death" (60 Minutes 2022) – are expressing his ability to identify with the plight of others who are suffering. As "an actor who is also a lawyer who turned parody to power" (60 Minutes 2022) Zelensky has been careful not to judge other leaders or heads of state even when he was pushed to do so in the interview. When asked: "Are you frustrated by President Biden?," he answered "No, I am grateful" (60 Minutes 2022). Only someone who is deeply connected to one's thoughts and feelings (as suggested in the first characteristic about self-knowledge) can attend to others with gratitude. It is possible to deduce that his positive experience of human relationships, including those who are intimately connected to him, including his wife, family, and colleagues, provides him with a unique source of strength and encouragement. Impactful leadership in a particular area (professional, political, or other social role) cannot be divorced from the rest of the leader's life. Ethics and spirituality articulate the importance of seeing human experience in a relational way.

Thirdly, what drives impactful leadership forward is a sense of purpose or the moral ambition to serve others. Ethics and spirituality articulate

“purpose” differently. However, fundamental to both, especially within the Christian (spiritual and ethical) tradition, is the principle of human dignity. According to it, human beings cannot be treated as means to an end but as an end in itself (human *qua* human). In the interview with Pelley, Zelensky talks about his goal or dream for Ukraine. It consists of national unity and the value of everyone, togetherness of the people and collective heroism of everyone. He wants all his people to feel victory and when it feels right for those who left the country to return (60 Minutes 2022). The point here is the importance of moral ideals, the vision of communal life, the ability to hold together diversity, plurality, and individuality. Impactful leadership is hostile to narrowmindedness or several reductionist views on measuring performance, as alluded in the earlier part of this paper.

Fourthly, impactful leadership is open to heroic or even sacrificial action. In the time of war this has a unique meaning and potentially is the costliest. Risking one’s own life for the sake of others is the highest expression of moral courage and a mark of spiritual growth. As we have noted above, President Zelensky embodies heroism that (fortunately) many political leaders are not called to practise. However, every leader (in any context) is required to confront fear, make difficult decisions, and take risks. Dealing with these challenges is not a matter of completing a course. It requires long-term formation. Ethics and spirituality in conversation with psychoanalysis and other fields (including art) can be crucial for understanding properly what is required, what sacrifices are necessary or morally appropriate, and how to deal with fear and other negative emotions as part of the process.

Fifthly and finally, impactful leadership is conditioned by an ability to creatively discern. There is no one (perfect) model of leadership that fits all contexts. In the earlier part of this paper, we have alluded to several models. Although we have not evaluated any of them, we could probably agree that all have strengths and weaknesses. In times of crises, old scripts might not work. Improvisation, discernment, and practical wisdom are key operational dispositions. According to Thomas Aquinas, practical wisdom has two parts: one is “common sense” and the other “perspicacity” (1947: IIa–IIae, q. 51, a. 3, a. 4). Perspicacity is a unique insight or an ability to see what needs to be done in the unpredictable or unusual circumstances when it is hard to apply the usual moral norms. It has something to do with moral perception on the spot, farsightedness, and innovation. Impactful leaders are moral improvisors and practitioners of discernment. Discernment is a form of insight that is personal and spiritual. According to Nick Austin, it is “something that is known more by practice than book knowledge”

(2019: 7). It is a “skill of moral evaluation in the concrete which employs symbolic and affective criteria to accomplish this evaluation” (Spohn 1983: 30). It is an “imaginative capacity” (Gustafson 1974: 104) that enables one to distinguish between what is important and what is not, what fits with the bigger picture and what does not. Discernment is key to impactful leadership. It is needed for deciding priorities, distinguishing what is more important and what less, in what to invest energy and resources and what to put aside, what is urgent and what is not.

/// Conclusion

There is no quick and easy training for impactful leadership as there is no quick and easy moral and spiritual growth. In order to grasp the complexity and possibilities of impactful leadership, the paper offered a brief review of different approaches to leadership, focusing on a sample that considers ethical and spiritual leadership. It offered clarification of several key terms and identified gaps and limitations in the contemporary discourse of leadership. Finally, it proposed a framework for thinking more constructively about impactful leadership. The paper indirectly has highlighted the need for thinking differently about the development of future leaders and argued that part of this development should include self-development or self-formation.

The paper argued that although the field of organisational ethics is growing and there is a greater interest in ethical and spiritual leadership, what is currently on offer is limited. It does not capture the depth and breadth of a genuinely impactful leadership. We need more than empirical studies of values and traits, ways of measuring performance, and providing (often simplistic) techniques for navigating in the complex field of decision making. We need to identify adequate resources. Some of these resources have been mentioned throughout the paper. Leadership training needs to provide opportunities for giving attention to all spheres of human experience and to cover both partialist (self-formation) and impartialist (other-orientation) strands. It also needs to be open to a greater use of imagination as a legitimate tool for creative thinking, discernment, and perspicacious insight.

If we agree that the relationship between spirituality and ethics is symbiotic and that the partialist and impartialist spheres of human experience are connected, then it seems that leadership in order to be impactful has to involve all these domains. Moreover, impactful leaders are not simply leaders. They also allow themselves to be led. “Being led” can take a form

of a variety of openings and practices that the wisdom traditions have on offer. The “being led” theme deserves a separate study. The main purpose of this paper was to make a case for a proper inclusion of ethics and spirituality. Ultimately, impactful leadership is what enables individuals and communities to flourish and to search for what is truly best. The latter is underpinned by spirituality. We are never free from obstacles, such as the culture of complacency (e.g., relying on a particular reputation, including good reputation, as in the case of US Catholic schools and universities, discussed by Beyer), which prevent individual and communal flourishing. A lack of self-knowledge, self-righteousness, wrong attachments (including attachments to ideas, ideologies, and opinions), distorted desires (for power, control, prestige, and wealth), inflated ambition (including “messianic” or imperialist), a lack of courage, rigorism, and idealisation can hinder spiritual leadership. These and other obstacles deserve a separate study.

Our contemporary “crisis of leadership” has multiple roots, which have not been explored here directly. One of the problems is a cult or idealisation of certain leaders and, associated with this cult, the leader–follower dynamic. At the same time, our world needs good leadership at all levels. We also need strong institutions that embody the ethics they preach and recognise spiritual dimensions. Rather than promoting a cult of individual leaders, we need to foster a culture in which different people can step (at any point) into leadership positions. A growing number of successful organisations practise co-leadership and see the art of leadership as one of several ingredients that get the best of people. There are several other themes and questions that have not been covered here but are relevant to the topic of this paper. Amongst them are concepts of power and empowerment, the role of people on the margins, the issues of poverty, gender, class, and racial injustices. How do we enact impactful leadership by attending to these topics, in particular to power imbalances and listening to less-heard voices? What should impactful leadership involve in order to tackle growing polarities in our local, national, and global contexts? Given that leadership is never perfect, how do we learn from mistakes in leadership, overcome the stigma of failure, and move forward through the failures? How do we prioritise in an increasingly complex (technologically driven) world and negotiate between patience and urgency to act? These questions and themes need to be included in the discussion of leadership. Such discussion, in order to be impactful, needs to be genuinely inter-disciplinary.

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FAREWELL TO A SON: A MEDITATION ON DEATH, SACRIFICE, AND ETERNAL LIFE IN THE FACE OF WAR*

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On 18 June 2022, my wife, Ivanka, and I said goodbye to our son, Artemii, who was killed in Russia's war with Ukraine. The brutal death of a soldier fighting for our freedom and homeland is a shared wound inflicted on all those who are part of the Ukrainian family. This war has brought physical death to the lives of both Ukrainians and Russians in a particularly cruel way. It has also forced us to confront the deeper meaning of death.

Meditating on death, I view it through the concept of eternal life, a concept that escapes human understanding. As I contemplate this mystery, I explore death through the lens of parenthood, where both fathers and mothers embody a ministry of nurturing life. This discussion, however, reaches beyond the confines of our immediate families. It encompasses local leaders, presbyters serving their communities, military commanders, educators – of both students and youth – and all who hold positions of guidance within their communities.

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/// Abraham, who at the Lord's Call Was Ready to Sacrifice His Son Isaac

In Genesis we read: “Then God said: ‘Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you’” (Gen 22:2).¹ God commands a sacrifice to be made not only by Abraham, but also, in the history of the human race, by every human being – for all humanity is called to a ministry in the special way of offering its own sacrifice.

In the Christian worldview, sacrifice should not be seen as something distant, as something done on a one-off basis, limited to giving or doing something to achieve peace. Above all, sacrifice is something personal that requires the involvement of the whole person and leaves a mark on their life – it is in this context that we must understand God's invitation to Abraham. God the Father wants to communicate to us (not only personally, privately, but also as His people) a call to make a special sacrifice. At the same time, we should not deceive ourselves that it is easy to sacrifice the most precious thing in our lives – every great goal requires from us an equally great sacrifice. The biblical account of the patriarch Abraham shows that he was prepared to give up everything for God, even the most important value in his life, embodied in the form of a son. The Lord accepted this sacrifice in a spiritual way because, as we know, a physical sacrifice was made of the ram, which, entangled with its horns in the bushes, stood behind Abraham (cf. Gen 22:13)

In the search for a personal encounter with God, especially in holy places (in today's Ukrainian reality, we are also talking about places where people are tortured and where they die), we should be ready to make our own sacrifices together with others, with our fellow human beings. If we embrace sacrifice and the gifts of the Holy Spirit which we have received for this ministry in the holy sacraments, we will be able, with God's help, to become fathers and mothers of many generations of a noble human nation. Death is transformed into life through resurrection in the places of God's presence. This is because the resurrection of Christ has become also the guarantor of our resurrection: “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:17).

Thus, sacrificing one's own son means giving up not only part of oneself; it also involves other people and goes beyond our own “self.” We give away not only the past, not only the present, but also the dreamed future of our own lives.

¹ Throughout the paper, biblical passages are quoted from the New American Bible, Revised Edition.

/// Sacrifice of God the Father in the Death of His Son on the Cross as an Example of Christian Parental Service

Another example of a father sacrificing his son in Scripture is God the Father, who, in his boundless love, in order to save the fallen human nature, participates in the death of his Son on the cross. John the Evangelist writes: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). It is not only an example of God’s boundless and unfathomable to our reason love of humanity, but also a fundamental dogma of the Catholic faith. Faith in the resurrection of Christ leads us to faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, since Christ, the Son of God, “one of the Trinity,” in the Holy Spirit has revealed God the Father to us. This apostolic faith the Church solemnly confesses in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Continuing with this topic, it is also worth recalling an article by Father Petro Oktaba, “Kozel vidpushchennya y Ahnets’ Bozhyy: rozmova z Petrom Oktaboyu” [The Scapegoat and the Lamb of God: A Conversation with Petro Oktaba] (2018). Oktaba writes about the participation of God the Father in the Sacrifice of the Son as “the mutual desire of the Father and the Son to renew God’s covenant with human beings by giving them a reward at the price of His death and blood” (Oktaba 2018, own trans.).

St Paul writes in Philippians 2:6–8 that Jesus Christ, “[w]ho, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, [...] he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” In a supreme act of humility, the God of the Universe, who became man, died for his creation. By means of *kenosis* (Gr. κένωσις – humiliation, self-emptying), Christ adopted human nature with all of its limitations – with the exception of sin – and emptied himself to the point of suffering and death on the cross.

The Father blessed Christ’s willingness to die, and the Son understood its meaning. By analogy, we can see that our enlistees and volunteers who – on various fronts – fight and care for their Fatherland, on a spiritual level reflect (consciously or not) the “mutual desire of the Father and the Son” in sacrificial patriotic love. By all this I mean that according to human standards they could try to avoid this dangerous and difficult task. From my own experience, I can say that our son Artemii has flown in from New York to stand up for his homeland. And he has not been the only one...

This willingness to make a “burnt offering,” a total sacrifice, is not a retaliation for the centuries-long submission of the Ukrainian people to the deliberate policy of the Russian state aimed at their spiritual destruction. This bestowment of oneself made for one’s nation as a whole is a reward “at the price of [...] death and Blood” (Oktaba 2018). In turn, this will provide a positive stimulus to the development of a free nation of like-minded people who fully experience their belonging to the culture of the great nations of Europe and of the world.

Already in 1995, the International Theological Commission issued the document *Select Questions on the Theology of God the Redeemer*, in which it mentioned the necessity of suffering or death to achieve higher goals. The same thought can be seen in many testimonies, especially in those of people who survived the “Ukrainian underground” during the Second World War and those who, because of Ukrainian patriotism or fidelity to their Church, were condemned to long years in the Siberian gulags. I personally have heard from Nadia Mudrej² that we would have to shed blood for Ukraine to become a completely free and independent state. The Vatican document reads:

So much of the search for liberation, freedom, [...] what might be called a “redemption” from the ambiguities of the human situation, are attempts to avoid and ignore suffering and death. The way of Jesus of Nazareth indicates that the free gift of oneself to the ways of God, cost what it may, brings glory to ourselves and also to God. The death of Jesus is not the act of a merciless God exacting the supreme sacrifice; it is not a “buying back” from some alienating power which has enslaved. It is the time and the place where a God who is love and who loves us is made visible. Jesus crucified tells how much God loves us, and affirms that in this gesture of love a human being has given unconditional assent to God’s ways. (International Theological Commission 1995)

The *Catechism of the Ukrainian [Greek] Catholic Church* by its very title (*Christ – Our Pascha*; see Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church 2016) points to the paschal foundations of faith. Christ through his death “trampled death” and through the resurrection “has granted life eternal” (Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church 2016: 3). The crucifixion

² Nadija Mudra was a liaison officer of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, geneticist by profession, member of the Union of Ukrainian Women. She served a 25-year sentence in the gulags of Kolyma. She lived and died in Lviv. See Kupezyk 2013.

and death of Jesus Christ became salvation for sinners in the face of eternal death. Oktaba notes that “the blood of Christ [...] saves sinners from death, without having anything to do with the punishment for sins” (2018). Thus, the offering of Jesus, our Divine Saviour, is understood as voluntary, noble, and blessed by the Father, as an act of giving oneself for the victory over death: to “trample death down with death,” as we sing in the troparion of the feast of Pascha.

“The resurrection of Christ [...] is the Father’s response to the Son’s sacrifice. It is the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice” (Oktaba 2018). He is the promise of overcoming decay and death: “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (Jn 11:25–26). We should therefore look at death and sacrifice through the prism of our faith: what is the Lord preparing us for in his providence through sacrifice and also through death in this life? Great are our prospects!

Pope Benedict XVI, in one of his catecheses during a general audience, said the following words:

However, let us ask ourselves: how is it possible to think of an omnipotent God while looking at the Cross of Christ? At this power of evil which went so far as to kill the Son of God? Naturally, what we would like would be a divine mightiness that fitted our own mindset and wishes: an “omnipotent” God who solves problems, who intervenes to prevent us from encountering difficulties, who overcomes adverse powers, changes the course of events and eliminates suffering. (Benedict XVI 2013)

In the *Catechism of the Ukrainian [Greek] Catholic Church*, we read: “In accordance with his plan, God acts in the world; he sustains the world in existence and leads it to its final fulfilment. This action of God is referred to as the Divine Plan (Providence) of God” (Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church 2016: 112). In his providence, the Lord has also provided the communication of his revelation in writing – through the Bible. Therefore, the Church teaches us to receive with faith and respect both Scripture and oral tradition (Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church 2016: 37–38). Faith in the Almighty God leads us to accept that God’s providence is different from our plans for life, and that the ways of the Lord are not our ways (cf. Is 55:8). God’s Omnipotence – in all its fullness – is also incomprehensible to the human reason. It is not an automatic,

arbitrary force; it is marked by parental love and freedom, and is essentially personal in character.

The Creator, having fashioned humanity freely out of love, calls us to love – the highest creative expression of a person. For this God grants us freedom. [...] As God's gift, freedom is strengthened through every free choice of the good. On the other hand, it is limited when humanity becomes dependent upon evil which is a consequence of its renouncing the good. (Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church 2016: 136–137)

God, having created free beings in his image and likeness, and giving them the freedom of choice, forewent part of his power and entrusted it to us.

It is for this reason that our human fatherhood and motherhood should, in the practical dimension of the Christian life, resemble the sacrificial and free love of God the Father. Whenever we are not certain of the rightness of our actions, let us strive to understand the image of God the Father – how he acts towards his Son, how he acts towards us, how he acts towards every person and nation. In other words, on a spiritual level, our parental ministry should reflect God as a loving Father who witnesses and participates in the sacrificial decision of Jesus Christ to “give his life for many” (Mk 10:45). As the Apostle Paul himself notes: “giving thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:12–14).

At the same time, it is important to look at the Trinitarian perspective from another angle: of how the Son of God submitted himself to the Father in order to be the head of his body, the Church. And this is precisely about the Church in the Trinitarian dimension, “initiated in the eternal plan of the Father, becomes a reality in the Incarnation of God's Son and is manifested at the descent of the Holy Spirit” (Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church 2016: 271). In the same context, “the bearer of God's grace in the world is Christ's Church. Through the ministrations of the Holy Mysteries, by means of sanctification and blessing, she apportions grace to those who believe in Christ” (Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church 2016: 267). “The Source of all grace is God the Father. From the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, the grace of God descends upon all creation and sustains its existence” (Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

2016: 266). If we look at God the Father in the light of the Gospel and the Church's teaching, we see that the destiny of parents is first of all to sow, live, witness, and at the same time leave room for the Holy Spirit to transform our good intentions and sacrificial service.

It is worth recalling here another example of the biblical Father – the one who organised a feast to celebrate the return of the (younger) “lost son” (Lk 15:11–32). The Father had arranged everything so well that his elder son, who was outraged by the return of the younger one, could not publicly express his indignation. Parenthood in God is always linked to freedom, as St Paul writes about it in his second letter to the Corinthians: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17).

It is also worth pointing out certain dangers, constantly present in this dimension of parental ministry. With regard to priests, we, unfortunately, often encounter manifestations of clericalism.³ On the other hand, among biological parents one can notice manifestations of irresponsible parenting. Other inappropriate uses of one's authority or a certain position in society include the phenomenon of bullying junior soldiers in the army or bureaucratism.

To sum up the above considerations, it is worth pointing out that a very important element of the Father's mission is to “leave room” for Jesus in his free love – that also should serve as a model of parental attitude towards our children. This means that we should give a lot of freedom to our children (spiritual or biological), not being afraid that they will make mistakes, always wait for them, enjoy their company, and encourage the family and the community to rejoice in their successes. In this dynamic relationship, one cannot do without the active presence of the Holy Spirit, who is the author of this co-action between man and his Creator.

In our ministry, we should act courageously (without unnecessary fear and doubt), feel with our hearts, be responsible for our words and actions, without forgetting that the Church is present everywhere: in the temple, in the family, while driving a car, in restaurants and in bed. Thus, each service is part of our overall sacrifice, our burnt offering. It is also important to be aware that every Christian is a witness (Gr. μάρτυς), that is, a person who lives Christ and testifies to him with his life, with words and actions of such a person being useful and fruitful only if they are permeated by the grace of God in the Holy Spirit.

³ The term clericalism refers to a deviant view of the clergy, an excessive respect and a tendency to grant them moral superiority (Senz 2018).

/// The Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist

In the third part of this paper, I propose to reflect briefly on the sacrament of Holy Communion, which Christ performed at the Last Supper, unveiled in the sacrament of Pascha, and continues to perform in the ministry of the Church – “as it was in the beginning, is now and always shall be.” Christ, already seated on the throne, repeats his sacrifice and, in the anamnesis of the Holy Eucharist, sanctifies our imperfect sacrifices. We also receive the pledge of eternal life when we have our share in the Body and Blood of the Lord: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day” (Jn 6:54). This means that the Common Feast, the Eucharist, turns those who attend into “brothers and sisters in Christ” and simultaneously opens the possibility of participating in a deeper knowledge of and conversation with our Divine Saviour, especially in situations of our suffering, death, and the great destruction brought by war.

Participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice prepares people to persevere in personal patience, as well as in the practice of sacrificial service in the daily turmoil of life. At the same time, people who trust God completely have the hope that God is responsible for the consequences of all that happens and that this leads to eternal life. We realise that God’s providence in whatever concerns our future (specifically, the question of our salvation) may be better and brighter than what we ourselves expect and imagine!

When we say goodbye to our loved ones (sons, daughters, friends... “on the altar of our Fatherland”), we encounter, on the one hand, the mystery of the suffering in the martyrdom of a son or a daughter, and on the other, the inner certainty that this is a situation in which death can no longer be called death (in its merely earthly dimension), because it has lost its destructive properties and transformed into the “victory of the spirit over the body.” It functions as an actual iteration of “the mystery of the death on the cross, the burial of Jesus Christ” through the prism of our Christian faith, which leads us to the resurrection. Consequently, the Eucharist as a sacrament also relates to the Eucharist as spirituality, when the spiritual consciousness of the human person is expressed in his or her sacrificial service. This can be seen in the case of the self-sacrifice of parents in today’s wartime circumstances and in their willingness to give up what is most precious and closest to them in their lives.

Summing up the role and ministry of parents in relation to the issue of death and eternity, we can be convinced, even after the tragedies in Bucha and Izium, that life conquers death. We also experience, in the spiritual

sense, through war realities that our Christian faith is mainly expressed by our deeds. One of the most effective and powerful methods of fighting evil on a large scale is prayer. Prayer keeps Ukraine fighting! The heroic struggle of the majority of Ukrainians against the Russian occupation in the twenty-first century is impossible without the help of God! Human logic cannot fully explain Ukraine's resistance and perseverance in the face of the destruction that the enemy inflicts daily on the various fronts of the anti-Ukrainian war.

I will conclude by asking rhetorical questions about the Christian ministry of each of us: what is my personal struggle? What is my personal victory in the battle against evil? Which "front" am I on? Do I have the right tools, the willpower, the training, the right information, the friends? Regardless of our current situation, each of us is called to come to our own front with Christian courage to stand up to evil and not merely wait somewhere in the rear. In other words: what are the goals and values for each of us personally, for our families, for the Church, the community, the country, for the nations of Europe, and the world?

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**ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP
IN POLAND**

ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE LEADERSHIP: UNDERSTANDING THE CRISIS IN POLISH ACADEMIA*

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In each national higher education system, academic leadership requires a customised model tailored to address its unique local challenges, distinct from those encountered in other regions or fields, like business or civil society (Anthony & Antony 2017; Etzkowitz 2003; Cetin & Fayda Kinik 2015; Shaked 2021; Winston 2019). There are no universal academic models across sectors and countries. Therefore, we propose a framework specifically designed to tackle the particular problems and polarities inherent across all facets of academia: individual, organisational, and moral. Aligned with integral leadership paradigms (Forman & Ross 2013), our model encompasses the interconnected subjective, intersubjective, and objective dimensions of leadership, providing a comprehensive approach to navigating academic tensions (Küpers & Weibler 2008). Integral leadership, in essence, entails effectively managing and leveraging the unique paradoxes inherent at each level of the academic system (Friedman 2017; Heifetz et al. 2009; Northouse 2016; Putz & Raynor 2005; Williams 2005, 2015).

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To elucidate the nature of leadership paradoxes, we turn to Barry Johnson's (1992, 2020; see Koestenbaum 2002) polarity management theory. The author delineates the fundamental distinction between problems that can be solved (choosing between A OR B) and polarities, which can only be managed (embracing BOTH A AND B). They assert that leadership entails navigating not just one polarity, but overlapping polarities, akin to wicked problems or multarities. Peter Koestenbaum (2002: 22, 104, 191) elaborates:

Leadership always exists in conditions of ambiguity and polarization. In a sense, conflicts are never settled, for the resolution of one makes room for the appearance of others. [...] The leadership mind understands and is fully adapted to the fact that the real world is ambiguous. The leadership mind is spacious enough to accommodate conflicting emotions and feelings, as well as contradictory concepts. Being comfortable with polarisation, paradox, and dialectical interactions – in the world, emotions, and ideas – is the hallmark of the spacious leadership mind.

What are polarities? Koestenbaum refers to them as paradoxes, contradictions, dialectical interactions, ambiguities. They can also be called uncertainties, dilemmas, difficult alternatives, recurrent, chronic tensions, dualities, contrasts, seemingly opposing forces, and dichotomies. Technically, Johnson (2020: 11) defines polarities as:

interdependent pairs that need each other over time. They live in us and we live in them. They exist in every level of system from the inside of our brains to global issues. They are energy systems that we can leverage. They are unavoidable, unsolvable (in that you can't choose one pole as a sustainable solution), indestructible, and unstoppable.

In the long run, one pole of a polarity cannot exist without the other. Each pole of tension has its values, upsides, which stem from focusing on a given pole when combined with a relation to the other pole. Each pole also has its downsides, hidden fears, and shadows that appear when we focus on one pole to the neglect of the other, that is, when we replace BOTH/AND approach with EITHER/OR. The goal of polarity thinking is ultimately polarity management or polarity leveraging, creating a positive feedback loop that leverages polarities, allowing us to benefit from the advantages of both poles without being overwhelmed by their shadow.

/// Academic Polarities

The contemporary university is subject to many thus understood polarities: leadership AND management, spiritual mission AND material basis, strategy AND operations, self-interest AND self-giving, team AND individual, theory AND application, tradition AND progress, reason AND faith, discipline AND freedom, nationalism AND globalism (see Adair 2005; Lukianoff & Haidt 2018; Kennedy 2014; Parker & Crona 2012; Manderscheid & Harrower 2016). For most academics a fundamental polarity exists between academic management AND academic excellence. This tension arises because they must balance the demands of administrative duties with the pursuit of scholarship (Teelken 2012; Deem 2004). An important moment in becoming an academic leader is to become aware of these tensions and to seek creative interchange in their mutual complementarity, instead of focusing on one of a given value to the neglect of the other. In the field of Polish academia, Andrzej K. Koźmiński is one such leader.

Koźmiński (R16), one of the 36 distinguished Polish academic leaders we interviewed, exemplifies the interplay between international engagement and impactful leadership within a national context.¹ Beyond his distinguished record of lecturing at leading universities in Europe and the USA, Koźmiński has demonstrably shaped the present and future of Polish academia. Koźmiński University in Warsaw, the institution he founded, is a testament to his vision. The university has achieved international recognition, competing effectively with the best in the region, and its collaborators hold prominent positions within Polish academia. In his interview with our research team, Koźmiński stated:

In academic environments, we have (and indeed should have) to deal with people with great ambitions, with great egos. And a big ego is very easy to offend, right? It can be offended even unintentionally. And this gives rise to conflicts of various kinds, fights, intrigues, which sometimes take on a caricatured, ridiculous image. And it's only funny [for] an outside observer. [...] In academic life, there are quite a lot of such "humorous" situations, especially if politics enters the university, research institute, or teaching. Well, then it's already a **cannibal feast**. Fortunately, no one eats anyone, murders are rare, but leading such a company is incredibly difficult. Incredibly difficult, especially if the sword of Damocles

¹ The interview was published in *Forum Akademickie* (see Luczewski 2024).

hangs over the person in the form of subsequent elections. [...] In addition, [...] people have ambitions that go beyond the university. [...] They want to climb higher somewhere else. And this means that they are willing to sacrifice their university interests to these ambitions or simply do not have the time or inclination to deal with them. [...] In our country, it looks like this: people generally do not want [to take on leadership positions]. Because the chance of realizing some kind of vision is tiny, and there is a lot of hassle involved, and it is very easy to expose oneself to some influential part of the environment. And then such a person is, so to speak, **pecked to death**. [...] The chance of some success is small, and the risk is huge. [...] If someone is stigmatized by some significant part of the environment, then “Forget about it.” Therefore, it is difficult to find outstanding leaders in our country. [...] Outstanding leadership in our conditions, in our higher education, happens very rarely. Because looking at all these conditions, it has no right to happen. But it happens sometimes. (Emphasis added)

We encounter a paradox here: a most prominent academic leader in Central and Eastern Europe acknowledging the near impossibility of academic leadership itself. With a touch of humour, Koźmiński addresses the following three key questions that define leadership in Polish academia:

- To be or not to be an academic leader?
- What are the key polarities in academic field a leader addresses and leverages?
- What is an academic leader for?

These three key questions are aligned with the three dimensions of the integral leadership model:

- Individual (the **WHO question**): Who constitutes a leader?
- Organisational (the **WHERE question**): Where does leadership take place? What is the scene of leadership?
- Moral (the **WHY question**): What goals and values does a leader pursue?

An integral model of leadership must encompass all three of these dimensions, that is, the **THREE Ws**. Let's delve deeper to understand how this integrated approach shapes effective leadership in academia.

- **WHO?** In Koźmiński's statement, this tension was a polarity between taking on a leadership role (to implement a vision and achieve common good) AND confining oneself to individual ca-

reer (to minimise the risks and difficulties involved in implementing one's vision). To be a leader, one has to risk the effort of realising their vision, including facing the “crucibles of leadership” (Bennis & Thomas 2002) and the possibility of being “pecked to death” (see Girard 1986).

- **WHERE?** Koźmiński shows that the academic field is a stage of drama. Here, academic leaders face a fundamental tension between stability AND change, individual AND team. If a leader turns out to be too directive towards realising their mission, they will expose themselves to ostracism. If in turn individualism prevails, there will be a war of all against all, and the group, instead of cultivating cooperation, will turn into a “cannibal feast” (see Girard 1986).
- **WHY?** What Koźmiński suggests is that participants in the academic field have different values and goals. This tension exists between extrinsic values (drawn from politics, business, civil society) AND intrinsic values (drawn from the traditional university). If an individual pursues their extra-mural ambitions, academic leadership will prove impossible.

This article aims to explore the complexities of these tensions by drawing on in-depth interviews with 36 outstanding Polish academic leaders. Based on the integral leadership model, our research team sought to understand the tensions these leaders experience at three different systemic levels. We aimed not only to grasp the realities faced by these leaders, but also to challenge their perspectives to uncover the hidden mechanisms at play within the university system.

/// Methodology

In selecting our sample, we used the typology of Dean Williams (2015: 9–31), which distinguishes three distinct phenomena: authority, power, and leadership. This typology partially overlaps with the distinction between formal leadership, that is, administrative-institutional leadership understood as fulfilling decision-making roles in university institutions or research teams, and competency-personal leadership, understood as the skills necessary to lead teams and institutions in the face of challenges. In constructing my sample, we were guided by the former criterion and invited people who held high institutional positions (past or future): rectors, directors, deans, heads of departments, and on the other hand – people

who belonged to the group of scientists managing the most prestigious grants and research projects, including ERC grants (see Hoening 2017).

We supplemented this formal criterion with two other criteria. First, we wanted to talk to people who have an impact on reality (power) and who are also respected by foreign scientific societies and hold positions at the best Western universities. Second, we intended to study people who, having formal authority and informal power, take leadership actions for the common good of the academy. We were close to Williams' intuition that "real leadership" lies in pointing out a problem, tension or a threat to encourage people to address them, even at the cost of causing group disorientation. In his view, leadership is a process of mobilising groups to face reality, solve difficult problems, and generate progress in creating knowledge, gaining experience, or institutional development. According to Williams, leadership should be courageous, but it does not have to be heroic. It is about partnership, strategic interventions, managing the learning process, the pace of work, and stimulating group problem-solving (Williams 2005: 246–256). According to this perspective, academic leadership can therefore be defined as a process aimed at fully realising the potential of the university and the people who create it.

By selecting the study group, we identified a unique group of leaders in which – we assumed – tensions related to leadership roles would be present in an extreme form (Bennett & Elman 2006: 455–476). Therefore, we focused on a group that experiences in a special way the "crucibles of leadership," which according to Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas (2002: 18) are responsible for forging true leaders. Being in a dual role: both leaders and followers, they were forced to deal with multi-level tensions, which we expect will be present to a lesser extent in other scientists.

The preliminary wave of the study (14 interviews) allowed us to prepare for the main part in 2023, when we conducted 22 interviews with academic leaders. Our study group had a significant limitation. Despite attempts to ensure a gender-balanced study sample, we reached 9 women. In their refusals to be interviewed, the respondents usually cited lack of time, family obligations, scientific obligations, or lack of compensation for participating in the research. In general, men seemed to us more willing to share their academic career history, which in itself indicates an important tension at the university. Our interviews showed that the issue of gender was an important topic and should be deepened in future research.

To complete the picture of academic leadership, we additionally conducted 10 interviews with international leadership experts, as well as 4 focus

group interviews (FGIs) with representatives of the Polish academic community. In preparing the scenario, we combined elements of in-depth interviews, biographical interviews and coaching interventions. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted from one and a half to three hours.

/// WHO? To Be OR not to Be a Leader?

The first challenge to the development of academic leadership in Poland is that there are few people in our universities who want to pursue a managerial career. And when they do start down this path, they encounter further obstacles. People may be reluctant to pursue a leadership career, as they must be prepared to give up their scientific career and lose prestige. As a result, it is a common phenomenon that key leadership positions are filled by people who have been somehow persuaded to do so, even though they sometimes had neither the desire, nor the skills, nor the predisposition. Let's give voice to one of our interviewees:

The fundamental problem is that a large proportion of [...] people gain some influence over management or decision-making, or even become deans or rectors, not because they have any management or leadership skills, but [...] because they have achieved scientific success and thus gained prestige and recognition. Or perhaps they have some socially useful qualities [...] that are needed in politics to win and convince. This in no way has to correlate with the ability to be a good leader, a good manager, a good dean or rector. (R4)

Our interviewee emphasises that working in scholar contexts does not translate into leadership and management skills at the university level. He describes the “leapfrog” nature of the leadership path and the lack of organic development from lower to higher positions:

In Poland there is no culture of [...] research groups, so a large proportion of professors first work very independently or with individual doctoral students, and then suddenly gain a management position that includes dozens or hundreds of people [...]. They had no previous opportunity or experience in this area [...]. So, they are suddenly thrown into the deep end and somehow make it work. (R4)

R4 described a leadership learning strategy that another interviewee called “trial by fire,” a method that seems to be the most popular method of learning leadership: “Learning is through trial and error, there is no other way” (R2).

As the current process for selecting leaders overlooks the candidate’s desire and preparedness for the role, this can lead to situations where individuals find themselves in leadership positions they never sought. Consider these two telling excerpts from our interviews: “I didn’t want to be a director,” one interviewee explains. “It works like this, someone has to be a director, and the one who is least assertive, but also has some competence, takes the job” (R11). Another interviewee reflects, “I am a leader who was a bit forced into it. It happened at a time when I didn’t have such aspirations. The director [...] suddenly resigned and offered me the position, before [...] I could even think about whether I wanted it at all” (R8). Interviews revealed a tactic where reluctant candidates are pressured into vacant positions by threatening to assign an even less suitable person. While acknowledged as manipulative, this strategy seems common.

Unsurprisingly, such forced leadership often results in unprepared individuals struggling with administrative duties. One interviewee bluntly stated their dislike for these tasks, expressing the sentiment that “all scientific ideals seem to just burst and disappear” under the weight of administrative burdens (R3).

Why there’s no desire among some of academics to become leaders? First and foremost they lack good leadership role models and programmes that would encourage and prepare them to take on positions in the academic hierarchy and lead effective teams. In the absence of systematic, standardised preparation, leaders often describe their leadership as based on intuition: “In principle, my knowledge was totally intuitive, [combined with] a fairly insightful observation of different types of leadership at our Faculty” (R8). These intuitive approaches were not always present (“I didn’t have,” opined R29, “any role models”), but there were also outstanding examples:

I didn’t have this know-how about an academic career. The person who was incredibly important to me and is still incredibly important in this dimension [...] is X. I think that thanks to her incredible intellectual-professorial-managerial formation, but also thanks to the fact that she willingly shares her experience [...], she was an extremely valuable source of information. So, there was some important agent of influence here for me and that agent of influence was her. (R13)

Sometimes, the search for leadership intuition requires looking beyond academia. One academic leader admitted that he would be much less comfortable in this role if it were not for the help of his wife, who is an HR director in a private company and informally advises her husband:

I think that if I didn't have my wife, who is really a soft skills person, who explains this to me regularly, I just wouldn't know. It wouldn't even cross my mind, because in the [...] academic environment, this doesn't even come up as a topic. People are supposed to work effectively [...], but how to do it? Most often this knowledge comes only from the one [...] who was previously [...] the boss. [...] He managed in such a style, so I also manage in such a style. (R7)

Another paradoxical strategy is possible: doing things differently than the former leaders. Leadership practice is sometimes created on negation of a boss:

I built my leadership model on the principle of negation. [...] If the boss sometimes liked to put someone down, I would never do that. If he liked to exalt himself, I appreciate the people who are in my team. [...]. If I had to write down 20 sentences that describe leadership, then probably 5–6 would be sentences taken from him, with already known opposites, and the remaining 15 from other sources. (R23)

These examples show that an accelerator of leadership is having an exceptional partnership with another person who will somehow complement the leader. A lonely leader is not able to fully utilise their potential, and it can also be stated with great certainty that they will not be able to overcome certain difficulties that they will encounter. Having a confidant who will accept the leader with their weaknesses as well and help them find their true, life-giving leadership identity is invaluable support for the demanding practice of leadership.

/// WHERE? Stability AND Change, Individual AND Team

In our interviews our interlocutors felt that their universities were choosing the value of stability over change. There was a paradox here, as there

was widespread complaint about the changes caused by successive reforms imposed by the Ministry of Science, but this did not mean real reforms of the universities themselves, but rather adaptation to external criteria and doing things the way they had been done before. No reforms have changed the organisational culture existing in some of the leading Polish universities: “People come to meetings, for example, without a meeting plan. Or they don’t know what is supposed to come out of it. Nobody takes notes from the meeting. Really a lot of bad practices” (R14).

On the campuses, respondents do not see programmes that would change the negative state of affairs:

We are proud of our achievements and [...] we show them to our community, hoping that they will motivate others. However, we have relatively few, or rather zero, so-called “career development” programs, that is, programs that are supposed to help people achieve these successes, not just reward them once they have them. (R27)

In the same spirit, an internationally acclaimed scholar criticised the organisational culture of his university:

We’ve been stuck on this track since the 1950s. [...] It feels like those who aren’t powerful enough lack the resources or influence to push for change. [...] I’ve spoken with colleagues, and we all agree we need someone to come in and manage us more effectively. [...] Hiring a consultant with expertise wouldn’t be a big expense (around 10,000 zlotys) and could really help streamline our processes. [...] Unfortunately, there seems to be a general resistance to addressing these issues. (R7)

Another strong tension we discovered at organisational level was the polarity between individual AND team. In the discussion about structural problems in the academic environment, R16 paid attention to the dominant attitude towards individual success:

The contemporary game of success in the academic environment is not a team game, but an individual one. People strive to achieve high ratings for their publications, entering into such temporary alliances, various co-authorships, but these are not long-lasting relationships. (R16)

At times, being in a team might be treated as an obstacle for an individual career: “It’s not worth investing in becoming a leader, because I prefer to do it myself, because I’m responsible for it, [...] if I do it with someone, [...] it’s they who will delay everything, there will be difficulties” (R8). In such a situation, the simplest solution dominates: a strong desire to separate oneself from teams out of fear of being exploited genius:

There are those who simply consider themselves geniuses, who do everything in the corner, do not integrate with the team and the group, believe that they have some super discovery and that if they say something about it, the discovery will be stolen from them. (R2)

Leadership activity would then address and leverage the tension between individual and team.

/// WHY? Excellence AND Relations

In the face of the disintegration of the traditional ethos of the university, with its intrinsic values of goodness, beauty, truth, selflessness, responsibility and freedom (Bloom 2008; Readings 1997; Rembierz 2019), contemporary academia increasingly refers to external values (Jemielniak & Greenwood 2016; Kwiek 2016) drawn from business (such as productivity and quality; Giza 2019, 2021: 164–166) or civil society (such as diversity, equity, inclusion; Dewidar et al. 2022). This creates a polarity within extrinsic values in relation to the traditional university, namely between excellence (drawn from business) AND relations (drawn from the NGO sector). One of our interviewees observed the negative consequences of prioritising scientific production at the expense of relationships:

Researchers are evaluated according to one criterion only: publish a lot and high-impact. A lot and high-impact! That’s it, you’re a star, you get money, and everything is fine, and everything else is less important. [...] The most important thing is that you have three publications, and then you write a grant, and it’ll be okay. And the fact that it causes depression in the process, well... [...] I’ve been to places where everyone was closed off because HR wasn’t working. And so what comes out is a cult of work, everyone was overworked and didn’t talk to each other. It ends badly. Productivity definitely drops. (R7)

Our respondent noted that the pursuit of productivity without building relationships with others leads first to depression (because relationships were neglected), and then immediately to a decline in productivity, which we wanted to devote ourselves entirely to. The inadequacy of such a leadership model becomes particularly evident in times of crisis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teams with more evenly distributed leadership competencies fared better. This contributed to better decision-making (multiple perspectives), increased engagement of team members, and did not require micromanagement (especially difficult in a situation of physical separation; Fernandez & Shaw 2020: 43). The overreliance on academic metrics like publications and citations can hinder effective leadership. As another interviewee highlighted, “Sometimes bibliometrically it’s great that someone has good contact, and then it turns out in practice that nothing happens” (R2).

Conversely, as a response to the absence of substantial relationships, another prominent global trend is the increasing focus on inclusion (Lukianoff & Haidt 2018). Michael D. Kennedy, an academic leader with considerable experience in authoritative roles, currently serves at Brown University. During our FGI session, he referenced diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies, highlighting Brown’s objective of integrating scientific excellence with inclusivity. This underscores a concerted effort to address societal disparities while fostering academic advancement:

It requires understanding a lot more than any project administrator ever could about what each person brings, and then supporting and respecting that. All of this comes together for me in a kind of polarity. [...] When at Brown we fight about how to increase diversity, one of the things people say is that diversity is one thing, excellence is another, but it’s that kind of thinking that leads to polarization. It’s a question of how to manage tensions. We’ve managed to do that. The best way to deal with it is to find people who expand the university’s inclusion mechanism while also having unquestionable academic achievements. [...] It was the result of real collaboration at all levels of the university to increase our diversity while meeting the standards of excellence. Not everyone was happy with this process, but now everyone is happy with the result. We have gained enormous respect from the higher administration of our university and the rest of the American Sociological Association. This is a dramatic change. We have difficulty acknowledging difference and diversity on our universities, which I suspect are

greater than in Poland, but I think they have their analogies in your country. So we are trying to find a language that expresses respect, even if we disagree. (Łuczewski et al. 2021: 275–277)

In our sample, Polish senior leaders didn't discuss DEI policies. However, there was a prominent focus on one aspect of inclusion: gender. One of our interviewees, a distinguished scholar and head of a school at a natural sciences university, highlighted the competitive atmosphere among women in her faculty. She pointed out the pressure on women to achieve a PhD within two years and defend it within three: "It all happened in a shorter time frame than I thought [...] I had to be better [...]. If you look at academic careers, in the case of women it often means sacrificing themselves for work. They have no family."

Another respondent, an economist and head of programmes at her university, echoed this sentiment, underscoring the prevalent gender inequality rooted in deep-seated cultural beliefs:

My boss was a professor. It regularly happened that after the seminars, he would say to another guy "you have such nice girls in your department." [...] I know that my basic salary is lower than that of my colleagues in the department and they do almost nothing, as I raised funds for them. And one of the professors said that my husband earned so well. [...] Women are much more manly than men, the men here are mostly about gossips, a lot of noise, PR, chatterboxes who can't get to the point. [...] Oh, sometimes I want to say during a meeting, let's be manly, let's put emotions aside, they are not decisive at all, I am a task-oriented person, you can't talk to these guys. This is my experience.

Without clarity about the goals and values of academic leadership in Poland, institutions will encounter significant challenges and become mired in the dichotomy between excellence AND relations. In the absence of well-defined values and goals, universities will face intense conflict and polarisations.

/// The Future of Academic Leadership

Our research reveals the three fundamental challenges facing Polish academia, rendering effective academic leadership nearly impossible. First,

there is ambiguity surrounding the values that universities should prioritise, with tension existing between intrinsic AND extrinsic values, as well as polarisation within extrinsic values regarding excellence AND relations, including excellence AND inclusion. Second, there is a polarisation within the leadership environment, with universities prioritising stability and individualism over change and team. Thirdly, at the level of individual leaders, there is a polarisation between being AND not being a leader. Polish academics are often ill-equipped and reluctant to assume leadership roles, lacking necessary role models and support programmes.

What is the future of academic leadership? The emphasis on productivity leads to a heightened need for academic leadership (Etzkowitz 2003: 111). Still, in our conversations, academics mention the lack of recognition among academics for leadership expertise. Many of them, including formal leaders and heads of department, are not convinced that this is sound knowledge. One of our interviewees articulated bluntly the dominant opinion in his hard-scientific milieu: “A book which says how to manage people? That’s nonsense, that’s humanistic stuff! [...] Why should I read that!? I might as well just listen to my colleague and that’s enough” (R7). Knowledge about stress management, team building, and maintaining work–life balance is then considered secondary. However, underestimating the value of leadership expertise that can inform decision-making has further negative consequences in addressing structural challenges.

Another obstacle is the belief in the superiority of the academic world over the leadership field in general:

People don’t accept that someone can be a facilitator on a training course and may not have a doctorate, may even know much less, but understands the process and therefore can lead the process with a better result than someone who doesn’t. This is knowledge that seems to me to be completely basic. [...] But it is often obvious that people with high titles think they know everything about it. (R14)

Anna Giza-Poleszczuk stated during the FGI that even she, with her position as Vice-Rector of the University of Warsaw, was unable to change this attitude:

For me, the key issue is the problem of connecting the heart with the mind. I have the impression that scientists are terrified of not using their reason and being guided by some kind of feeling. I mean

that every time I tried to do something like a workshop with sticky notes, they were so terrified that they would say something like: “No, no, no, no, just ask questions and we’ll answer. We don’t think we have a subconscious, we don’t have feelings, we don’t have emotions, we have this big, big brain, we’re 100% conscious of everything and don’t even try to use psychological manipulation to get something out of us!” (Łuczewski et al. 2021: 269)

In consequence, none of the respondents participated in a comprehensive, advanced academic leadership development programme on behalf of the university. Participation in management courses and trainings was rare. On the other hand, the respondents articulated their growing need for preparation for leadership roles. An example of such conscious development was the rector of one of the universities. But even in the highest leadership positions at the university, she did not have time for systematic development: “I’ve been here for 10 years, because we don’t have rector’s term limits, [...] so I simply didn’t have time to go to management school, but I did take a series of different trainings” (R26).

Our research suggests an increasing need for integral leadership that considers the polarities in all dimensions of leadership: individual, organisational, and moral. By embracing integral leadership perspective, academics can develop the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively navigate the challenges and opportunities of Polish higher education. In this type of leadership, the key is the ability to recognise and be present amidst polarities and polarisations, while also being able to manage and transform them into creative tensions. As Koestenbaum (2002: 191) reflects: “The leadership strategies are instruments of an orchestra, playing different melodies to create one symphony.” The stakes of academic leadership are thus high. Universities can either resemble “cannibalistic feasts” or “symphonic orchestras.” The future of any given university hinges on how these tensions are effectively managed. The first casualties of a lack of reflection regarding academic leadership are the leaders themselves.

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/// Abstract

Dominant leadership models, derived from business or politics, fail to address the unique nature of academia. This article proposes the integral leadership model, tailored to the specific challenges of universities, particularly in the Polish context. Drawing on data from 36 in-depth interviews and polarity management theory (Johnson, Koestenbaum), the article argues that inherent tensions (polarities) at every level of the academic system are a key factor in understanding leadership complexities. Unlike problems requiring a single solution (A OR B), polarities necessitate managing seemingly opposing elements (A AND B) for long-term effectiveness. This framework sheds light on the challenges faced by academic leadership in Poland across three dimensions: individual, organisational, and moral. Individual challenges include a lack of aspiring leaders and inadequate role models. Organisational challenges stem from prioritising stability over change and individual over team. Moral challenges arise from a lack of clarity about leadership goals and values, resulting in conflicts between excellence and relations (inclusion). The article emphasises the growing need for integral leadership that acknowledges and manages these particular polarities.

Keywords:

leadership, the crisis of universities, neoliberalism, polarities, Polish academia

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THE LEADERSHIP ROLES OF THE “MAN OF KNOWLEDGE”: NAVIGATING POLARITIES AND POLARISATIONS IN POLISH ACADEMIA*

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In recent decades, the question of academic leadership has become a familiar topic in the works of prominent scholars (Bloom 2008; Fuller 2000, 2016, 2023; Haidt & Lukianoff 2018; Kennedy 2020; Nussbaum 1997; Turner & Chubin 2020; Ziman 1994, 1995). However, I propose to revisit this subject through the lens of Florian Znaniecki, author of *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* (1940), a work that predates contemporary debates by nearly a century. My aim is not simply to rehash old ideas but rather to demonstrate that established theoretical frameworks can offer fresh insights into contemporary challenges. While Znaniecki’s work is best known for its typology of knowledge roles (technologist, sage, explorer, etc.; Wierzosławski 2016a, 2016b, 2017), I will focus on the underlying theory itself. This approach serves a threefold purpose: to articulate, operationalise, and apply Znaniecki’s theory of social roles to the specific challenges faced by Polish academic leaders.

The foundations for the theory of social roles were laid by the pioneers of American pragmatism, including William James, G.H. Mead, and Charles H. Cooley. The theory steadily gained importance and was further developed by the most influential sociological theorists of the time, such as

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Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton, Alvin Gouldner, Samuel Stouffer, and Erving Goffman (Biddle 1979, 1986: 67–92; Biddle & Thomas 1966; Raffel 1999: 113–124). Nevertheless, despite significant refinements and elaborations in the second half of the twentieth century (Goode 1960: 483–496; Sieber 1974: 567–578; Snoek 1966: 363–372; Marks & MacDermid 1996: 417–432), the theory of social roles has gradually lost its dominant status. At the same time, its key ideas, such as role strain or role balance, have become commonplace in the vast literature on well-being (Briggs & Reiss 2021; Seligman 2002, 2011), work–family life (Bednarz-Łuczewska 2013), work quality (Kowalik et al. 2022), or the highly influential job demands–resources (JD–R) theory (Demerouti et al. 2001: 499–512; Bakker and Demerouti 2017: 273–285), which also includes the question of (academic) leadership (Tummers & Bakker 2021). This trend further shows that while the socio-psychological theory of roles was losing its status in sociology, its main insights were being developed by psychologists.

By the middle of the twentieth century, the theory of social roles was applied to a vast number of fields. In its early, crucial contributions, we find *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* both as a classic in the theory of social roles, which was arguably the most elaborated part of Znaniecki's system (Jakubczak 1966: 251–269; Piotrowski 1976: 99–109; Szacki 2002: 768), and as a pioneering study of leadership in general and academic leadership in particular (Neiman & Hughes 1951: 141–149). Among the books of which Znaniecki was the main author, this one has remained the most influential (Chmielewski 2009: 223–231; Szacki 1984; Wierzchosławski 2016b: 111–130).

/// The Theory of Social Persons

While Znaniecki's work became the standard reference for the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals (Eyal & Buchholz 2010: 117–137; Kurzman & Owens 2002: 63–90), mentions of it are conspicuously absent from the growing body of literature on leadership in general and on academic leadership (Holcombe et al. 2022; Kezar et al. 2006). Even among the few scholars who still utilise role theory, Znaniecki's work is rarely referenced (Hoyt & Price 2015: 531–539; Hoyt et al. 2013: 712–723; Boardman & Bozeman 2007: 430–463).

One possible reason for this neglect is the structural bias of the whole theory of social roles, which has been the subject of growing criticism among social theorists (Jackson 2011: 49–55; Raffel 1999: 113–124). Over more than half a century of developing his sociological system, Znaniecki

diverted from his initial fascination with symbolic interactionism, which was focused on the Self, and became one of most prominent representatives of the structural theory of roles. The turning point was *Social Actions*, where Znaniecki (1936) abandoned his previous psycho-sociological approach in favour of a purely sociological theory of roles. It is this version of his theory that became known in the Anglophone world, as he codified it in *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* (1940; Neiman & Hughes 1951) and later in his posthumous magnum opus, which was intended to summarise his project of theoretical sociology: *Social Relations and Social Roles* (Znaniecki 1965). Znaniecki's daughter, Helena Znaniecka-Lopata (2006: 230), an eminent representative and continuator of the theory of social roles, summarised Znaniecki's concept as follows: "A social role is a set of patterned, mutually interdependent social relations between a social person and a social circle involving negotiated duties and obligations, rights, and privileges." Znaniecki's structural bias resulted in an overemphasis on social relations to the neglect of theorising about the Self and human agency (Jackson 2001: 49–55; Raffel 1999: 113–124).

The paradox was that in his earlier – philosophical, sociological, and psychological – writings, Znaniecki (1925, 1987, 1988) was one of a few social theorists who creatively leveraged the polarity between two seemingly rival types of theories about social roles: structuralism and symbolic interactionism. He was thus able to combine an analysis of (sociological) roles with the (psychological) Self. This is where I see his originality and most significant contribution to the theory of social roles, and therefore, in my exposition of his theory of social roles – or more precisely, social persons – I will refer to his earlier, unique socio-psychological or psycho-sociological version.

Specifically, I will draw on the theory that emerged during his analysis of academic leadership. I find this rendition of his theory to be particularly elegant and comprehensive, as it creates a novel and much-needed theory of social persons, which is free of the reductionism and one-sidedness of structural theories of roles (Marks & MacDermid 1996; Jackson 2001; Raffel 1999). This version of his theory is not well known beyond Polish academia, as Znaniecki's report, titled *Education and Social Change*, remained in manuscript form until 1998 (Znaniecki 1998), with only a small excerpt ("Przodownictwo i zwolennictwo"; Znaniecki 1934; "Leadership and Followership in Creative Cooperation" in Znaniecki 1998: 122–138) and a summary in Polish (Znaniecki 1935) being published.

/// Methodology

In accord with Znaniecki's methodology, I based my analysis on 36 biographical documents, that is, in-depth interviews conducted with Polish academic leaders and international experts on leadership. In the preliminary phase of our research, Piotr Czekierda and I conducted 14 interviews with Polish academic leaders, and in the second phase in 2023 we added 22 more interviews. The interviewees were selected based on two criteria: their institutional positions of authority (past or present) as rectors, directors, deans, or chairs, and their experience as leaders of research teams and benefactors of prestigious grants, such as those from the ERC (Hoeing 2017). We focused thus on a particular group, as we believed that the role strain generated by the academic system would be very visible in it (Bennett & Elman 2006: 455–476). The interviews were complemented with four focus group interviews (FGIs) with representatives of Polish academe and ten interviews with international experts on leadership.

Our sample had its limitations. The process of recruiting the interviewees revealed to us how special Polish academic leaders are as a group and how overburdened they are. Many potential interviewees did not have time for an interview (“When I look at people who represent STEM, they often seem completely focused on their work and often, from my experience, treat such conversations as distractions” [R1]¹). With others, the negotiations at times lasted months, and some of our interviewees could only allot us time very early in the morning.

Though we aimed at having a gender-balanced sample (Raftery & Valiulis 2008: 303–307), it proved to be impossible. A typical and instructive negative reaction to our query for an interview was formulated by an ERC-grant recipient and mother of young children: “Thank you for the invitation, I appreciate it very much. I must admit that in the coming months, I am already so overloaded with various commitments that I lack the time for even my most important scientific work, so I have to decline.” In the end, we interviewed nine women.

As we were interested in the inner life of leaders, in order to get to know the polarities our interviewees faced, including the shadow of academic leadership, we moved beyond the standard, sociological interview to include more challenging, direct questions typical of coaching dialogue.

¹ Respondent no. 1 – other respondents will also be labelled numerically.

As a rule, those leaders with whom we had some previous bonds of trust were more willing to be open about the tensions they had personally experienced. We devoted from one to three hours to each individual interview.

/// Introducing Polarity Thinking to Leadership Studies

To articulate and visualise Znaniecki's theory, we can use a polarity-thinking paradigm with its signature tool: a polarity map (Johnson 1992, 2020). I find this tool pertinent to Znaniecki's theory of social persons because in *Education and Social Change* (Znaniecki 1998: 45–46), he defined social persons (or social personalities) in a remarkably symmetrical, dynamic, and indeed polar way. Polarity thinking was inherent in Znaniecki's dynamic, and creative logic (Łuczewski 2023), which he shared with American pragmatism: Charles H. Cooley (1918: 43–51). Znaniecki wanted to overcome one-sided particularisms with a holistic, "organic view."

The polarity map consists of a left pole and a right pole, together representing polarisation (EITHER/OR) or polarity (BOTH/AND). Each pole has an upside (values) and a downside (shadow), with the downside defined by fears – negative outcomes resulting from overemphasising the left/right pole at the expense of the right/left pole. Conversely, the upside is defined by values, that is, positive outcomes resulting from emphasising the left/right pole. The objective of polarity thinking and polarity management is to transition from polarisation (OR) to polarity (AND) and thus to move from reinforcing negative fears (a negative feedback loop) to reinforcing positive values (a positive feedback loop).

Let's apply the polarity map to the theory of roles. Znaniecki (1998: 45–46) defined social persons through a set of polarities. He started with distinguishing two aspects of a social person: the social role (described by sociology) AND the Self (described by psychology). Accordingly, he then went on to distinguish two aspects of the social role: social position AND social function, while pointing out two aspects of the Self – the reflected Self AND the reconstructed Self.

Znaniecki defined social position as the set of an individual's rights, which include the right to be recognised as socially valuable (social standing), the right to have one's material needs satisfied (economic status), the right to be protected from the harmful activities of others (the sphere of security) and the right to engage in activities without being controlled (the sphere of privacy). For its part, a social function entails a set of obligations: to act on values characteristic of one's circle (objective task), perform social actions

bearing on other individuals (moral goodness), and refrain from actions that are contrary to the group’s values (moral integrity; see Fig. 1). All the elements of a social role might also be considered to be polarities.

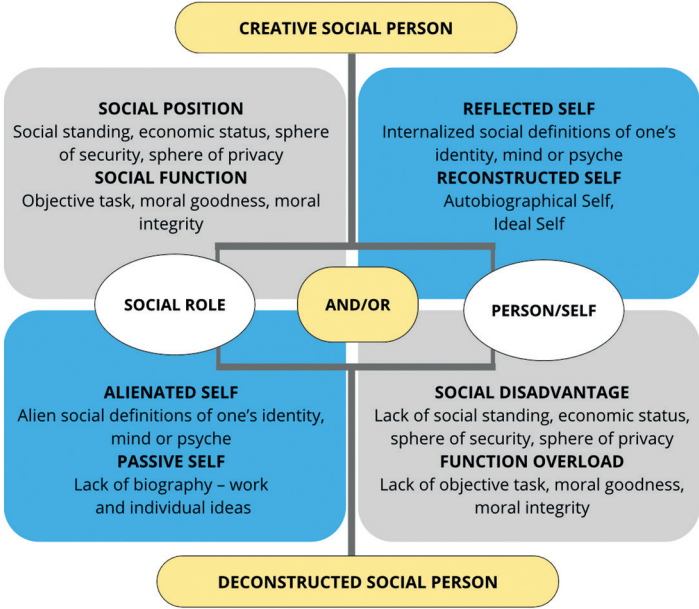


Figure 1. Polarity Map of Znaniecki’s theory of social persons. Upsides and downsides of each pole

Source: own work. Illustration designed by Karolina Bialecka.

Now, there are polarities between social AND psychological aspects of a person as well as within the social role AND Self. This polarity has long been recognised in the theory of social roles in the form of the concept of role strain or role tension (Snoek 1966: 363–372; Creary & Gordon 2016: 1–6). If the polarity between and within roles is creatively leveraged, we will experience role balance (Marks & MacDermid 1996: 417–432) or even role accumulation (Sieber 1974: 567–578). On the other hand, if the polarity (tension, strain) between the social role AND the Self is not leveraged creatively, then we will experience the downsides of each pole, that is, role conflict (Hecht 2001: 111–121; Jones 1993: 136–141; Karkkola et al. 2019: 456–463; King & King 1990: 48–64; Stouffer & Jackson 1951: 395–406; Van Sell et al. 1981: 43–71). Role conflict happens when we overfocus on one pole (role) to the neglect of the other (Self), and thus we suffer from role overload (Creary & Gordon 2016: 1–6; Kelly & Voydanoff 1985:

367–374; Matthews et al. 2014: 72–91; Sales 1970: 592–608). For instance, if an individual focuses on social position and social function to the neglect of their Self, they run the risk of becoming a conformist, a social machine, or a “one-dimensional person,” of being blended with their position and function, while their Self becomes alienated and deconstructed. In the language of the theory of roles, we discover that by overemphasis on the social role, we are inadvertently consumed by our latent role (Gouldner 1958: 444–480). By the same token, if an individual focuses on their Self to the neglect of their social position and function, their identity will become idiosyncratic, without relevance to the social world as such, and thus the individual loses both their social position and function (see Fig. 1).

If a leader stays in the two lower quadrants (downsides) they are stuck in a vicious circle (Hagan & Palmgren 1999; see Tummers & Bakker 2021). This phenomenon is described variously as self-undermining, a maladaptive regulation feedback loop, self-reinforcing negative path, or loss spiral, which might lead to burnout (Bakker & Costa 2014: 112–119; Bakker & Wang 2020: 241–251; Bakker & de Vries 2019: 1–21). On the other hand, if a leader stays in the two upper quadrants, they experience a virtuous circle (Hagan & Palmgren 1999), that is, role enhancement (Bednarz-Łuczevska 2013), an adaptive regulation feedback loop, a positive self-reinforcing spiral or gain spiral (Wrzesniewski & Dutton 2001: 179–201; Tims et al. 2012: 173–186), which can also be experienced in academia (Hobfoll 1989: 513–524; Van Wingerden et al. 2015: 51–67).

/// Leadership

Znaniecki’s theory allows us to define four polarities characteristic of academic leaders, that is, (a) the fundamental intra-person strain between social roles and the Self, which splits into two sub-tensions: (b) the intra-Self strain between the reflected and reconstructed Self and (c) the intra-role strain between social function and social position, which in turn entails also (d) moral strain between moral obligations and moral rights. Let’s now describe each of these polarities.

/// Academic Function and Function Overload

For all our interviewees, the social role of an academic represents undeniable – even the highest and noblest – values. In the interviewees’ statements, we can identify all the norms of the scientific ethos as defined by

Robert Merton (1973): communality (as opposed to secrecy), universalism, disinterestedness, and organised scepticism. As one participant expresses it, “It may sound grandiose, but science makes sense in and of itself” (R3). Another interviewee explains, “What motivates me the most is pure curiosity. [...] Our actions increase the understanding of the universe” (R4). A scholar who has collaborated with the leading academic figures of our time, including Nobel laureates and Fields medallists, says, “This is an incredible intellectual pleasure, because you collaborate with experts at a very high level, professionals who really know what they’re doing” (R5).

When describing their work, these academics use metaphors such as “scholarship as passion,” “scholarship as adventure,” or “scholarship as family.” An eminent Polish chemist likens the pursuit of science to sailing: “Science provides many opportunities to have the joy of understanding. Because we’re always on the edge. [...] When I’m sailing a boat in a strong wind [...] I have that satisfaction – I’m on the edge. And this expands our pleasure” (R6).

These expressions convey the sense of the academic role, which allows scholars to discover autotelic, intrinsic values, be curious, and find joy. However, because these values are of the utmost importance, academic leaders, who are often at the forefront of scholarship, may tend to overfocus on their academic role at the expense of their Self. As a result, they may experience role tension, role strain, and eventually, role conflict.

When climbing the academic ladder, some of our interviewees discovered that the academic role became increasingly consuming, leaving less and less space for the pursuit of the values that initially attracted them. This is an example of “role ambiguity” (Kahn et al. 1964; King & King 1990: 46–64), as aspiring scholars associate the academic role with research and teaching, while in the course of their career it turns out to be more and more about managing teams and administration. A senior leader of one of the largest laboratories in Poland recalls:

Oh, it’s such a pity that you have to spend part of your scientific life saying to yourself, “...if I do some equations or take some measurements, I can draw up a list of items to buy.” And I have to turn myself into a device-purchaser for six months or a year [...]. I had to turn the whole team into a team of instrument purchasers. (R2)

Another, younger leader is even more critical of “administration, overloaded administration, absurd administration” and admits he gets carried away when he starts to comment on “bureaucratic gibberish with ten different layers”:

All the promised administrative simplifications end up causing more complications. When they tell us, “Okay, now we’ll simplify the process of [...] purchasing international tickets; it will be easier,” it turns out that instead of having one form to fill out, we now have two. [...] Twelve people had to sign it. [...] It’s absurd, and I ordered a computer, for example, back in August, for one of my postdocs, but I still don’t have it. I still don’t have it. I have four people sitting in a room with four monitors because monitors are cheap and easy to get, and they don’t have computers. [...] Maybe they’ll come in March. Why, when I order office chairs, do I have to wait six months? (R7)

Academic leaders are not eager to take up key management roles, as these are considered to consume valuable time needed for research and teaching. It’s understood that scholars burdened with administrative tasks cannot remain academically creative. An accomplished chair emphasises that she cannot expect that “such a busy administrative person and also a scholar” will be able to just sit in front of a computer and write a good article. Without creative freedom, time to reflect, and the peace needed for creativity, individuals in this position must develop extreme resilience and self-discipline to survive intellectually (R8). One of the leaders admits:

I miss the time for scholarly work, which I sometimes manage to snatch. But maybe I’m wrong – it’s not about time but rather about intellectual stamina. Intellectual stamina. When I’m very tired, I admit, I read detective novels or watch movies (the latter less often), but crime stories are the texts that draw me in with their plot. That’s how I rest. (R9)

One interviewee expresses a similar sentiment, describing his tenure as director as “the biggest challenge,” “the most down-to-earth and boring” job. He says that “[i]t was bad even back then, and it’s worse now in terms of bureaucracy” (R10). Another interviewee who served as a department director for two decades concurs and elaborates:

I see tension [...] between teaching and, on the other hand, bureaucracy: the whole mass of bureaucracy – this nasty process in which the University becomes a corporation. [...] I ask students if they've read the syllabi? "No, we don't read them." But we have to write them, right? – Modify them based on various new requirements and so on, and I have this feeling of wasted energy. [...] That's the sort of thing that generally occupies our time. And I remember at the beginning of my academic and teaching career, something like 80%–90% of my time was devoted to teaching and research, and 10% to minimal bureaucratic requirements. That was at the beginning of the 2000s. Unfortunately, these proportions are reversing. I mean, we live in some kind of Matrix; we increasingly create something that no one really needs for someone, and we all pretend that it's important. [...] Yes, and I see this tension growing. I see it in my friends – that some people are ready to leave academia simply because they don't want to live in the Matrix anymore. (R11)

The latter interviewee describes not only role overload and role ambiguity, but also the deep loss of meaning of academic work. Previously, he had compared scholarship to a lover. Now he feels that he is in a Matrix. The loss is the more striking the greater was an academic's promise of finding meaning. To be sure, not everybody is as critical as the above respondent. Our interviewees, though experiencing the overload and ambiguity of their functions, are generally not leaving academia, as they skilfully leverage the polarities inscribed in their functions and keep on returning from the downside of their function to its upside.

/// Academic Position and Social Disadvantage

In the global competition for excellence, talent, and funding, Polish academic leaders quickly realise the marginal, semi-peripheral position of Polish scholarship (Warczok & Zarycki 2016; Zarycki 2022: 363–369; Kolasa-Nowak 2022: 357–361). Even among those who have reached the pinnacle of their field on a global scale and have entered the race for Nobel prizes, there is a growing sense of challenge in keeping up with the pace of the globalising academic field:

We are at the forefront of global science. However, [...] the future seems to belong to large international teams. [...] When you're in

a team of a thousand people, everyone has their small part of responsibility, but overall, there are those more responsible, like the Nobel laureates, who are associated with it [...]. That's what science looks like today, unfortunately. (R1)

Under such circumstances, Polish academia faces difficulties maintaining its academic standing while struggling to attract talent from around the world: “When someone from the West comes, they are considered second rate” (R12). Upon returning to Poland from one of the best Western universities, a leader in the Polish academic field felt as follows:

My personal mentor, [...] Professor Y, in front of people (this is important), told me that she had looked at my CV, and it's so bizarre. [...] Because there is this notion that when someone returns from abroad – even if they were a professor there – something must have gone wrong, damn it [...]. Something must not have worked out.

In the Polish semi-peripheral position, it is not only challenging to attract talent from global academic centres, but it is also easy to lose talent to these centres (Jałowiecki & Gorzelak 2007: 299–308). A leader of an ERC research group describes his most talented students, who surpassed him in many ways, leaving Polish academia. This brain drain resulted in growing challenges in building competitive teams at Polish research centres.

The low social standing of Polish academia is closely linked to its low economic status. The overall financial state of Polish academia is portrayed in very bleak terms. One leader in the Polish university field, an internationally recognised academic, has witnessed the growing impoverishment of Polish academia among her peers:

In most cases, it is difficult to live comfortably as a Polish scholar [...]. When I think about the situation of some of my friends in academia, it really seems that on retiring they'll have to sell a kidney to afford their medications. It's depressing. (R14)

The lack of funds is experienced by interviewees both early in their careers and even after they have established themselves as leaders in their fields. The director of one of the leading Polish social science departments has noticed that students have been making fun of the professors' antiquated cars

in the parking lot, and a growing number of faculty members are taking unpaid leave to seek better-paying jobs outside academia: “We are a fairly quickly pauperising social group” (R11). This, in turn, leads to “intellectual depletion, narrows ambitions, and does not encourage thinking about collective destinies from a broader perspective” (R15). However, only one among the leaders interviewed acknowledges contemplating leaving academia:

It’s even harder, even though I have tenure. It’s not rosy at the university. Fewer and fewer grants – it’s getting harder to get them, and the cost of living is rising. [...] The university can’t keep up with salary increases. [...] It’s getting harder. Maybe I should take another job, but who would employ an old professor? (R12)

Even in this dramatic situation, the interviewee did not change his job, instead opting to relocate to a more affordable city. In general, none of the interviewees have left academia, as they employ various strategies to overcome the economic challenges of their positions. These strategies include securing prestigious grants and combining their academic work with work as experts in the policy, business, or NGO sectors (Warczok & Zarycki 2016).

/// Moral Contradictions of Academia

The originality of Znaniecki’s theory of roles was based on the fact that it included specifically moral polarities, which were a concretisation of an intra-role strain between roles and obligations, that is, tension between moral rights (the rights to security and privacy) and moral obligations (obligations to perform according to a given circle’s rules of moral goodness and to refrain from actions violating the moral integrity of the group). When scholars overemphasise their moral obligations to the neglect of their moral rights, their individual sphere of security and privacy is compromised. They experience vulnerability and a violation of privacy instead of security. If, on the other hand, their individual rights come to the fore to the neglect of their moral obligations, they risk being self-righteous. On the basis of our interviews, we identified three main areas where academics’ moral rights and obligations come into tension: (a) the process of peer review; (b) personal politics; and (c) political polarisation.

Michael Murray, one of the world’s foremost leadership experts, points to the fundamental contradiction inscribed in academic work:

The topic of academic leadership is, in my estimation, a critical issue these days. I won't go into my explanation of why I say that except to say: I have rarely met a happy professor. There is something about life in the academy that is draining the spirit. I think it may have something to do with the tendency to analyze, criticize, find fault, focus on mistakes and errors, etc. etc. etc. The human spirit thrives, I think, on valuing, appreciating, affirming, esteeming, and the like. (Cited after Łuczewski et al. 2021: 263; see also pp. 263–282)

The expert was referring here, among other matters, to the system of giving reviews, which is the basis for determining academic excellence. In interviewing one of Poland's most prolific authors, who publishes in a stunningly interdisciplinary range of leading academic journals, I said to him, "So rejection is just part of the game, right?"

"You expect it."

"You expect rejection?"

"If it goes for review, it's already a success."

Despite R14 being accustomed to the rules of the academic game, I could also sense his resentment because of the flaws of this system:

I always create a pipeline of several journals for each text, in the order in which I will submit it. If I receive a rejection, I simply send it to the next one, unless there are reasonable comments. Lately, it's almost always rejections. [...] It's even better if it's right away – I'm fine with that. Today I received a rejection [...], now, maybe a week after submission. I thought it was great; they don't really know, but okay. But when you find out after four months that you [got rejected] because they couldn't send it for review, that's scandalous!

Even though R14 is one of the most resilient and skilful leaders in the Polish academic field, he was still frustrated with the review system. One of the founders of the modern Polish academic system after 1989, who has an international reputation, opined in a similar vein that

[t]he academic environment is a school of conformity. If you stand out with something that is not accepted in the environment, they will cut your head off. To publish something original, you practi-

cally need to be a Nobel laureate first – although even Nobel laureates, in some journals, go through a whole ordeal with successive reviews. I remember [...] a Nobel laureate spending a year and a half correcting his article. It's absurd. This entire peer review system has killed original thinking in the social sciences. (R16)

Another kind of tension compromises the sphere of privacy and security and involves personal politics. From the vantage point of a university rector, all attempts at reform or even miniscule organisational changes bring about polarisations: “the institution is not a structure, but the people who create it – are very different people [...] In fact, every change is received by this huge community in two ways. Some see it as good and others as bad.” These tensions might spiral into deathly conflicts. The theme was often alluded to in our interviews, yet not elaborated upon. For instance, when R8 decided to comment on the struggle between factions at her university, she prefaced it with a typical caveat: “I don't want to delve into [the details] because it would become too personal.” Yet, she went on to say that

there were very serious conflicts among the older faculty in our department. These conflicts led to the elected head [...] not being recognised by the dean. There was a terrible scandal. Because some people were against his candidacy, various things were happening there. [...] I realised back then that it's simply impossible to work in such conditions. Constant conflict is absolutely exhausting. I couldn't find any positives in creating such factions and battling or scoring against each other. These are not conditions for scientific work. (R8)

The polarisation is to be found not only between different factions of the faculty but also between management and professors. The former rector commented on this issue:

What's the dean as far as the professors are concerned? The same as what trees are for dogs. So they can pee on them. It's a very apt observation. Indeed, leaders are often scapegoats because you can blame them for failures. Then you choose the next one, who can't change much either, but you can put the responsibility on them again. It goes on like that. [...] The idea of a scapegoat is interest-

ing and valid, but it all seems to happen through a social contract that envisions that, except in various extreme cases, nobody is doing great harm to anyone else. So the dean or rector don't harm the interests of the faculty too much, and in turn, they forgive him later for being at fault. (R16)

The last element undermining the sense of security and privacy at the university is political polarisation. A distinguished young professor described the process, which in his view had started recently. Though he espouses “maximum ideological neutrality,” he sees that all of a sudden the faculty at his institution have started revealing their political views. “They even snarl at each other. That didn't happen before. It's disgusting. Will we be tearing each other apart because we belong to different factions?” (R12). In one dramatic case, a professor reported “the use of disciplinary procedures against colleagues with whom we disagree” in order to eliminate someone. Previously these might have been “soft pressures on those who deviate,” but now “a penal system and prosecution, punishment, disciplinary proceedings” are in place at the university. He had become their object, which meant “a void was created around me, a sanitary cordon. [...] No one had the courage to stand at my side, to discuss [the matter]. To survive, don't stand out – like in the Communist era!” (R17). This tension might be traced back to the growing polarisation between the Civic Platform and Law and Justice parties (Tworzecki 2019: 97–119; Wilson et al. 2020: 223–228). One of our participants reported being demoted when he decided to join an advisory body of one of these political parties (R18). Another professor recalls meeting his old mentor around the time he decided to provide his expertise to politicians: “Hi, it's me! – We used to know each other. He terminated our relationship. He cut off contact with me [...]. It was unpleasant and tactless. [...]. This is delegitimisation: ‘You are illegitimate.’” Later on, “a student on the Faculty Council attacked me. [...] Then no one stood up fundamentally to defend me” (R19).

What is alluded to here is also a potentially growing discrepancy between professors and students, who use the weapon of slander against one another (Haidt 2017; Revers & Traunmüller 2020). Though we did not conduct quantitative research, we can hypothesise that repercussions at the academy more often afflicted conservative than liberal academic leaders (Zipp & Fenwick 2006: 304–326). This imbalance was noted by a distinguished professor: “Conservatives are being pushed out, and progressives are on the rise and fighting. It is difficult to expect openness from

them” (R15). Having over the course of his global career encountered people with different beliefs, including “true conservatives who are not radicals and do not want to overturn the world,” he “was not in a bubble.” He introduced himself as a liberal and a representative of a “spiritual culture” based on openness, tolerance, curiosity about people with different beliefs, learning, strategic thinking, and innovation. He was against both dogmatism and a lack of strong ideas. Ideologies emerge in “the absence of strong ideas that do not lead to dogmatism.” His idea of the university was based on leveraging the polarities characteristic of the Polish intelligentsia – between conservatism, liberalism, socialism, and Catholicism (R15).

However, the most radical and extreme case of political polarisation concerned an apolitical professor who was not only criticised by his colleagues but was also personally attacked by politicians and fell prey to massive, orchestrated online attacks: “People vent their frustrations and write down their grievances there. It’s unbelievable. [...] People have something in them, like gratuitous envy or lashing out at another citizen, and that’s everywhere, not just in Poland. [...] It’s not just a Polish problem, it’s not some unique Polish hell” (R20).

The moral contradictions of academia are captured in the metaphor of academia as family. On the one hand, academic leaders often describe their life as based on close ties and friendships, which create a “familial atmosphere” (R1). This metaphor articulates the sense of combining security with privacy, moral integrity with moral goodness. Under such conditions, it is natural that the representatives of each generation support one another “as much as possible,” so that they quickly advance in their careers, complete their degrees, get prestigious grants and go on to do post-docs abroad (R1). Another professor tells a story that seems to reflect the parable of the merciful Father. Without informing him, his most talented postdoc took some sophisticated piece of machinery from the university laboratory to another country. One day he called the furious professor, who had been unable to continue his experiments, asking whether he could visit him:

I didn’t know whether to be furious or pleased [...] I told him: “You brat, you took our machine and now we have to get a new one. Have you been using it at least? [...]” My goodness, the guy couldn’t wait to put it to good use; he hadn’t gone to sell it after all, but to do science. He’s our student and is working with Italians. So things are happening and that’s the real purpose – for things to happen.

On the other hand, however, the academic family might quickly turn into a toxic family, where the sense of security, privacy, and integrity is destroyed. An experienced and versatile manager recalls:

I have worked in many different environments. I worked in an international corporation – one of the largest. I've worked in public institutions. I've worked in non-governmental organizations. Finally, I also worked in the academic environment, serving as the vice-rector of the University of Warsaw for many years. And my impression is that the academic environment is the most toxic place in the world. [...] Academia is becoming cruel. Not academia itself, but the practice of academia is turning into something very cruel, very inhumane. (Łuczewski et al. 2021: 263–282)

/// The Creative Self and the Alienated/Polarised Self

In scholarship at the highest international levels of the globalised academic field, overemphasis on the academic role is a matter of course. It's impossible for an academic to have a successful career without focusing on the attached social role. However, to invest so much in the academic role one has to internalise it and thus by extension one has to overemphasise one's reflected Self as an academic. This fusion or merger between one's social role and one's reflected Self is seen in the metaphors our interviewees employed: "When you take learning seriously, well, it's like having a lover, I mean it's something you dedicate yourself to completely. You immerse yourself in it entirely" (R11).

Leaders cannot achieve high academic positions without emphasis on their reflected academic Self. There are two challenges, however. First, as the social role of an academic leader is replete with tensions, contradictions, and polarisations, once it is reflected by the Self, the tensions, contradictions, and polarisations are internalised. Second, the reflected Self might be marred by a polarisation that cannot be overcome and reconstructed. The Self will thus not create a dynamic synthesis but will deconstruct into alienated and polarised parts. In other words, if leaders focus on their reflected Self to the neglect of their reconstructed Self, they will experience this downside or shadow of the academic social role. This is the situation we wanted to elucidate in the course of our conversations with academic leaders.

Even the most effective and prolific authors recount moments of exhaustion and despair: "I have such days when I really do not want to get

out of bed. And when I remind myself how long the list of tasks is for that day, I bury myself under the blankets even further; I set the timer for 15 minutes more. But there's no escape" (R5). In a similar vein, one of the most promising Polish scientists, the recipient of an ERC grant, described his career in Silicon Valley. He had to make considerable sacrifices to change from one postdoc position to another every two, three, or five years: "But to do that, I would have to leave everything here [in Poland] and commit fully to what I have there" (R3). A similar story is recounted by another ERC recipient:

You know, when I was in Paris, there was a fierce battle to receive bonuses. At a certain point, this battle seemed to hinge on being entirely dependent on grant results, which is partly a lottery. [...] The entire process of obtaining grants, the associated uncertainty, and also the feeling of not knowing what to do – there's a lot of pressure in Paris. But that's the reality. [...] I think it's somewhat of an open secret. To get grants, people have to know you. I mean, your chances increase immensely if people on the commission know you. So, we networked a lot. That's what it's called. (R21)

In these accounts we can sense academia being guided by neoliberal norms, with their emphasis on flexibility and mobility (Jemielniak & Greenwood 2015: 72–82; Kociatkiewicz et al. 2022: 310–330; Lekka-Kowalik 2021). In some cases, this translates into almost incessant work. An eminent medical doctor describes the transition in his work from the usual 10 or 12 hours of work a day to 20 hours a day, including Saturdays and Sundays, and of going 8 to 10 nights without sleep.

Michał Łuczewski: "It's a bit like being in the Marines, isn't it?"
R20: "It's not healthy. That's why the average lifespan of doctors is not impressive. Few live to a ripe old age when they work like this; heart attacks await."

By similar token, R22 described her continuous work, as both a leader in key institutional positions at the best universities in the world (where meetings alone consumed 30–40 hours a week) and as an accomplished scholar, in terms of a calling and even a spiritual vocation:

“I think I’ve constructed a narrative for myself that, for institutions or departments [...] to function well, I have to put in as much work as possible and take care of everything.”

“So I’ll ask a tough question. Is this a calling or is it workaholism?”
“It’s both.”

Such a dedication to one’s role, which demands sacrifices, produces challenges in the reconstruction of the Self, which might become alienated or polarised. An example of an alienated Self is to be found in the interview with the leader who used the metaphor of science as a lover. Towards the end of the interview, he was struggling to describe his relation with his Self:

Michał Łuczewski: And your relationship with yourself? Because you talk about your relationship with another person, and you’ve also talked about your relationship with God. Is there any relationship of love towards yourself?

R11: Well, that’s a difficult topic. You know, I find myself not having time for myself. I mean, I’m willing to give it to someone else, not because I’m magnanimous, but simply because I’m not fully ready to establish a relationship with myself. And that requires some work, but not everything can happen at once, you know? Lately, a few people have told me that I should be kinder to myself – not just giving, offering something to others. Yes, but I think I’m not alone in this.

The case of a polarised Self, where the Self is engulfed by the academic pursuit and at the same time torn between different commitments, was articulated by R7. It was not so much a case of role strain or role conflict but conflicting internalised parts of his psyche:

I don’t know if I’m living through my work. I mean, I’m certainly living it quantitatively because it takes up an enormous amount of time. And it’s also the case that due to my family situation, which is difficult now, and family health issues, there isn’t much time left. I really see here that... well, it’s like two angry dogs fighting over my time and tearing it apart between themselves.

A similar tension is described by R12, who additionally reports role ambiguity not only as an academic but also as a father:

The boundaries between home and work have become blurred. I start working at six in the morning to have a peaceful time to do research while still at home; I come back early and spend the afternoon with my family. How much time to allocate to whom? [...] Every time I look at my phone, my children say, “You’re addicted to work.” But I have to work; we have to eat. [...] It’s especially challenging during travel times. Leaving your wife with the children – that’s harsh. I thank my wife for allowing me to travel, but staying away for three weeks was too much for us. So I gave up on trips – one conference a year at most.

The alienation and polarisation of the Self might lead to burnout. Because this topic encroached on a most private and intimate sphere, it was not a matter that was brought up and elaborated upon. Typically, it was barely mentioned, and thus it was up to the interviewers to flesh it out:

I realised that I need a private sphere, independent of work, where I can relieve this stress. I enjoy sports, skiing, hiking in the mountains, and having places where I can completely disconnect. I convinced myself that I can’t live only through work. There was a moment when I truly saw that the stress and the workload were too much, and I experienced burnout. (R8)

The costs of an academic career included (a) those to one’s own well-being, and also (b) those to the well-being of one’s family. One of the leaders expands on the moment when she experienced a deep crisis:

R22: I was at quite an important meeting, and my headache became so severe that I had to leave the meeting. I collapsed and couldn’t remember what was happening at all. I couldn’t have foreseen that something like this could happen to me. [...] You have to experience something like this to completely start over, because for six months I had to rest. And there had never been a time in my life when I did absolutely nothing. [...] I went to the doctor, to the emergency room, and then to my own doctor, and the doctor

said, “Oh, you have typical – I don’t know what it’s called in Polish – post-traumatic stress disorder.”

Piotr Czekierda: Post-traumatic stress disorder. How is it that we try to be in control and take care of ourselves, but we end up in such trouble?

R22: If I understand correctly – and I’m still thinking about it – partly in my personal case, it’s related to the fact that we see work as a calling.

In our research, we came across various other stories of burnout, where the body said no:

Michał Łuczewski: I want to ask how you managed it – working 16 hours a day, sometimes at night. A wife. Children. Media involvement. How did you survive something like that?

R23: You know, I think I didn’t handle it well. I’m not satisfied with those two years and my approach to it. I imagine myself as a calm person who devotes enough time to prayer to trust in God in this difficult situation. I take care to choose ethically, what’s good and what’s bad, and I go about my work peacefully [...]. Maybe because I’m [...] a father of children, who was completely shattered at that time. I also had the added burden of suffering from intense intestinal pain. There were times when I lay on my bed for an hour, clutching my stomach, howling in pain, not answering the phone. Maybe it was also the stress associated with it. Maybe something else. I don’t know. Tough times.

Another leader reminisced about the time when he started suffering from depression, which was around the period when his kids were born:

In that intense life, at some point, raising the children, working two jobs, and, well, a lack of understanding of what was happening around me, all of it led to me starting to not sleep well, being overly exhausted, and also irritated. [...] I used to be the kind of person who thought I could handle everything on my own, you know, that I was strong, that I could handle everything. But at some point, that started crumbling, and it was like an implosion. (R24)

In our interviews, we found allusions to further personal costs of academic careers: “This is a non-financial cost. Yes, it’s family. And the closest” (R11). There are also descriptions of parting ways with a partner:

For many years, we spent a lot of time on airplanes, traveling everywhere, giving presentations all over the place, and in the meantime, you know, working. It was an exhausting lifestyle for several years, and I had a sense of burnout, an enormous level of stress. (R21)

One thing I am sure of and one thing I regret is that I do not have children. And I don’t have them because I was constantly putting them aside for later, thinking they would disrupt my scientific work. That there’d be a toddler running around and I wouldn’t be able to work any longer, so I kept on postponing it until it was too late – psychologically, I would say – not even physically, but psychologically. I regret that, because I missed something of value, and of great value at that. Something very precious... But one can’t have everything. (R10)

Because of the possible work–life conflict in academia, some of our respondents highlight that family might be an obstacle for a successful academic career. “The best academic is single” (R12). “I see greater opportunities for people who are childless. I mean in the academic sense; going for scholarships, etc. Even in things like arranging one’s own time in the evening – rest and late-evening work”; “I am divorced and when I was deciding whether to become president of the university, I knew it would take my whole time. So my decision was very conscious” (R25). On the other hand, however, some academics see that family can be an important source of resilience: “family, and especially kids, give us an additional value that can in no way be categorised” (R26).

/// Conclusions

In this paper, we have identified four fundamental polarities, using Florian Znaniecki’s theory of social persons. Polish academic leaders are facing the diminishing role of their social position in all the dimensions Znaniecki distinguished: social standing, economic status, the sphere of security, and the sphere of privacy. They additionally see that their social function is becoming more and more demanding and consuming. In other words, Polish

academic leaders are experiencing a deconstruction of the values that define the rights associated with their position and a growing emphasis on the obligations inscribed in their function. They invest more and more into what seems to give them less and less, while it demands more and more. This leads, in turn, from the upside of academic life, which attracted these individuals to the university in the first place, to three downsides of academic life: (a) social disadvantage and function overload, (b) moral contradictions, and (c) alienation and polarisation within the Self. If these downsides remain unaddressed or poorly leveraged, they can result in the deconstruction of the academic social person, that is, leaving academia (a sociological strategy) or burnout (a psychological outcome).

However, Polish academic leaders are still able to turn role strains and conflicts into creative tensions. Their example shows not only the downsides of Polish academia but also the way forward. In reflecting on their pasts, they make an effort to reorganise it creatively in the form of meaningful biography. In turning to the future, they might see the same discrepancy between their ideal Self – the Self they want to actualise – and the projection of their future Self, which will be guided by the rules of the academic field and does not allow for their imagined and projected Self-actualisation. By becoming *homines prospecti* (Seligman et al. 2016) they may reevaluate their career and find that the key to their well-being is not to allow for the merger of their Self with academia. “The key to happiness in the long run is not to allow the academic environment to dominate you. I do not allow academia to define me” (Łuczewski et al. 2021: 263–282).

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/// Abstract

This paper has three objectives. First, it seeks to reestablish Florian Znaniecki as the founding father of the sociology of leadership by emphasising his enduring relevance in this field. Second, it aims to revive Znaniecki's theory of social persons and highlight his innovative contributions to the broader theory of social roles. Last but not least, it endeavours to apply this theory to the unique challenges faced by academic leaders in Poland. To articulate and operationalise the concealed, dynamic, and creative logic inherent in Znaniecki's theory, this paper draws on Barry Johnson's polarity-thinking paradigm with its signature methodological tool, the so-called polarity map. Through an in-depth analysis of 36 interviews with academic leaders in Poland, the present study reveals the individualised approaches and strategies these leaders employ in navigating the polarities in Polish academia. Znaniecki's theory allows four principal polarities in the experiences of Polish academic leaders to be identified: (a) the fundamental intra-person strain between social roles and the Self, which splits into two sub-tensions, that is, (b) the intra-Self strain between the reflected and reconstructed Self, and (c) the intra-role strain between social function and social position, which in turn entails also (d) the moral strain between moral obligations and moral rights. The management of these strains can result in either detrimental polarisations, leading to the deconstruction of the social person, social role, and Self, or the nurturing of creative polarities, fostering the development of a more creative and adaptive social person, social role, and Self.

Keywords:

academic leadership, burnout, role strain, Znaniecki, social persons

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**HOW TO BE
A [GLOBAL] ACADEMIC LEADER?**

CONTEMPLATIVE STUDIES, MARTIAL ARTS, AND SOLIDARITY: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE*

Michael D. Kennedy
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How could I turn down this invitation to reflect on a life in academic leadership, especially with such a trinity leading the title? Even more appropriately, how dare I write such a thing? I have extended their sociologies sequentially, but it is only through this essay that I think about their synchrony and the ways in which they have combined – not only to enable a certain kind of academic leadership but also to refigure the place from which such leadership is most properly exercised in this stage of my life.

This is an autobiographical reflection; not the autoethnography or first-person narration one might expect from someone working in contemplative studies. That is, in part, because I am newly engaged in that field. Nevertheless, I find contemplative studies and its practices enormously

* I am most grateful to so very many people for this article's realisation. The anonymous reviewers not only gave me license to elaborate but were especially helpful in opening doors to future work in contemplative studies. Some of my Polish friends and colleagues – Michał Łuczewski, Tomek Zarycki, Ania Giza, and Filip Łapiński most immediately – shaped much of what I write but so many others are apparent in the pages that follow. As are my colleagues in martial arts and contemplative studies. In the end, to express gratitude to those who shape a life seems impossible when naming is convention, but gratitude permeates this time of life. And so it does in the experiences that shape this paper.

productive not only for addressing the stress that accumulates with academic institutional responsibility but additionally for rethinking how leadership within the academy might be more properly exercised in these most challenging times.

Below, I will consider the serendipity realised through Polish solidarity that – relatively early on in my academic career – led me to be offered meaningful institutional leadership. I recollect next a story of how martial arts practice became martial arts sociology, a translation that enabled me to recognise the power that comes with appreciating the immanent and irreducible presence of violence in everyday life. Rather than an academic or athletic preoccupation, martial arts has become part of my habitus, an asset to be sure when addressing academic contests and their relative importance in the bigger questions organising our lives. I turn in the following section to consider my growing engagement with contemplative studies, facilitated by tai chi and yoga, but finding additional philosophical legs in its exploration of awareness through and beyond mindfulness. Its practice, I propose, is invaluable in the exercise of academic leadership. In that function, we need not only to manage resources and people but to work with all involved to realise the intellectual responsibility these awesome institutions organised as higher education deserve. And that, sometimes, means going beyond familiar charges to realise new purpose, especially emergent in times of need. In these times, the relevant question is perhaps best posed simply: solidarity with whom?

This essay has proven longer than I expected it would be. That is, in part, because I have had a wider range of scholarly experiences than most fellow sociologists, as the trinity of foci in the article's title suggests. But it is also because Michał Łuczewski's reaction to my first draft prompted even more recollection and reflexivity. And while solidarity, martial arts, and contemplative practice might still serve as organising themes, there is an underlying commitment that allows me, if not also you, to anticipate the connection.

My academic focus in sociology is not just an expression of social science. Although I did not have the words back in the 1970s and 1980s I now use, I clearly saw my wish to go to graduate school as a way to figure out my politics. During that period – and in my first years of graduate study – among my intellectual inspirations beyond conventional sociology were C. Wright Mills (I wrote a paper on his corpus at Davidson College), Black Panthers' Huey P. Newton (*Revolutionary Suicide*) and Eldridge Cleaver (*Soul on Ice*), Michael Harrington (I was active in the Democratic Socialists

of America movement in the early 1980s), and Irving Howe (reading his 1982 intellectual autobiography, *A Margin of Hope*, sustained me during my fieldwork in Poland in 1983–1984). I even remember how Gerhard Lenski, my most senior mentor, told me on my second preliminary exam in 1982 that I seemed more like a socialist than a sociologist with my failure to reference Seymour Martin Lipset in my political sociology prelim response to a question around democracy and inequality; I focused instead on Alan Wolfe (1977). Lenski was wrong. And right.

I have never defined myself first as a sociologist, but neither was I ever simply a socialist or activist. It took me decades, but I am quite comfortable today identifying my work with a knowledge cultural sociology¹ as knowledge activism: the quest to bring scholarship, and especially sociology, into the struggle to realise social justice, and to bring the questions of injustice to the heart of academic work (Kehal et al. 2019). That articulation congealed when I was recruited to different academic leadership positions across 15 years at the University of Michigan, before my departure for Brown University when I was recruited to lead the Watson Institute for International Affairs. I retired from serious academic administrative work in 2011, but my quest for meaningful academic engagement has continued in surprising ways – around martial arts sociology and most recently in contemplative studies. That combination has proved most helpful for me today in wrestling with questions: with whom ought I express solidarity and how might love inform that quest? Below, I begin with the ties that led me to knowledge networks, which enabled the invitation to publish in this journal.

/// Solidarity and Poland

When I applied to graduate schools, I declared that I was interested in the sociology of religion, especially of Hinduism; during my senior year of college, I took a most meaningful course on Hinduism and wrote a substantial essay about Sri Ramakrishna. Alas, I did not get good advice about where to continue work on that subject, but that was probably all for the best. I went to the perfect university for my PhD in sociology, as it turned

¹ Knowledge cultural sociology (KCS) recognises the importance of explaining how social relations and positions shape the articulations and validations of knowledge. However, KCS also works to understand how knowledges' symbols, schemas, institutions, and networks shape the terms of social reproduction and transformations within the sites of practice privileged by particular knowledge cultures while simultaneously recognising their implication in larger social forces shaping their contents and effects.

out, even if I could not have known that during my application process in the fall of 1978.

For practical reasons, I decided to go to the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, following my undergraduate education at Davidson College, both of which are in North Carolina. Excited by the prospects of dedicating my life to scholarship, I moved to Chapel Hill early. Browsing through sociology journals in those early days, I came upon a special issue of *Social Forces* (57[2], 1978), dedicated to the analysis of social change in societies ruled by communists. And lo and behold, that issue happened to feature two professors in the UNC Sociology Department: the already distinguished Gerhard E. Lenski wrote the lead essay on Marxist experiments in destratification, and Assistant Professor T. Anthony (Tony) Jones was the special issue's guest editor. I can still remember the look of astonishment on Tony's face when I entered his office to ask if he thought I should learn Russian, given how much I liked that issue. "Of course," he said, marvelling at my naivete. Looking back, I myself marvel at the serendipity.² How fortunate to find, quite by chance, the perfect department for my work, additionally for the approach to critical social theory I was afforded.

I thrived in that department during my first year, in large part because I learned from Assistant Professor Craig Calhoun both classical sociological theory and about Marx and Marxism. At the time, Craig was engaging, among others, Leszek Kolakowski and his *Main Currents of Marxism* (Calhoun 1981). My approach to critical social theory (Calhoun 1995; Kennedy 2006) and sociology came to be largely shaped by Craig's influence. That is even evident in an essay I wrote especially for Polish colleagues (Kennedy 1999b).

Towards the end of my first academic year, in April of 1980, I met with Gerhard Lenski, seemingly impressed with my performance on the first general preliminary exam in the department. He asked about my interests. I told him I wanted to develop a sociology of the Soviet Union. He replied, kindly, that I might want to reconsider. It would be better, if I were interested in studying actually existing socialism, that I study Poland. After all, its sociology was far better than in the USSR, and its research environment was much more open. He said that I might even be able to study inequalities in occupational prestige and not just the sociology of sport I might be able to manage in Russia.

² I might have devoted my career to the sociology of serendipity rather than of solidarity if I had been more reflexive over time. But then Merton and Barber (2006) have provided a much more suitable substitute.

With little effort, I learned that I could end my year of Russian language study with Victor Friedman and begin learning Polish from a graduate student at UNC – Piotr Drozdowski, the son of the Polish poet Bohdan Drozdowski. And so it was arranged in May of 1980. But it was what happened in August 1980 that genuinely recharted the course of my scholarship, and my cultural politics.

Before 1980, as many sociologists in the USA – then and now – I was principally interested in inequality. I might have also said “social justice” at the time. I still would, but it had then, and even now, a particular kind of ring in its accent. It did not overly concern itself with normative justifications for its utopian and transformational politics, instead presuming equality and justice sufficiently similar and evident without any need of further elaboration. Even before I began my own research and dived deeply into Polish sociology, I knew that was not quite enough to satisfy me. But I began to learn more positively what I sought in the Polish Solidarity movement of 1980–1981.

My 1985 dissertation and subsequent book (Kennedy 1991) were organised around the question of solidarity as an ethos, as a sociological process, and as a social movement. I focused in particular on the inequalities between professionals and workers, and how those inequalities might have been transcended in the formation of a social movement and trade union seeking freedom and dignity. In that early work, I continued to emphasise a cultural politics based on material conditions; I did not engage the symbolic sphere much; neither did I take national identifications very seriously. At the time, I thought that to explain this transformational movement as an expression of a national spirit is too simple. Of course, most scholars now recognise that there are many ways to be Polish, thus justifying my previous scepticism; but I did not have the learnedness to recognise the importance of thinking about how the nation offers a medium with which to express deeper ideas of and commitments to solidarity that go beyond declarations of citizenship, memory, or belonging.

In subsequent scholarship, I worked to make up for that deficit by exploring postcommunist cultural studies (Kennedy 1994), intellectuals and the articulation of the nation (Suny & Kennedy 1999), transition culture (Kennedy 2002), and why Poland is important in the study of global transformations (Kennedy 2015). Ironically, it was in that second volume that my co-editor, Ronald Grigor Suny, and I decided to ask our contributors not only to write about their subject matter but also reflect on how their own national identity shaped their intellectuality. Even though that idea

was mine, I found my own autobiographical expression the least interesting of that set of scholars: Ron Suny, Andrzej Walicki, Janet Hart, Katherine Verdery, Alexander Motyl, Khahig Tololyan, Yuri Slezkine, and John-Paul Himka. After all, being a white (Irish) American cis-gender straight man studying a country most receptive to Americans is, well, rather uncomplicated. Or so I thought.

We published that volume at last century's end, before whiteness studies became so obviously important in studies of racialisation and US sociology. Increasingly with decolonising sociology and other such endeavours, we can see greater efforts in the articulation of Du Boisian and Polish and other Central and East European studies, including my own work for *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* (Kennedy 2019b). I especially appreciate my former University of Michigan colleague's approach to Polish history in this vein (Valerio 2019).

One could see my more recent efforts in the extensions of Du Boisian (Kennedy 2019b) and decolonising sociology (Kennedy & Tadesse 2019) as a new expression of solidarity but now around racial formations. However, this articulation only restores my original interest in sociology.

My first sociology course at Davidson College was in race and ethnicity with Joseph Drake (Kennedy 2019c), a professor about to retire even when I was in college in the 1970s. His work at the time was an expression of solidarity, looking for ways a privileged white man might find some greater justice in a profoundly racist southern United States. His Davidson College successors – as professors (like Piko Ewoodzie) and as former students (like Clint Smith) – are all part of this transformational practice in struggles against US, and global, racism. And while I contribute, especially given the number of students at Brown University I have supported in this field (Kennedy 2023), this aspect of transformational sociology is not the focus for which I might say I am more distinctive.

Instead, that relative distinction resides in the dialogical process moving the quest for justice. Its greatest expression was my engagement with the Polish Round Table negotiations of 1989; the event we organised in 1999 at the University of Michigan. To address that transformational practice (Kennedy et al. 2000) may have been the most consequential expression of knowledge activism, and academic leadership, in which I have ever been involved.

The University of Michigan has enjoyed one of the best and broadest assemblies of Polish studies scholars in US universities. Its Copernicus Lecture series has brought notable scholars and public figures to Ann Ar-

bor. Marysia Ostafin was the abiding intellectual and administrative force across decades of that work, and during my time in Ann Arbor. But it was 1999 that represents, to my mind, a real reflection of what she and her faculty, staff, and student colleagues could realise.

We sat in the reading room of the Center for Russian and East European Studies in 1998, discussing how we might recognise the transformations of 1989 in the upcoming tenth anniversary of this miraculous event. Adam Michnik had come before, and he would certainly be a central figure again. But who else? Our Polish studies team deliberated and wondered whether we could bring not only those more familiar but also those associated with the more conservative traditions of Poland, as well as Church leaders central to the roundtable dialogue. We discussed whether we could, or should, invite communists who participated in and helped to shape the negotiations. Josef Blass, an émigré from the 1968 wave, was critical to all of this, for his own knowledge activist networks and broader intellectuality helped us appreciate the opportunities and challenges.

It would be too much to rehearse now what we accomplished, but it was because of this event I received among the greatest honours of my life. First, President Aleksander Kwaśniewski awarded Piotr Michalowski, Marysia Ostafin, and me the nation's Gold Cross of Merit in 1999, following that roundtable scholarly event. He even came to the conference and offered the keynote address. We also invited Pope John Paul II to come. He declined, but he also replied – through his secretary of state – with congratulations and appreciation. He hoped that

[t]his disciplined reflection on the spiritual, cultural and political aspect of Poland's peaceful transition to democracy will highlight their ultimate foundation in a moral imperative arising from man's innate dignity and his transcendent vocation to freedom in the pursuit of truth. (Kennedy 2002: 289)

At the time, the Pope's support was so profoundly meaningful on its own terms. Indeed, we also had many critics saying that we should not have "that side" on the stage, so John Paul II's blessing helped to mute their resentments. We should remember such inclusivity in these days of intensified polarisation.

I wound up becoming Vice Provost for International Affairs and Director of the International Institute at University of Michigan in the academic year following our conference, which was mainly spurred by my Polish en-

gagements, along with the support of my promoter, Nancy Cantor, then provost, whose subsequent academic leadership continues to inspire me. The newfound responsibilities prevented me from following up on all the research and scholarship we produced around the event in the measure of seriousness that I had wished to develop (albeit see Kennedy 1999a). Still, I managed to include some of it in my 2002 book's conclusion, but this is certainly one regret I have in my career. I moved on to other matters, most notably around globalising knowledge, but before I leave this Polish focus and emphasis on solidarity, I need to mark here my return to it in this last decade.

Thanks to the publication of *Solidarity: Step by Step* (Łuczewski et al. 2015), I engaged solidarity once again in a substantial way. That engagement was hardly a matter of destiny – or even of legacy – rather being a function of knowledge networks.

My Polish knowledge networks were shaped by my year of dissertation research in 1983–1984. I was supported generously by many Polish sociologists: Włodzimierz Wesolowski, Witold Morawski, Ireneusz Bialecki, Grzegorz Lindenberg, Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, Renata Siemińska, Jadwiga Staniszkis, Edmund Mokrzycki, Andrzej Rychard, Krzysztof Jasiewicz, Jadwiga Koralewicz, Irena Reszke, Anna Titkow, Marian Kempny, and many others – many of whom appeared in a three-issue volume reflecting our University of Michigan–Warsaw University ties (Kennedy & Kirwil 2004–2005). Through that network, I finally wound up working with a scholar younger than I: Tomasz Zarycki. Later, I asked him the boldest question: would you introduce me to some sociologists even younger than you?

During a visit in which I enjoyed commentaries on my 2015 book, I met Marta Bucholc, Michał Sutowski, and Adam Leszczyński in a session Tomasz organised around *Globalizing Knowledge*. During that visit, I also met three younger scholars who profoundly shaped my approach to solidarity: Maria Rogaczewska, Maria Szyborska, and Ola Goldys. Although we were all working on social entrepreneurship at the time, we also developed a sense of solidarity, even if with very different accents. Our discussions therein helped me consolidate an awareness that the sociology of solidarity cannot be treated simply as a dependent variable varying along a single spectrum.

Instead, I came to appreciate something underlying: that articulations of solidarity must be understood before the independent variables shaping their magnitudes. With whom, and around what, do we establish our mutuality? Whose burdens do we carry? To what ends? And around what principles and identifications?

Right around that time, I renewed contact with Michał Łuczewski. We had had some slight contact around his earlier scholarship, but when he wrote to me to ask if I would review their volume on solidarity, and perhaps consider writing a blurb alongside my earlier colleague Jadwiga Staniszkis, I was hesitant. But when I read the volume, all doubts disappeared. It was exactly the kind of discussion of which I sought to be part. While their ten steps might not have been the same steps I would have chosen, their invitations to dialogue were exactly the kind of discussion I thought solidarity deserved, especially if we were to treat it as the foundation for our normatively informed sociology and not just a dependent variable to be measured along magnitudes.

Largely because of that volume, I wound up teaching a course on solidarity and social change with my fellow sociologist Syeda Masood; she went on to write a dissertation on the articulations of justice in Afghanistan. At the time, I wrote this about Łuczewski and colleagues in a summary of the course, drawing also on Jodi Dean (1998). I wrote:

Traditionally, solidarity has been conceived of oppositionally, on the model of “us vs. them.” But this way of conceiving solidarity overlooks the fact that the term “we” does not require an opposing “they”; we also denote the relationship between “you” and “me.” Once the term “we” is understood communicatively, difference can be respected as necessary to solidarity. Dissent, questioning, and disagreement no longer have to be seen as tearing us apart, but instead can be viewed as characteristic of the bonds holding us together... Łuczewski et al. invite that exploration. The team devised six steps in realising solidarity – to face reality, seek the good, work on yourself, serve others, strive for agreement and forgive in truth. They introduce each so powerfully, not least because they are able to bring people into dialogue in this history that today cannot speak with one another with their divergent locations across ideological barricades. They contribute meaningfully to an elaboration of this dialogical and transformational solidarity with 10 principles.

In the years since that course, I have continued to work on solidarity in a number of ways, most obviously and profoundly in relation to Ukrainian solidarity in light of Russia’s 2022 invasion (Kennedy 2023). More of my work there might be found on X/Twitter via the hashtag #UKRSolidarity.

As the year progressed, I became especially concerned of how to articulate a more global solidarity, mobilising African sensibilities around sovereignty and justice to challenge the manifest Russian imperialism focused on Ukraine's invasion. However, that priority crashed in the wake of the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, and the ensuing war on Gaza that even some experts in the Holocaust call genocidal (Bartov 2024).

More than anything I have done, this conjunction of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the calamity in Israel/Palestine feels pressing: the legacies of the Cold War impose horribly on emergent sensibilities that ought to be shaping what I have also called on X/Twitter #SeekingJustice. My identity at birth – much less the one I have crafted across this lifetime – hardly suffices for the kind of sociological imagination this epoch end invites (Kennedy 2022). Solidarities of all sorts need be cultivated to consider the issues that matter for others and not just for the identifications and commitments we bring to struggle. However, this is not the first time that I have had to find meaningful and enduring solidarity beyond the path of identification my family assumed. They certainly would not have expected my Polish identification, one made even more meaningful for me when others see it too.

During the International Sociological Association 2023 meetings in Melbourne, Australia, I spoke again of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, except this time focusing on “strongmen” as the mobilising concept, with Putin as exemplar (Bavbek & Kennedy forthcoming). However, the principal point of relevance for the present essay was Tomek Zarycki's reaction.

He told me that the way I spoke of Ukrainian solidarity revealed my identification with and membership in the Polish intelligentsia. Michał Łuczewski reminds me Marta Bucholc said something similar in a 2015 Warsaw symposium devoted to globalising knowledge. As we continued in that public session, both he, Piotr Kulas, and others turned a general discussion of strongmen into a discussion of the qualities of leadership Józef Piłsudski and Jarosław Kaczyński bear, and their complicated resonance with the term so popular today. As it so often happens, Poles complicate concepts whose roots lie elsewhere; strongmen ought to be rethought as a concept with Piłsudski and Kaczyński in mind.

Today the antipodes of strongmen are most clearly found among those who struggle to defend democracy from authoritarian assault. Those who defeat strongmen in democratic elections – Biden and Lula being the most prominent global examples. Pope Francis has also been so identified given his commitment to peace (Elie 2018) and work to end the war in Ukraine. Those leaders of democratic nations who resist imperial pressures, like

President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan in 2023, are also obviously antipodes of authoritarianism. Given Putin's most gross expression of strongmen, President Zelensky is the most profound antipode with his alternative expression of masculinity (Sheridan 2022).

Instead of negotiating peaceful if still radical transformations, today we are discussing solidarity in terms of sanctions against Russia and supplying Ukraine with some of the most advanced weapon technologies. We also debate in the USA whether sending weapons to Israel is consistent with the Leahy Law that prohibits assistance to any military accused of violating human rights (Fadel 2024). Clearly violence sweeps the world in ways it did not in the time when Poland could be seen as a leader in peaceful if still radical democratic transformations.

A significant current in my work around Ukraine involves rethinking the place of violence in transformational solidarity, much as Huey P. Newton and the Black Panthers in the 1970s explored how bearing arms could move the needle around racial justice towards greater freedom, dignity, and equality. Again, with serendipity at my side, I have been able to draw on my interests in martial arts; it may not help me to rearticulate solidarity, but it does help me rethink the relationship between violence and justice and the place of intellectual responsibility in their articulation.

/// Martial Arts and Violence

Superheroes can shape the sociologist and not only the sociological imagination. I have published a few articles on the subject (Kennedy 2018a, 2018b, 2018c), but my superhero sociology book manuscript – completed in 2015 – remains buried beneath the wave of social and cultural transformations occasioned by the Marvel Cinematic Universe (see the works of Julian Chambliss). But in the course of researching that volume, I realised where my martial arts interest came from.

When I first began reading those comic books in 1965, with Batman featured, martial arts figured prominently. Crudely, of course, but filled with references to karate and judo. And on the advertisements in the back pages, one could find assurances that a black belt was awaiting you in just six weeks for a small fee of \$5.95. Something like that. It took me some time, however, to find my path into real martial arts.

In the early 1980s, alongside my sociology graduate school training, I began to learn taekwondo. I never went further than a lightly coloured belt in that episode of my learning; then, later in that decade, I thought I might

learn aikido, especially since my primary relations at the time abhorred violence and sought, rather, to emphasise peace.³ As the most non-violent martial art I knew, aikido fit the bill. But that, too, lasted less than a year.

My children were born in 1989 and 1992. I was almost biding my time to get them into martial arts, figuring that it would not only be good for them but also give me a reason to become involved in such community. Thus, at ages eight and six, Emma and Lucas began their classes at the Asian Martial Arts Studio (AMAS). Like so many other practitioners I have come to know, that became the pathway for the parent to begin their own martial arts training.

The AMAS offered training in aikido, karate, kung fu, and tai chi. Unleashed from concerns about non-violent martial arts, I leapt at the chance to learn karate (I worked on Shuri-te and Shudokan); after all, that was the familiar term of reference for the Batman of my youth. And so, in 1998 I began my martial arts training. I have not stopped in the 25 years since. My martial arts sociology began later.

I began karate without an idea that its sociology could be important. Although I had known Loic Wacquant from the 1980s, during his visiting lecturer status at UNC, his book on sociology *from the body* had not yet appeared (Wacquant 2006). But once it did, I realised that a martial arts sociology could complement wonderfully his own carnal sociology. After all, karate, and most other Asian martial arts, claimed a bodymindfulness quite different from the knowledge cultural claims of boxing. Hence, I began my own quest to develop a martial arts sociology not only from the body but from within the knowledge culture(s) of martial arts.

I began teaching martial arts sociology in the first decade of this century at the University of Michigan. I suppose being allowed to teach this course was something of a gift for having served in academic administration between 1999 and 2005; being Vice Provost for International Affairs and Director of the International Institute was quite demanding, especially in the midst of the 9/11-related transformation of our university's global sense, along with budget cuts in the wake of that attack on globalisation's academic habitus. I returned to the faculty after a year sabbatical, in the fall of 2006; I developed this course shortly thereafter.

I relied heavily on counsel from my AMAS sensei, Karl Scott, but I also took that sabbatical year to explore martial arts comparatively. There was not much sociology out there, but lots of what has been called hopology.

³ In fact, even then, I was working to figure how to connect Polish lives and Western sentiments around the Cold War by working on the Freedom and Peace Movement (Kennedy 1990).

Anthropologists were also critically important. Historians offered much. But nobody, at that time, was quite offering what I sought: a comparative and historical sociology of the various articulations of bodymindfulness embedded in martial arts, and the social forces shaping their different expressions, most notably around peace, justice, and violence.

As I worked through that first course, and then in seven instances over the succeeding years, I have come to be ever more awestruck by the importance, and challenge, of this work. In the meanwhile, I moved to Brown University in the summer of 2009, in order to direct the Watson Institute for International Studies. My tenure was relatively brief, as I had a different sense of what Brown could and should do around international affairs than other stakeholders thought. But that release from administration in 2011 was a gift; it allowed me to focus even more on what martial arts sociology could look like. I began teaching it regularly in 2013, thanks to the generosity of our sociology department. After all, I could imagine their asking why we need martial arts sociology anyway. Is it not a bit of a digression from the study of inequality?

Indeed, we *can* figure martial arts' articulation with inequality, most notably in the ways in which martial arts practice informed the Afro-Asian solidarity movements of the 1970s, something that Bruce Lee symbolised so powerfully as he kicked apart that sign that declared, in that British colonial way, no dogs and Chinese allowed. Vijay Prasad (2002) was among those more critical theorists who moved that general awareness, but the wave of studies subsequently emphasising Bruce Lee has been substantial. Indeed, that emphasis has been an important part of a journal called *Martial Arts Studies*, giving me far more substance on which to draw in my martial arts sociology courses. Inequality is important, but what we might learn from martial arts sociology about violence is far more critical.

Among the articles in *Martial Arts Studies* from which I have learned most is the one by William Little (2018). He explains the distinction of martial arts practices of the self in “their formulation as spiritual practices and their freeing relation to violence.” He argues – properly in my view – that these truths are revealed only through intensive bodily training over many years. Their sense cannot be understood from without; they are only realised through a transformed subject. But more than offer skills and strategies to win in violent contest, this martial arts knowledgeability can transform one's relationship to a quality of human existence: “the idea of unlimited and irreducible insecurity as an always immanent, ever present condition of life.”

In this sense, martial arts is all about violence but also its transcendence. It is not an expression of simplistic political slogans like “peace through strength.” Instead, it embodies deep and profound knowledge about the presence of violence in existence as such, and a preparation for this violence so that one is not overwhelmed by it in its sudden appearance or by the lack of awareness of its destructive power, once it is deployed.

I am working to elaborate these ideas elsewhere, but I mention it here because it is important for those beyond security and martial arts studies to recognise how violence is often ghettoised from so many studies devoted to understanding solidarity and emancipatory change. Recognising what my former student, Juho Korhonen (2019), calls “sociological occlusions” is a critical part of knowledge cultural sociology. But to recognise the occlusion of this profound point about harm in harmony – as Little (2018) puts it – required a transformation in my own martial arts practice, one that moved me more towards internal strength and love through martial arts itself.

On moving to Providence, I followed the advice of my sensei in Ann Arbor and took up a different martial art style so as not to mix up my karate practices. I met a colleague at Brown, Robert Lee, who was particularly enthusiastic about a studio in East Providence called Way of the Dragon; not particularly associated with the film of Bruce Lee, of course. Its Sifu, Wen-ching Wu, turned out not only to be a terrific martial arts instructor but also an inspiration for figuring the articulation of the knowledge cultures of sociology and Chinese martial arts.

Since 2010, I have learned from Master Wu and the other instructors of the school. I have studied both northern and southern styles of kung fu as well as what some would call internal martial arts, most obviously associated with tai chi, but not only. As I have aged and suffered occasional injuries, my turn towards less acrobatic and more bodymindful practices like tai chi and qigong has become more important. I have also sought to learn from other scholar practitioners and to the extent possible included others in my scholarship, and in my course.

Over the various iterations of my “Martial Arts Sociology” course, we have enjoyed visits by other martial artists and scholars: Kumu Ramsay Taum whose workshops on Lua in Providence were attended by many of my students and fellow practitioners, Donald Levine whose fusion of sociology and aikido long predated my own efforts, and others. I have also enjoyed the counsel of other, more local, martial artists and scholars beyond them, including Robert Lee, Madison Ski Krieger, Colin Swanson, and

Larson DiFiori. I have begun writing a book on martial arts sociology that draws on this course's learning, as well as my broader engagement in the field. But just as significant as this breadth, I have turned towards the extra-martial sides of martial arts, most notably around the cultivation of energy.

By now, many in the West are familiar with the notion of qi, the energy that connects us all across the universe, that flows through and around our body. Health practitioners familiar with this approach would emphasise the importance of that free flow within the body, something tai chi is designed, in part, to facilitate. Over this last decade of its study, I have become able to provide at least rudimentary instruction in its most basic form – 24-form tai chi – and to demonstrate even to the skeptical how we might “sense” chi and transmit it to others. Of course, it is not just my parlour trick; I am fascinated by how health sciences have begun to research the health benefits, for body and mind, of these Chinese martial arts (e.g., Wayne & Fuerst 2013).

That “first person” learning has become, in fact, one of the most appealing parts of my martial arts sociology course, which takes “sociology from the body” to another level. It is not just the existing body that might become an instrument of sociology and one of the discipline's vectors. We might also imagine the potential body, mind, and spirit that can be cultivated, which in turn can transform our sense of self and society (Yuasa 1993). We might even rethink solidarity and love in its terms and take a cue from aikido's disposition. After all, its founder, Morihei Ueshiba, declared:

In real budo, there are no enemies. Real budo is the function of love. The way of a Warrior is not to destroy and kill but to foster life, to continually create. Love is the divinity that can really protect us. Without love, nothing can flourish. If there is no love between human beings, that will be the end of our world. Love generates the heat and light that sustain the world. (Stevens 2001: 16)

Over the years, this martial arts sociology course has become increasingly popular, so much so that in both 2023 and 2024 I could not admit every student who wished to learn. I often draw on those who are actively practicing martial arts: from wrestling and boxing to taekwondo and Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Moreover, I have begun more extensive work in yoga, thanks mainly to my partner, Amy Dolan, herself a yoga instructor. I have added yoga as a principal theme in the course, to the considerable enrichment of our learning. It also helps to put the sociology of love at the heart of the course.

Towards the end of his life, Pitirim Sorokin focused on the *Ways and Power of Love* (1954). What led him here was his encyclopaedic approach, apparent in his other works. But what astonished me most was his focus on yoga. In that, one might say that sociology began to explore connections with contemplative studies through yoga's common place in their respective knowledge cultures' address of love and contemplation. I continue in that stream thanks, once again, to the power of serendipity.

/// Contemplative Studies and Love

One of the people with whom I train at Way of the Dragon, Larson Di Fiori, is not only expert in martial arts practice but also a scholar of Daoism and contemplative studies. In solidarity with him I thought I might attend his doctoral dissertation defence of “Early Intertextual Uses of Parallels with the Laozi and Their Role as Sources of Authority” in 2018 under the supervision of Harold Roth. His supervisor was a scholar of Daoism and himself a Zen Buddhist priest. Hal is also the founder of the Contemplative Studies Program at Brown University.

Hal “coined the term ‘Contemplative Studies’ and designed the first university concentration program in this subject” (Roth n.d.). He has elaborated on its meaning in a number of places, most recently around Daoism (Roth 2021). Based on learning from him and extensive participation in the programme over these recent years, I summarise the initiative:

Contemplative Studies is a relatively recent academic field in which experiences of focused attention and concentration across cultures and across time are analyzed. These practices are presumed to yield more profound insights about who we are as human beings and how that awareness leads us to make a more just and environmentally sensitive place in which to live.

Of course, Hal is not alone in developing this field, but there are relatively few sociologists who are so dedicated. However, one scholar is already a critical part of my own knowledge network, and I have only begun to learn from a second.

Inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh, sociologist Hiro Saito provides an invaluable TEDx lecture on mindfulness, social science, and enacting social change (Saito 2022). Drawing on his words, he helps me to appreciate the following. (1) Many of us are aware of how mindfulness practice helps us

cultivate awareness of what is happening in our minds. Social science helps us expand that awareness from what is happening in our minds to what is happening in the world. (2) With this awareness, we can see how sufferings are not only individual problems but systemic ones caused by economic, political, and social structures we have created. (3) The crucial question, however, is how we can draw on mindfulness and social science to change society. (4) The insight of inter-being tells us we can play a part.

It was not until writing an earlier draft of this text that I discovered Krzysztof Konecki's work. In particular, I have come to appreciate his approach to the sociology of contemplation, beginning with its definition as "a kind of activity that leads to a certain state of mind, and at the same time, it is a method of obtaining knowledge about some objects at present, and also about getting knowledge itself, here and now, by mindful insight into the perceived (and also imagined) phenomena or objects, and also into the self" (Konecki 2018: 21). Contemplative social research, as Konecki (2018) frames it, involves the exploration of identity processes and dialogicality of the self with anamnesis engaged, following by suggestions for how meditation and contemplation might inform social scientists and economists alike; considering its applications to research, notably in "experiencing the university," and in hatha yoga's place in higher education; he also provides critical advice in figuring how to conduct self-observation and "Zen experiments" alongside their translation into more familiar sociological expressions. His work is clearly critical for the developing articulation of sociology and contemplative studies.

I am working on another article to explore mindfulness in knowledge cultural sociology's terms, in which both Konecki and Saito will figure even more prominently. But here, I want to turn to what is the most critical part of my potential contribution to contemplative studies beyond its knowledge cultural sociology: its articulation with, and distance from, power relations and violence.

The most obvious problem is when contemplative practices are appropriated for political and especially destructive ends, the most dramatic example of which can be found in Japanese militarism's appropriation of Zen Buddhism (Victoria 2006). However, that is not the only articulation of contemplative practice and kinetic violence worth considering. It is hard for me to imagine a robust contemplative studies that does not consider how it is appropriated by, or implicated in, the reproduction and transformation of power relations in everyday life.

For example, Komjathy (2018: 15) argues that contemplative practices are not only about “positive psychosomatic changes” but also “action directed toward increased peace and social justice.” In this introduction to the field, Komjathy (2018) even identifies the importance of critical race theory and other complementary perspectives to contemplative studies’ development. However, in his own explication he demonstrates the abiding power of whiteness in defining contemplative studies. Where, after all, is bell hooks in his introduction or in his sourcebook (Komjathy 2015)? And where has bell hooks been in my own learning?

How is it possible, I have often asked myself over this last decade, that I had never seriously engaged bell hooks? It is not a disciplinary thing, of course; hooks transcended her PhD origins. She is widely cited and admired in sociology. For example, the 2023 American Sociological Association President, Prudence Carter, tweeted on 15 December 2021, the day of hooks’s passing, that she “modeled brilliance and how to speak truth to power. An outspoken Black feminist scholar-activist who was critical of the dark forces of racism, patriarchy, sexual violence, class exploitation but who often peppered her speech with southern hospitality and kindness.” hooks was all “about the politics of love” (Carter 2021). In her own contribution to contemplative studies, sociologist Crystal Fleming (2022: 132) also invokes her. But Kennedy not (until now).⁴

Given my interest in the sociology of love, how could I have never engaged bell hooks even when my students and colleagues encouraged me to do so? Even when I was so focused, I did not recognise hooks’s centrality. In our fall 2019 discussion in my graduate seminar on contradictions, solidarities, and reflexivities, Jocelyn Bell, Nabila Islam, Alejandra Irene Cueto Piazza, and I began with an appreciation of how Sorokin (1954) could consider the variety of forms of love, and how “love energy” itself might be accumulated and distributed; at the same time, we were distressed by how remarkably ignorant and even disdainful (considering his approach to jazz) he was of forms of love energy expressed in minoritised populations and marginalised groups.

As an alternative, we considered it so very productive to consider how Cornel West (2017: xxi) elaborates radical love and its example in Black music:

The distinctive benchmark of Black music is soulful kenosis – the courageous and compassionate styles of genuine self-empty-

⁴ For many sociologists in the USA, especially people of colour, they will immediately think about the movement Cite Black Women: <https://www.citeblackwomencollective.org/>.

ing that give all one is and has to empower, enable, and ennoble others. In this metaphoric way, the greatest Black musicians and Black freedom fighters are the truth, in that they embody and enact a radical love (especially for an unloved people) by freely giving all they are and have to inspire and encourage others. The condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak, and the condition of being the truth is to transform your suffering with great creativity and compassion into forms and deeds that empower others to do likewise in their own ways.

But even in this most profound of our discussions concerned for solidarities, I did not consider bell hooks, even thereafter, despite Jocelyn's encouragement. It was only when I prepared for a fall 2023 graduate seminar on cultural politics and critical social theory that I developed that commitment, largely, as a result, of women of colour, especially Black women, asking why I have not read bell hooks more. And so I began.

hooks (2001) understood love as a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust, working interdependently. Her work must be central to any sociology of love, if love is to be inclusive and not another performance of white supremacy (Diefendorf & Pascoe 2023). Indeed, within the USA but not only, hooks seems to be one of the best foundations on which to link love and emancipatory politics. As she has said, "the only way out of domination is love, and the only way into really being able to connect with others, and to know how to be, is to be participating in every aspect of your life as a sacrament of love" (Yancy & hooks, 2015). But it is not just the sociology of love. She also needs to be part of the canon of contemplative studies. Consider what hooks writes:

My belief that God is love – that love is everything, our true destiny – sustains me. I affirm those beliefs through daily meditation and prayer, through contemplation and service, through worship and loving kindness. In the introduction to *Lovingkindness*, Sharon Salzberg teaches that the Buddha described spiritual practice as the "liberation of the heart which is love." She urges us to remember that spiritual practice helps us overcome the feeling of isolation, which "uncovers the radiant, joyful heart within each of us and manifests this radiance to the world." Everyone needs to be in touch with the needs of their spirit. This connectedness calls us to spiritual awakening – to love. In the biblical book of John, a passage reminds us that

“anyone who does not know love is still in death.” All awakening to love is spiritual awakening. (hooks 2001: 83)

As we consider contemplative practices and studies, we should consider not only the place of bell hooks for her insight but also her absence as an indicator of racism’s abiding power, even in a field so committed to enlightenment as contemplative studies claims to be. Moreover, it is not only a matter of anti-Blackness, powerful as that is.

Crystal Fleming, Veronica Womack, and Jeffery Proulx (2022) illustrate the variety of ways that racism abides in mindfulness and contemplative practices. They also illuminate ways beyond it. Their name and critique “white supremacy in the representation and appropriation of mindfulness in the United States and other Western societies” in order to “make visible the mutual imbrication of the present moment with historical and ongoing realities of racial domination, structural inequalities and power relations” (Fleming et al. 2022: xv). They ask who is included and excluded in mindfulness’s representations and theorisations, and I might add, its practices.

Here, they connect directly with what Hiro Saito identifies as central to sociology’s dialogue with contemplative studies. That is not surprising as Fleming is herself a sociologist. Fleming, Womack, and Proulx (2022) – and their coauthors – seek to counter the exclusion of minoritised people in mindfulness practices; they also note its relative value in addressing the stress that the minoritised are more likely to suffer. These authors are also dedicated to linking mindfulness to the emancipation anti-racist and other liberation movements seek, whether in support of these mobilisations’ activists or of those who suffer from various structural oppressions including, but not limited to, racism. Collective and racial trauma, here, is critical.

Once we move beyond mindfulness studies or contemplative practices per se – especially to yoga studies – we find far more work pluralising the subjects of contemplative transformation. Stephanie Y. Evans (2021) certainly illustrates the above, but allow me to also highlight the broader corpus of the journal *Race and Yoga* to appreciate what can be done. Given my own life trajectory and relatively recent entry into this field, I have much to learn. But I believe everyone has much to learn, especially when we consider whose traumas we consider relevant to our own knowledge activism. It is here, then, that my starting points in the sociology of solidarity return, for in that field we should by now be accustomed to ask, “solidarity with whom?”

To ask that sincerely, and recurrently, over a life course is an expression of leadership in quest. Learning from others beyond one’s familiars can

signal that culture of critical and compassionate discourse which exemplifies the learned community I most treasure.

/// Solidarity, Violence, and Love

In my autobiographical contribution to Suny and Kennedy (1999), I remarked that my teenage identification with the Black Panther movement and, by extension, my subsequent identification with the Polish Solidarity movement could have been moved by my “childhood fascination with Batman and Spider Man” and my sense of nationhood “informed by the missions of Captain America” (p. 380). At the time, I wrote that relative “nationlessness” resulted from my privilege, allowing me to choose the emancipatory movements of which I wanted to be a part.

Now I can see more clearly that my choice to focus on others’ justice struggles was less a matter of righteousness and more a matter of liberal innocence. I believed in solidarity, but I did not experience it in profound ways. I did not feel “oppression on the skin” as my 1994 coauthor, Nikki Harsanyi, did when contrasting our experiences during 1989’s tumultuous transformations (Harsanyi & Kennedy 1994). That is privilege. But that is also the past.

In these times of growing violence and manifest antipathy – when homages to “freedom and justice for all” or “Za naszą i waszą wolność” seem at best anachronisms – nobody, even those as privileged as I am, feels secure in their privilege.

Epistemic insecurity is one consequence, moving ever stronger articulations of “us” vs “them.” In these exercises, we lose our sociological imagination; we naturalise the bonds moved by conflict, histories of violence, and theologies of fate and destiny. And in that cultural transformation, we come to fear recognition of our own complicity in the injustices moving destruction. We fail to see the contradictions whose clearer articulation might move greater awareness of alternative futures, and our potential contributions to better ones.

In this condition of increasing ignorance, contemplative practice feels like resistance, and a path towards enlightenment. Maybe.

Too many in contemplative studies focus on positive psychosomatic changes presuming that if enough people engage in similar behaviour, whether through meditation or prayer, the world could be transformed. Maybe. But the accompanying sociological imagination in such practice can erase difference. Or it can treat those distant as less deserving of im-

mediate care and action because they cannot be seen. Or even if seen, in the long run their suffering might be mitigated by a politics of love and non-violence that will, in the karmic end, triumph if enough right action prevails. Maybe.

Those more deeply informed in theologies of non-violence are certainly better prepared than I am to address the philosophical possibilities involved here. But my own disciplinary grounds – focused on what can be known not only through third-person scholarship but first-person transformations of knowledgeable through bodymindful practice – demand that I ask how my foci shape not only my explanations of social relations but also: whose experiences do I deem relevant to my concerns? Whose solidarities are worth engaging and on whose terms?

The solidarities I emphasised in this text, and in my life, are variably surprising even while sociologically explicable.

As an American, I find W.E.B. Du Bois obviously right: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line” ([1902] 1969: 54). Even while my friends and colleagues make an argument that this is a profoundly global perspective still applicable in the twenty-first century (e.g., Itzigsohn & Brown 2021), I find its American accent still distracting and in need of adjustment, much as Du Bois himself did when it came to recognising the place of Jews in Poland (Kennedy 2019a). At the same time, any colour-blind alternative – an argument not only offered by those manifestly supporting white supremacy but also those feeling beyond it – is far more destructive to seeking justice and the quest in knowledge cultures to learn from dialogues around difference.

My second life identification beyond assignments at birth with Poland and the spirit of solidarity evident in 1980–1981 is complicated today by the animosities and polarisations that exist within the USA. Now is not the time to declare my sympathies, even if they should be obvious. Instead, I focus on that solidarity moved by my commitment to Ukraine’s sovereignty and defence from Russian imperialism and criminal war. I explained earlier how my love for Poland came to be; my commitment to Ukraine is its extension. And I extend my knowledge activism into a world where solidarities with Poland and Ukraine are not self-evident. And here the challenges fall into two domains, animating my current work not only as a public intellectual (Kennedy 2024b) but as someone who works to re-think what academic leadership means in these times.

First, on global solidarity in support of Ukraine.

Although through 2023 the European Union and NATO and their closest allies have enjoyed surprisingly resilient solidarities around their support for Ukraine, that engagement has not been uniform across the globe. While it comes as no surprise that China might support Russia in their common embrace of a multipolar world – or one in which the USA is diminished in its power – other nations with more experience of American than Russian imperialism reserve their judgement. Cautious positions taken by South Africa, India, and Brazil reflect not only contemporary geopolitical negotiations but also legacies of a global color line defined by Western imperialism more generally. Here, Russia benefits from the effects and memories of a Cold War, in which the Global North could treat the Global South as pawns in a contest animated by different visions of markets and democracy.

Engaging those political actors like Kenya's Martin Kimanji (Ioffe 2022) about how past imperialisms and their enduring effects articulate current geopolitical effects represents, to me, the kinds of transformative theory and practice that might enable all imperialisms to be articulated better. However, this is a long struggle, one that turns the quest for solidarity into something more than recognising convenient alliances based on bargains and deal-making. It invites us to recognise the conditions that make some struggles seeking justice obviously deserving of solidarity, while other struggles seem unfamiliar, if not also alien and suspicious, and hardly deserving solidaristic recognition.

Second, on violence in general, and around Ukraine and Israel/Palestine in particular.

I engaged in debates about détente and peace at the end of the Cold War. I was frustrated with Western European and American friends who sought peace with the USSR above freedom and liberation for those under communist rule. I sought then discursive strategies that could put freedom and peace together, even if it was based on a self-limiting notion of struggle, just as the Solidarity movement practiced in 1980–1981 (Kennedy 1990).

In Russia's war on Ukraine, self-limitation is still in play; where Russians resist, so far, weapons of mass destruction and Ukrainians limit the use of weapons from the West in their attacks on Russian territory. Those red lines are shifting as Ukraine's defence grows more challenging and visions of victory in war demand assaults not only on Russians in the Ukrainian territory it occupies but also Russia itself.

It was much easier for me to express solidarity with victims of Russian imperialism before the greatest expression of that commitment became the delivery of ever more potent weapons. During an earlier revision, I ago-

nised along with the rest of the world over Biden's decision to supply cluster bombs to Ukraine, arguing, properly, these are immoral weapons, especially in their enduring effects on innocent publics after war's immediate fires.

Figuring how to defend Ukraine from Russia's expressly evil invasion invites moral judgments that few, if any, are prepared to address with divine reason much less practical and urgent responsibility. It seems wrong to debate degrees of evil when there are some who might be able to mobilise the sanctity of non-violence against manifest violence. And yet this is what this moment demands. And in this time, I recall the lessons of martial arts.

When violence threatens, a violent response may be the only possible reply. But that limited choice may also be because we denied the very possibility of violence in the first place, and did not conceive of the prospect of Russia's 2022 invasion as real, even after the reality of 2014's events. The habitus of martial arts discourages that kind of denialism. But that habitus is no panacea, especially when powerful norms collide even among the good-hearted.

I finish this essay's last major revision in May 2024, nearly seven months after Hamas's assault on Israel, following months of death and destruction Israeli forces have rained on Gaza. Universities in the USA especially are consumed with questions of righteous action mobilised around swirling tensions pitting Palestinian solidarity against anxieties over antisemitism. My own Brown University recently realised a distinctively non-violent end to an encampment by students protesting the university's refusal to divest from corporations supplying the means for Israeli violations of human rights (Hernandez 2024).

I played no prominent public role in this transformational solidarity, but I was glad to be part of a knowledge cultural infrastructure enabling the tremendously difficult dialogue around violence and peace to move ahead rather than spiral into ever greater injustice and destructive conflict. I am working now on a knowledge cultural sociology of this Israeli/Palestinian catastrophe, drawing on observations recorded here (Kennedy 2024a), but I can conclude with one person's observations about the process of negotiated transformation I also witnessed.

My friend and colleague Tricia Rose (2024) recently published a book on systemic racism for which an interview on the local public radio was scheduled. But before Ian Donniss asked her about her publication, he invited her to talk about how Brown realised such a singular conclusion to this protest tearing other universities apart (Ramirez et al. 2024). She replied,

I think there's some key people on the campus who have been, who are close to students, respectful of the administration, but, trying to manage that tension w the bigger picture in mind. There's not evil people and good people, and that there are conflicts & disagreements, and we need to figure out how to push people who are comfortable and complacent into change, but still hold on to the notion of a community. I think (Brown University president) Paxson deserves a tremendous amount of credit for being in dialogical conversations. Some boards at other schools and some presidents feel that that's just an irrational thing to do, to talk to young people. I think Brown really benefited from our culture and from our leader and from some strategic people who were really instrumental in keeping the teams together talking. (Donnis 2024)

I agree with her assessment. While we might celebrate those figures who are leaders in their respective communities, movements, and institutions, in conclusion I prefer to draw attention to those colleagues among faculty, staff, and students who remain anonymous by design. They are transformative leaders enabling other leaders to realise points of departure otherwise impossible. These embedded and broadly respected actors are moved by a vision of peaceful transformation, treasuring community, acting out of love for all the actors involved even as they remain moved by a powerful sense of righteousness, justice, and dignity.

To assign responsibility for leadership to those charged to guide higher education's bureaucracies and finances is itself a failure of leadership, especially in these tumultuous times. We all need to be aware of the precarity of this moment, as martial arts would encourage us to sense. We all need to see how our concerns beyond the moment lead us to misrecognise the immediate commonality of our needs. To consider solidarity in these times invites polarisations of disposition, while missing the culture of critical, and compassionate, discourse that might reanimate the spirit of academic freedom. As we reconsider "solidarity with whom" we might even come to value the importance of academic freedom and intellectual responsibility. And in that quest, we can find our collective contribution to academic leadership.

Juxtaposing solidarity, martial arts, and contemplative studies is no recipe for world peace and global justice or even a rethink of leadership in higher education. I know. But their combination does allow us to imagine how figuring love, violence, and contemplative practice might be combined

in a sociology that asks questions far exceeding the currently reigning imaginations and practical solidarities. And that could matter. At least I have bet my life on it.

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/// **Abstract**

In this reflection on my sociological practice and academic leadership across four decades, I discover abiding themes otherwise hidden by the keywords featured most prominently: solidarity, martial arts, and contemplative practices. Articulations across knowledge cultures and leadership responsibilities distinguished by place, emphasis, spirit, and (non-)violence move me to conclude with an embrace of love as a force across what might

appear, on the surface, incommensurate expressions. However, they are but different manifestations of a deeper unity to be realised in transformation moved by address of the following question: solidarity with whom?

Keywords:

solidarity, martial arts, contemplation, justice, transformation, articulation, love

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SOCIOLOGY AS A WAY OF LIFE: WARSAW AND HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ENGAGE MICHAEL D. KENNEDY

Szymon Chlebowicz: Michael, when I first saw the keywords of your autobiographical piece (Kennedy 2023), I immediately thought: this could be a description of an excellent old American action movie. We start with Solidarity and Martial Arts, go through Contemplation, Justice, and Transformation, and finish with Articulation and Love!

Filip Dankiewicz: In my view, your testimony is about sociology as a spiritual exercise. You practise sociology how the ancients practised philosophy: not as an abstract theory but a way of life. Pierre Hadot (1995) argues that ancient philosophy was about self-transformation, ascetic practices, ethical living, wisdom, courage, temperance, justice, and presence. It is the perfect description of the project of your sociology, isn't it?

Anna-Larisa Hoffmann: Indeed, I love the part about your spiritual transformation, Michael. I also love that you reflect on contemplative practices critically and still decide to engage in them. You are not saying: "I'm so self-reflective that I'm stepping back." No, you recognise that these contemplative practices really mean something to you. Also, your text really spoke to me because you normalised violence. Usually, contemplative studies focus on calmness, kindness, love, and peace; somehow neglecting ubiquitous inequality and violence.

Marcin Mochocki: For me the theme of solidarity is vital, the phenomenon of "we" that doesn't necessarily require "them," which is far from obvious. In the context of militarised animosity in Ukraine and Gaza – and soon elsewhere in the world – what are the practical steps that you deem important to build long-term peace?

Michael D. Kennedy: My deepest response to your first reactions is the feeling that I have right now. And that is profound gratitude. This strikes me when thinking about sociology because we never talk about gratitude for our practice. Whereas gratitude is profoundly implicated in all sorts of contemplative practices.

Jakub Szydelski: Gratitude seems to be a bridge between sociology and so many different fields like peace-making and dialogue. And it connects with humility. To be grateful one cannot look down on the other person. In your take on sociology of martial arts I find this mutual respect, curiosity, and recognition of self-biases.

ALH: I would be happy to know more about how martial arts change a lot about one's way of life. I find it interesting as it personally resonated with me when I read your text. I felt like I'm going through similar processes, although it is hard to say for me whether they form a spiritual journey. Whenever I try to engage with contemplative practices like yoga I immediately feel they are inauthentic. That I am just following the masses on some fashionable trend. And I think it is worth striking the balance here between enjoying yourself and being critical. Recognising your own position within the broader social structures. And also dimensions that are different to all of us, such as race or gender. For me the recognition poses a question: how come yoga became so fashionable and cool now? Why is it so expensive and accessible mostly to the privileged? Why are other practices not hyped even though they are really beneficial? That makes me wonder if I should even practise contemplative arts at all. But I also realise Seligman et al. (2023) suggest there are some contemplative practices that are not body related ones, but mind-oriented. Sometimes at night I go to sleep and just think about beautiful scenarios of the future. In fact, that's already a mindfulness I recognise now, thanks to you.

MDK: One of my former students wrote this article on yoga sociology and its relationship to neoliberalism (Erkmen 2021). She wrote yoga practice is the ultimate neoliberal expression, because we are supposed to figure out ways to contort our bodies so that we become accustomed to living with discomfort. That's just like neoliberalism and how it asks us to adapt to its structures, alongside the promise that there's something better coming down the road. At the same time, yoga can help us recognise the distinction between our everyday lives and the lives we might wish to live intentionally. When I'm on the yoga mat, I'm complaining about my body, but I'm also escaping from those everyday stresses. And when I leave the yoga studio or the martial arts studio, I approach everything with more

calm, peace, and clarity. And this is actually a central theme in contemplative practice. Neuroscientists today seek how different parts of the brain light up when you are praying, appealing to something external to you, and recognising the commonality of all existence (Chang & Chakrabarti 2024). That was a wonderful insight, Anna, thank you. I'll be interested to hear how everyone builds on it.

JSz: I don't practise yoga or martial arts, but I enjoy playing squash. And when I am fully engaged in the match, I achieve this zen state, the feeling of flow. I just focus on the game, and my body intuitively does the rest. It also lets me detach myself from daily struggles. As for the contemplative part, praying gives me this opportunity to step back from the daily rush, rethink the day, and to be grateful.

FD: I was wondering whether we should distinguish some contemplative practices from others. I think that prayer and mindfulness are great examples because prayer engages with a higher deity, and mindfulness doesn't. Focusing on the breath or some physical activities through which we can sharpen our attention is one thing. But there is also the content or the object of attention, and our relationship with this object, which is of the utmost importance. So, there is the act of practice and the object of practice. I wondered whether we could swap this object or deity and have a sociological prayer. Replace deity with something else, society, state, or even sociological theories. I'm asking myself: How would that differ from a Christian prayer?

MM: Jakub mentioned the state of flow in squash. It resonates with me. I often do not succeed in organising myself in a way that both the bodily and the intellectual parts of me work together, but when I practise sport, they come together after all. There is also another part, the spiritual part. Maybe in contemplation I can access it, but I'm not sure. Spirituality is the area that I know the least. Contemplating anything sounds quite weird to be honest because we're not used to it anymore. You mentioned that it's hard to be grateful nowadays. We are taught by our culture that we should be occupied and "hungry" all the time. That's probably also why it's hard to be grateful because why would you be grateful if you can have more?

JSz: I find it weird to treat sports and martial arts as a sociological field. Because to me they are so personal. I would treat martial arts sociology in the same way as visual sociology. Rather as a method than a subject. Example of that would be Palestinian Freedom Theater that was set up by both Israelis and Palestinians. They channel their trauma, violence into drama, role-playing, dance... Playing out the trauma on stage helps both

the amateur actors and the audience to cope with extreme emotions, to let them out and process them. And for me, this is what the sociology of martial arts could be. This could be a method of engaging people from very different backgrounds to meet at a safe, neutral place and engage with one another. In the case of visual sociology, it was a scene, but here it could be an arena or dojo. A place where you can meet and let out the anger, pain, hurt in a regulated, humane way. Martial arts is not about killing the opponent, it's not about crushing them. Actually, as they throw each other across the room, as they practise together the opponents may become colleagues. In this way, martial arts sociology could be the study of how to get people together, how to engage them and how in time create this mutual understanding, respect even.

FD: What you say strictly relates to other topics, mainly personal transformation and spiritual practice. This is simply a great question, which we may add to this conversation: what is the right way to transform the world? Is it through theatre, like in the example of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and those actors you mentioned? In other words, is it through our own personal change or is it through systemic, top-down, political solutions? Maybe it's a false opposition? What would the change including both systemic and personal actions look like?

SzCh: I see peace-building as both engaging public debate and taking actions. We must find a balance so as not to fall into a trap of just talking about problems, on the one hand, or blindly acting without any theorisation on the other hand. Participation in public debate is a crucial factor for achieving real actions in society. And discussing problems is certainly a way of affecting this sphere.

MDK: One of the things I want to do is to think about how different institutions and organisational practices can be infused with some kind of spirit of loving kindness. This shapes my contemplative disposition, which has always stemmed from my Catholic roots and from me listening to music – I always had it, but I never named it as such. We might ask how naming contemplative practice helps us to recognise and appreciate it. By the way, none of you mentioned music as a contemplative practice, which surprises me in the land of Chopin; music is one of the most profound contemplative practices. Performing it, listening to it, enables you to escape from the tyranny of the cognitive, the tyranny of words. Visual sociology is a step in a good direction, but music sociology is deeper. It fosters solidarity without language, like martial arts, which are grounded strongly in our body. And I think it's really important to be able to name it so that we can

escape the domination of our everyday professional secular lives in order to be able to imagine those questions that our everyday professional lives ought to ask but don't because of our frenetic everyday lives.

ALH: You reminded me about the peacebuilders' life stories (Gopin 2023; Lederach 2005). Most of them actually came to the point that they became great at their vocation by improving their relationship with themselves. That's why this scaling up from personal change to the community, even world change, is more tangible for me. As for me, I am in a state of personal change right now, yet unrelated to an academic field. In the case of peacebuilding researchers – you or Marc Gopin – I wonder if your transformative experience was intentionally academic from the start or rather well-being practices followed your research. Experience suggests that both individual and community levels are important in peacemaking, so the question remains: how can academia, community, and peacemakers change the world for the better?

MM: I was wondering about the artists in Gaza, Jakub. People had an opportunity to let their emotions out in a safe space, whatever that means, and what's next? That's what I'm interested in. Is it a promise of peace that is possible to fulfil? Or is it merely an exercise that we carry out and then go on to continue participating in violent contests.

JSz: It is way easier to talk about peace or conflict resolution from the standpoint of countries that are relatively peaceful.

MM: If Ukraine loses, then Mr. Putin the strongman will certainly sooner or later come for us. We are not so safe in Poland. What should we do if the strongmen don't want to play by the peaceful rules? Probably also martial arts can teach us that in some cases there is no escape from violence.

MDK: Martial arts recognise the existential quality of violence. It is always present, it is always potential, and it is always potentially greater. So how do you deal with that? Not through simple slogans like peace through strength but through awareness of how to contain and transform violence. Albeit intrinsic to human experience, violence can be mitigated through sociological, theological, and public work. Think about experts on nuclear war who are stuck in a mindset saying we must do everything we can to prevent it. Putin as a judo master knows how to use this escalation debate to his advantage. He is juxtaposing the nuclear holocaust as an alternative to Russian fascism's victory against Ukraine, making the latter somehow acceptable, better than nuclear war. Meanwhile those who have experienced Putin's rule know that passivity will only extend the aggressiveness of Putin and the kind of destruction that he will bring in the future. Only

armed opposition of Western democracies and public mobilisation of Russians can stop Putin. The same goes for the Israel–Palestine war. Only grassroots Jewish and Palestinian political action against the atrocity of war can prevent the destruction of Gaza and the loss of all these innocent lives. Paradoxically, the greatest threat to Israel nowadays may come not from Hamas itself but rather from the loss of Israel’s legitimacy and global solidarity, alongside the possible convictions of its leaders for human rights violations and war crimes.

MM: Violence can be always justified because – if it’s in my interest – I can present my violence as more “moral” than yours. My violence is going to “end” the conflict and bring “peace and order.”

FD: You view solidarity as based on opposition to the other, be it Putin or strongmen. But violence creates violence. The conflict will never be resolved. If we want to think about conflict resolution, we should reflect on the positive solidarity that needs no opponents. The Solidarity movement is a great example.

MM: I don’t think Solidarity was purely a positive movement, but you are right nonetheless about the vicious circle of violence: violence creates violence. It’s very hard for me to even think about positive solidarity. I’m just so embedded in the culture of violence when choosing my country, Central Eastern Europe, and Europe over Russia. I doubt whether your kind of solidarity is even possible. Even if it’s possible, I’m just afraid of advocating for it from a position of inferiority. That’s probably one of the many reasons why I call for solidarity with Ukraine. It’s probably not because I love them, but because I know it’s in our best political interest.

FD: I think that practical and idealistic approaches don’t necessarily have to stand in opposition to one another. Last year, I had an opportunity to engage with the thoughts of Ukrainian theologians (see Dymyd 2023) reflecting on the war in Ukraine (Dankiewicz 2023). And I believe their message is the following. Yes, we protect our land. Yes, we engage in this antagonistic relationship. But we also see pathology. We see that what differentiates us from them is that they are embedded in this antagonistic logic, even if Russians obscure it in the name of peace. For Russians, the state is the demigod (or a mortal god in Hobbesian terminology). Every death of a Russian soldier is a sacrifice on the altar of the empire or *russkij mir*. Whereas Ukrainians refuse such logic, or at least some of them do. They intentionally dissociate themselves by rewriting Ukrainian history in a semi-mythical way, highlighting the role of positive solidarity and Christian ideals in Cossack communities. Practical action demands, the survival

of the nation demands, these ideals, just like firing bullets. Nevertheless, they keep in mind this fundamental distinction.

MM: Is their position something along the following lines? “We engage in this practical firing of bullets to the enemy while being aware of the fact that this is wrong, and we therefore do not fully engage in the act of violence.”

FD: They find deeper meaning in martyrdom and in Christian values. The way Ukrainian theologians phrase their metaphysics of death may be informative. They are not sacrificing themselves for the sake of the nation’s greatness. On the contrary, the act of sacrifice in itself is something they value because of its connection to the pre-political Christian community, which thrives in the midst of war. But maybe they are also wrong, it may be just another justification of Ukrainian nationalism...

JSz: Solidarity is usually based on scapegoating (Girard 1986). We create an ingroup by selecting an outgroup: somebody against whom we act. In Poland, the Solidarity movement connected people against the communist elites. Maybe in the same vein we can imagine solidarity of Ukrainians (and some Russians) who are against Putin. I don’t expect people to share one object of love during times of crisis. Instead, I would settle for them sharing the same hatred for someone. And maybe from this hatred might emerge some kind of understanding and communication. If the hate is already there, we should capitalise on it instead of forcing a very generous, selfless, intricate feeling of love.

MM: So, can solidarity emerge without a scapegoat? I doubt it...

FD: Pawel Rojek (2009) researched the semantics of both the discourse of Polish Solidarity and the Polish United Workers’ Party. He concludes that the discourse of Solidarity wasn’t only a reversed version of the communist discourse. They were not just taking the rhetoric of the communist party and merely reversing it. He argues that they created some positive, creative input. Maybe this is what you’re talking about, this movement arising from the opposition to the communist party, but then transforming maybe into something more promising than just an element of political, antagonistic relation. But we must also keep in mind that the broad programme of Solidarity collapsed after 1989. Maybe this impact arising from positive solidarity wasn’t enough to keep the movement going. While accepting this fact, it doesn’t necessarily imply that the impact of positive solidarity sometime in the future won’t be able to sustain itself. I don’t believe such kind of solidarity is impossible or that we have to exclude it from our sociological imagination.

AH: For me as a German it is really striking how the Solidarity movement as well as the solidarity concept are evergreen themes in Poland. I am sure each country has its own agenda, and this is also why some prioritise social, economic, or historical forms of solidarity. I have the intuition that – in martial arts – solidarity is built around “strength,” while in sociology, around “understanding.” In martial arts you can become in solidarity with a group or a person by preparing your body through enhanced strength and common body practice, while in sociology – by listening and understanding.

JSz: So, we’ve started with the ideological and the political to finally arrive at the sociological aspects of solidarity.

FD: Sociology as a social science is predominantly a critical endeavour, in a loosely Kantian sense. Sociologists should examine activists who want to engage in solidarity with the Ukrainians, or university students who participate in protests and demonstrations in defence of Palestine. We should shed light on the hidden social motives of their actions, which might push them to engage in solidarity, not for “true” solidarity’s sake. To give a historical example, Max Weber writes extensively on mystics in different religions and Christian denominations. He argues that their goal wasn’t exactly to become one with God but to stay in this mystical stage because mystical habitus in itself was something they valued (Weber 2019). Being a mystic was attractive in itself. The situation of protest or a huge rush of emotional energy, following the same principle, might be attractive in itself. What is more, the situation might make it hard to access real solidarity, which was supposed to be the goal of those protesting in a given situation. So, I would add to our list the important role of a sociologist performing a critical evaluation. Only after such an evaluation can we hold a serious conversation.

MDK: I have always defined myself as a critical sociologist. I’m profoundly unsatisfied with most politicians’ approach to social change, because they often don’t recognise sociological realities. They don’t recognise social structures; they don’t recognise how institutions work. They don’t recognise the contradictions of existence, because they believe they can supersede them through their own interventions. This is where I show the limits of my loving kindness. I can’t stand it when we distinguish between the abstract and the empirical. The ideal and the real. I can’t stand it when we use these categorical distinctions, because such terminology is a way of positioning our discussions in a fashion that limits the creativity of our engagement. Instead, some key concepts that I’ve come to embrace are “epistemic justice” or “epistemic injustice” (Fricker 2009). I think we need

to create that space to be able to ask challenging questions and find solutions that are based on community action and try to transform violence. We as sociologists need to think about what are the social forces that enable a deeper reflexivity, a deeper awareness and possibilities for a transformational solidarity (Kennedy & Tadesse 2019).

SzCh: Recently, Ruth Wodak (2021) explored this deeper reflexivity in her critical analysis of the strategies used by European governments to legitimise their restrictive measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. She identifies four frames – religious, dialogic, trust-invoking, and warlike – employed to build national solidarity in the face of the threat of death. However, according to her, the constructed solidarities were based more on fear than on hope, focusing on conserving rather than transforming societies.

MDK: One of the things I love about our sociological discipline is that it's constantly emergent. It's not about the state, it's not about the economy. It is about how we live together and how we destroy each other. And so, if we can't constantly use the context of our learning in everyday life to pose new questions and imagine anew then we're killing sociology. One wisdom I have gained as I have aged is that developing science is not about how many people I can find to replicate me, but rather how many people I can support in superseding what I've come to know. And so that quality of emergence is something we need to think about: how to cultivate and practise it? This is where your discussion of sociology and its plurality helps, beginning with the distinctions among professional sociology, policy sociology, critical sociology, and public sociology (Burawoy 2021). In fact, critical sociology has this emergent spirit at its foundation. Always looking at the unacknowledged assumptions that are suffocating classical sociology, and at the unintended consequences that public sociology sometimes doesn't want to consider.

MM: This is the question of academic leadership. I think that we can feel a great lack of it at our universities. We are led by managers, not leaders. Don't get me wrong, I probably wouldn't want to be a leader. It's so hard to be courageous and reflective. It's hard to start a conversation, for example, with the pro-Palestinian protesters right now at our campuses. Those in the positions of authority often seem to fail in taking the responsibility and courageous action. One of the most important questions of our time remains: why is that happening?

JSz: I guess it's really hard. There's a problem with leadership, probably because we talk so much about it. Everybody wants to be a leader. There are only leaders...

MM: But somebody has to be a follower.

JSz: Exactly! Our times encourage people to write their own story as a hero of their own life. And it's rarely the story of a follower.

MM: Everybody's a leader. Yet somehow, we have a crisis of leadership.

MDK: The question of leadership adequacy oftentimes becomes the substitute for engaging what the problem really is. And that is the structure of communication in which the leader is implicated. Speaking from experience of leadership in academic administration, I think my best moments were when I listened to people offering novel approaches. Those critics were helping us to see the challenges and to address them by mobilising our institutions to find better pathways. And so, leadership is not about finding the person most suited to lead, but rather leadership is about designing more robust, resilient forms of communication. This practice allows those formally charged with leadership to have a wider optic, to anticipate, plan, and address not only today's problems but also those months and years ahead. Strongmen, for example, never think beyond the present. They imply their resilience when they single-handedly solve the present problem. This is the key difference between a strongman and a good leader. The first one is focused only on himself and his proposition for solving current problems. A really good leader would also want other people to join in the problem solving, in trajectory-setting, involving those who will be affected by leadership's decisions. Strongmen don't amplify other voices. Whereas good leaders always amplify other voices because by recognising others they increase solidarity.

JSz: The key is responsibility and humility, being eager to exchange places and to serve others.

MDK: There is a sequence of leadership styles that creates a continuum: order, rule, hegemony, legitimacy, trust, peace, and love. All of them imply a coordinated life, but "order" doesn't tell you how it's realised. "Rule" implies a strongman dictating order. "Hegemony" clarifies the coercive mechanisms that enforce the status quo of power. "Legitimacy" suggests consensus but often masks the difference between voluntary and coerced acceptance. "Trust" implies an idealistic state of consensus without the use of power. "Peace" never exists. But we *can* talk about degrees of peacefulness and love. "Love" is often seen as whimsical, but it evokes a sense of vulnerability, gratitude, and spirit of collaboration. And this is why I want to just conclude that little sequence there with love. Because when we talk about love here, almost inevitably we'll chuckle, we'll laugh. Love is playful and beautiful. And that's why love is a good subject because

you can't be loving without having playfulness inside of you. This is where I end. The idea of loving kindness in sociology makes me smile. And we're all smiling a little right now.

/// Postscript by Michael D. Kennedy

I am so grateful for this transcript. But I must say that I feared reading it; I worried that it would not stand up to my memory. The live conversation with the students was definitely among the best conversations with students I have had in my life. That is all the more remarkable given that I had never worked with any of them before. However, this transcript does that conversation justice. More, it allows for us to read, pause, and reflect on some profound issues to emerge from the engagement.

Of course, I was honoured to have these students read my work so closely. But the ways in which they engaged it offers lessons to all sociologists. Here are just a few things I would mark as significant and worthy of further reflection.

First, what is the relationship between our everyday lives and our scholarly practice? We often bracket them, but we know – sociologically yet intuitively – that they shape one another. In my essay moving their questions, I am explicit about this, especially with the martial arts preceding its sociology, which in turn allows me to engage contemplative studies with a rather novel frame. We each might do more of that kind of rearticulation, whether through sports, music, or other immersions in the present, or with more deliberate concentrated work, as in prayer or meditation. Sociology has much to gain from that address; and contemplative studies has much to gain from its sociology. That became most evident when we began to compare contemplative practices in sociological terms.

Second, we encountered more familiar sociological subjects, but I found our conversation to be quite innovative. In particular, we need to develop a sociology that takes more seriously the cultural construction of “idealist” and “practical” distinctions so as to rearticulate them into more sociological questions. For example, under what conditions does idealism prove transformational in real terms? To what extent does that distinction elevate a certain category of policy-minded intellectual over intellectuals who can see the bigger picture in which these policies function? Considering “positive solidarity” is a good example of both.

Finally, this conversation has led me to think anew about qualities of leadership, and even teaching. So many professors want to be sure that their

students follow their example in a kind of “homosocial” reproduction. So many leaders want to assure that their followers support the leader’s ideas, and then they engineer practices with carrots and sticks to maximise an outcome that looks like good management. But is good management, good leadership, based on assuring a smooth organisation? Or is it one that is disruptive of convention, and rather looks in our routines and our imaginations for the things we cannot see, for the practices that make some invisible and unworthy of engagement? If our organisations are dedicated to anticipating the future, and recognising the excluded, we cannot be so ignorant.

Listening to these students certainly demonstrated to me just how important it is to have communication structures and practices that allow for voices with less institutional or credentialed authority to be heard. And maybe in the dialogue, new ideas can be found, new expressions articulated, new modes of understanding realised. This conversation certainly reaffirmed my faith in just that.

In the end, these wonderful students were struck with my emphasis on gratitude at the start of our conversation. We all find gratitude too uncommon in our professional practice. To my mind, that is enough to mark this conversation as genuinely transformational. I am grateful to Jakub, Anna, Filip, Marcin, and Szymon for their time and thoughtfulness.

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SCHOLAR AND PEACE PRACTITIONER: A LIFE

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My books on peacebuilding have followed the course of my life's practices and engagement, and my life's peacebuilding practices have led to the journeys undertaken in my books (Gopin, 2000, 2002, 2009, 2012, 2016, 2017, 2021). Since I was a child, I have sought to know what is right to do in a broken world and what will make the world somewhat less violent. From a moral consequentialist perspective, I wanted to know what will save the most lives in violent situations, and what are the most morally relevant character traits. This has been a thematic question through the ages for philosophers of wisdom. The desire to search for ways to save the lives of innocents has been ingrained in me from childhood due to family tragedies, including the accidental death of my uncle when he was four. I have based myself as well on extensive religious and philosophical courses of study.

Experiments with interventions in war zones throughout my adult years and practice in a small field called international peacebuilding have prompted me to write books. These works have been a place where I could integrate peacebuilding with my first field of philosophical ethics and moral decision-making in religious traditions. I have also embedded in the books my style of interdisciplinary thinking, which prepares me for real-world ethical practices. My writings have been based on a life-long and interdisciplinary examination of world religions, violence and peace in those religions and cultures, the neuroscience of prosocial emotions, positive psychology, and moral reasoning. In all of these disciplines, I have leaned towards a better and more effective form of conflict analysis and resolution.

The books have also been deeply personal and a place of my growth as a practitioner. They are a place for me of reflection, refuge, self-criticism, self-care, and exploration of future possible worlds. For 40 years, coffee shops with small tables – I am sitting and writing at one now – have been an oasis from the horror of seeing the world through the eyes of war victims. I see before me those people I helped and got to know, with their swollen eyes, blank stares, and nervous twitches. Just days before they had narrowly escaped being killed; they were weighed with the guilt of having left behind their cherished loved ones.

The memories of so many have passed through me, much as I try to forget. Some victims have even healed well from war, and in my small way, I helped that process of healing, as did so many other people. But due to the excess of empathic distress in my nature, my mind remains in those first terrible moments of encounter and learning. I see these victims as they looked when we first met, in their worst hour, and I see them repeatedly and involuntarily. Worse, I see what they saw; I feel it. I am stuck in time, as an involuntary witness and sponge of information, recalling vividly their stories of atrocities witnessed and experienced. Contagious or acquired trauma has had real effects on my body; though these are now mostly gone, they sometimes lasted for years.

Due to this difficult personal experience, I have tried through my writings and practices to chart for myself and my students a healthier course of interventions. I wanted to follow an intellectual and professional path away from empathic distress and acquired trauma, and yet I wanted still to be deeply engaged in the ethics, art, and science of conflict resolution. I have tried to emphasise a path of joyful care and service, and I am now convinced by the evidence that with more enlightened teaching and training, improved ethics, and vision, we can care for the world's wounded in better ways than we have done, as we repair and rebuild for a flourishing future. The more meaningful we make these encounters of care the more millions of people will find this path of service to be a healthy and beneficial way to live in and engage with a troubled world. This has been a journey to change the balance of society's reactions away from indifference and fear, or deep empathy and burnout, and towards confident, joyful engagement and responsibility.

I have found the path towards this end-state of healthy encounters and meaning to be the most challenging of mental and emotional habits for the mind to develop. It is the mind and the body that intrigue me endlessly in this challenge. It is not that I am less interested in society as a whole or

large patterns and movements of a social, political, economic, and military nature. But I am proposing that those large movements and patterns often cause us to overlook and avoid examining the basic building block of any societal evolution: the human being's habituated mind and body.

It is the difficult job of the mind and body to take a person from a life of escape and selfishness to a life of peacebuilding, engagement, and giving. Moving from despair and withdrawal from the pain of this world towards a flourishing compassionate engagement and service is the job of a disciplined mind and body. Once this transition occurs and we discover how to teach what I have come to call "Compassionate Reasoning," then engagement in the most difficult places can become attractive to younger generations – as attractive as any practice of joy and meaningfulness.

My greatest focus for the first 20 years of my research and study was traditional ethics across the range of world religions, with a special focus on global wisdom literature, ethical laws, and rituals that generate compassion in the human mind and in habits of behaviour. But for personal reasons I also had to make sense of why and how religions founded by non-violent thinkers and prophets could turn genocidal, particularly against my people, the Jewish people. The Holocaust and centuries of atrocities have always haunted my mind and heart. My nature is especially prone therefore to extreme empathy and empathic distress from the awareness of tortured suffering in those people and civilisations that I meet.

I had to examine all religions equally, including Judaism, since I had been influenced by many ethical schools, especially deontology or Kantianism. I knew that an empirical, robust, and honest look at religious traditions across the globe would yield at least some sacred texts and traditions that advocate violence. This was a painful evolution of discovery for me since I grew up in a deeply religious and ethnically insular community. But on the bright side, the journey yielded a methodology of "hermeneutic peacebuilding," inspired in part by Hans Gadamer's (1979) fusion of horizons, across the lines of many religious traditions and denominations. It gave me the tools to see what was missing from the best efforts of political science, international relations theory, and diplomacy to create effective peace treaties. The very nature of these treaties excluded religious conservatives and/or extremists.

I acquired the tools to conceive new methods of combining conflict resolution practices, religious traditions, and ethical practices. This has yielded good results over the past 20 years as governments since 9/11 have scrambled to understand both the good of religious actors traditionally left

out of consideration and the dangers within religious traditions. Most importantly we have come to see the destructive consequences of all states that manipulate religious militancy for their national interests or their interest in conquering or controlling neighbouring states. I have been called upon many times, especially since 9/11, to engage media and government agencies in building a more rational approach to conflict through considering world religions, their adherents, their doctrines, and their power structures.

It has been gratifying to see that there has been much progress in this regard and that it has helped to neutralise the threat of at least some forms of religious extremism. Of course, the last place that governments look for trouble is “under the hood” – at themselves and their own cultures and religions. Thus, much remains to be done in terms of self-examination by states and cultures. Various governments in the West and across the world have continued to weaponise and instrumentalise radical religion for the sake of strategic, economic, and military objectives. Nevertheless, the problem is far more widely exposed now and there are efforts to do the contrary.

This focus on self-examination as the key to effective conflict resolution has led me over the years to look at the consequences of the inner life of individuals for their effectiveness or failure as peacebuilders. The same can be said of governments and cultures, however, and that is why I keep studying the psychological capacities of the individual to grow and evolve in healthy ways. My practice and my research have moved towards the individual’s inner life and the model of effective changemakers and peace-makers, but this necessarily has implications for policy and the behaviour of states in war and peace.

I had spent most of my adult life on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and so I naturally delved into the inner lives of Arab and Jewish peacemakers, to explore self-examination, the evolution of identity construction, and peacebuilding. It has been a long hard road, but I have travelled this road with many amazing people. These are not “famous” people in the Western world, which defines fame, power, and impact through a very limited lens. Nevertheless, their stories, though rarely told, hold the secret to better forms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

I decided to do whatever I could to tell the stories of extraordinary exemplars of peace. I wanted the world to know them, to stop ignoring the most significant Jewish and Arab relationships, which could give birth, through their model, to a nonviolent future. These peacemakers are a unique subset of human beings, partners in peacemaking across one of the longest and most serious enemy lines in modern times. In a certain

sense, they stand on the bridge of a divide that goes back many centuries, to the very foundations of a split in that cluster of religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – known as the Abrahamic religions. There are very serious and violent political divides, but my focus was on the inner lives of the few because the key to creating true partnerships across enemy divides is the inner life. Let me explain how.

From friends to lovers to business partners to academic colleagues the hardest challenge is a happy partnership. A partnership that is respectful, trustful, and generous is a precious and rare human experience whose maintenance requires constant effort, much trial and error, and long-term evolution. Imagine how much more difficult and how much more consequential – indeed fateful – is the difficulty of creating trusted partnerships and friendships across enemy lines where the blood of the innocent – the blood of your own family – has been shed. The obstacles are overwhelming, the pressure from both sides to desist is unimaginable, and the inner challenges of guilt-ridden thoughts of betrayal are intense. Peace partners sometimes find themselves deserted by their closest friends, family members, and neighbours as a price for their association with a peace partner.

Almost all of the peace partners have either suffered violence themselves or witnessed it against their loved ones. Almost all of them face serious opposition from those people whom they would usually rely upon for help and support: family, community, and teachers. How do they cope? How do they even flourish?

/// Self-Reflection at the Core

My principal focus and interest have been the practice and power of self-reflection. This is particularly important for me because I have concluded after decades of observation that a central source of endless conflict and misery between enemies – but also a central source of misery in families and communities – is the emotional, cognitive, and ethical failure of self-examination. An inability to examine oneself is one of the greatest impediments to peace because it prevents the crucial calculations of science and reason that are anchored by *all* the facts about oneself and one's group.

A lack of self-examination also prevents an analysis of power relations and material relations. It prevents a person from making a thorough examination of justice and fairness because one never sees one's own role in, or responsibility for, destructive conflict. We all have a hard time looking at ourselves in the mirror, and the negative results of this fact affect each and every

one of us every day in our conflicts. Extraordinary peacemakers know this, and that is why they are working on themselves all the time. They are not saints, and they are not perfect, but I have observed for decades that they are far more conscious of their internal life and struggles, and much more ready than average people to “look in the mirror” as they struggle for answers.

/// Self-Examination as an Antidote to Despair

Self-examination is also the principal means of confronting and overcoming despair as we will also learn below, from Ibrahim. In my earlier years, before studying the neuroscience of “burnout,” I posited that reflection is the ultimate defence against empathic distress because mental and emotional exhaustion are often due to an inability to accept the limits of one’s capacities and the limits of what can be fixed about the past or the present. Reflection and self-examination, however, lead to a deeper understanding of limits, that is, to a level where these limits are grieved but there is also an embrace of the extent of human capacity. Critical reflection encourages taking responsibility for things we may have evaded, but it also exposes the wrongness of seizing *too much* personal responsibility, as doing so is often a prelude to burnout. Reflection is therefore very forgiving, and frequent forgiveness seems to prevent burnout – at least this was my operating hypothesis.

There is a good reason why thousands of years ago the Greeks expressed the essence of wisdom in two words: “Know thyself.” I started to notice among the best peacemakers that inner knowledge is the key to authenticity and an antidote to despair. It seems to be for them the path of authentic growth, and it is the key to nonviolence in the face of adversity, injustice, and the tragedies of war. I have wondered what it would take for whole nations, tribes, and religious communities to do the same, and what rewards this would reap in terms of evolutionary growth and wisdom.

I want to examine the practice of knowing oneself by introducing the story of a little-known peacemaker who had a very strong impact on me. He was one of the members of the Bereaved Parents’ Circle, a group of hundreds of Palestinian and Jewish families, all of whom had lost an immediate family member to the violence.

I made transcripts of Ibrahim’s recounting of his story, and I want to quote it extensively. I have edited it minimally (only for the sake of clarity and to eliminate unintelligible phrases) in order to maintain Ibrahim’s syntax and idiom.

/// A Word on Theory from Practice

I want to emphasise that my interpretation of every word of Ibrahim's, this non-scholar activist, is a deliberate act of mine as a scholar and theory builder of conflict resolution. I have become quite convinced in recent years that it is inside the minds and hearts of victims, and of would-be aggressors who have consciously worked through their pain, that we can perceive the best theory. It is they who innovate, who experiment, who invent a winding road that passes between radical injury and revenge and beyond to inner and outer peace. They crawl out of the hell of cyclical rage and revenge and into the mysterious region of peacebuilding, reconciliation, and the struggle for justice. In the process, they build unique theories of peacemaking that we must study. Therefore, I want to give Ibrahim's account as an extended example.

/// Ibrahim's Story Analysed

These are Ibrahim's words (presented as block quotations) as he describes the Parents' Circle families. I will integrate my content analysis in the body of the text:

Those families [...] lost relatives from the first degree, sons or fathers or sisters or brothers. And they follow strange way, to sit and dialogue, to revenge in another way, to sit and make dialogue with the others.

Ibrahim emphasises the choice between “revenge” and “dialogue.” For Ibrahim, in all of his thought processes about violence, the central moral choice is between revenge and dialogue. Because he is so honest and self-examined, Ibrahim articulates here the essential moral problem of violence. Violence against our loved ones demands the *moral* response that has been sanctioned by most human societies since the beginning of time and that is often referred to as “revenge.”

Revenge is not immoral according to most human traditions. Rather it is a moral choice to achieve justice for victims. Countless cultures have institutionalised and authorised revenge. But most wisdom traditions – often in the same cultures (!) – have concluded that revenge is *at the same time* a very problematic choice, because it guarantees an endless cycle of injustices, each injustice demanding more vengeance.

The truly self-examined person, however, also understands that revenge is a morally problematic choice. Thousands of years ago, the great Greek playwright Aeschylus examined this question in depth. Both the Bible and the Qur'an, for example, allow for revenge under very particular circumstances, but they also discourage its use at the very same time! Why? Because the boundaries of revenge and justice are entirely unclear, and the effects of revenge are almost always cyclical and therefore destructive to human happiness and the goal of creating a just society.

/// Ibrahim's Understanding of Revenge

Returning to our bereaved parent, Ibrahim's examination of revenge and the inner life is every bit as sophisticated as that of the classical writers. More importantly, it is wedded to an examination of the complicated choice between revenge, justice, and nonviolence. He argues that nonviolent engagement with enemies can result in a more authentic form of justice, and more importantly, *a better kind of revenge*, so that nonviolence and revenge merge, and violence dissipates. In other words, there may be a way to separate revenge – or getting even – from violence and aggression.

Ibrahim:

The normal feeling, the natural feeling when you are lost is to go and revenge. This is the first thinking [...] this is the first answer for the first question in your mind, that the only solution is to go and revenge immediately. Because when you are losing, the pain and the sorrow of the loss, it's building a new energy, a very, very strong and huge energy. This energy – I can describe what's happened to me – it's more dangerous than the energy of nuclear weapon. And as you know, the nuclear energy, you can use it to make darkness or you can use it to make light. But the first thing you are thinking after is how to go and revenge.

The tragedy as I told you, before four years from now [...] I build small family, composed from one son and two daughters. This family, despite the way we are a small family, a small family living under full occupation, we still believe in dialogue, and this is very important, dialogue inside the house first of all. Peace inside the house. Because if you cannot make peace inside the house, you will never make it outside the house. And this is the problem of the peace here between Palestine and Israel. I mean the Israelian

[sic] people have to start to make peace inside their society, the Palestinian people must make peace inside their society, I have to make peace inside my family, he has to make peace inside his family; then we will go out.

Ibrahim is arguing that peace in society depends first and foremost on peace in the home. The most important preparation for Israelis and Palestinians who are making the difficult transition to meeting and knowing each other is their home lives. It is an essential prerequisite that they work on peace in the family as a part of the path towards reaching out to enemies. This is an interesting theme that I heard throughout my years working with the Palestinian side of the conflict.

Here is Ibrahim's succinct and cogent critique of the entire Oslo Peace Process, whose leaders might have benefited from his words:

The main obstacles in front of the peace, all the people asking why is there no peace here. The answer divide to two things. The first one, that all trying to bring the peace from up [i.e., top] to down. That's why all the agreements falling down with all the Israeli. And the second thing, the settlements. The settlements in the West Bank are considered one of the most important obstacles in front of the peace process. I don't have a problem with a nice guy from Tel Aviv or from Israel to come and build factory close to my village and to create chance of working to my friend. I have problem with the settlers who have a different ideology than the other Israeli who lives inside the Green Line.

Now tragedy strikes Ibrahim to his core:

So, it's three and a half years ago now, a settler runs over my son on his way to school with his mother. And they called me on the telephone that the only son that I have is injured. Ok, "the only son that I have is injured" is so far away from my mind for two reasons. I think because I am a peaceful one, I am a Palestinian who think within the peace. It's not easy because the peace in the Palestinian society is not as well [accepted as] in Tel Aviv or within the Israeli society. With whom are you going to talk about the peace, the majority of the people there are against your idea? So to be a peaceful man in West Bank under full occupation is not

easy. On the contrary, sometimes there may be some people who will harm you. But despite all of this situation, I took the decision, I have to be a peaceful man. I decided to be an ambassador for peace, not a soldier for war. A settler run over my only child that I have, the only thing that I have, that he lives with me 12 years ago, and he was killed immediately.

The natural feeling, the first feeling that you face it, that somebody come and take a flower from your garden, that you have to go to his garden and take another flower. But imagine, this is a flower or a tree, what about the son? Someone took your son. In Arabic it says a child is a part of earth.

So, the first thing, the first ambition after this tragedy [...] it's to go and revenge. Have your revenge by killing other Israelis [sic]. This is the first ambition. It's a natural thing. It's something that is other than you control, that you have to go and kill another Israeli, innocent as your son.

/// Introspection and the Triumph of Compassion and Reason

Here is the crucial turning point in the story. We see the heroic strength and resilience of Ibrahim's personality emerge triumphant; we note the astonishing level of self-examination. Note the emphasis on his "I," his self, and its centrality in his emotional survival and transformation. Here we see how a life of introspection liberates two essential functions of the human mind, the capacity for reason, and the capacity for compassion. Both seem essential in the transformation of revenge into heroic reconciliation. This is something that I had concluded in the early 2000s and would later make into a formal theory of ethics and neuroscience, which in 2021 I named "Compassionate Reasoning," as the reader will see below.

Ibrahim's introspective moral reasoning in his worst moment of agony leads to a more generalised compassion for *all* people *as humans*, for *all* victims as simple victims regardless of their identity. Listen to Ibrahim's remarkable words, which I have kept in my mind to this day:

But I am the one who was in touch with myself, and this is one of the very important things. **I am the one** who used to be in touch with Israeli people. I know that the majority of the Israeli people I succeed to build very deep social relations with them, and I am sure that – I speak the Hebrew language well, and this is

very important, I listen to the Hebrew language well. I saw, I am sure there are so many families from the Israeli side losing their children in the same way, when the Palestinian comes and explodes himself inside a bus or inside a coffee shop.

I ask myself another question, another important question. If I go and revenge, if this will come [i.e., bring] back my son? Who will care about my two daughters [if I commit suicide]? All of these questions, I don't find answers for them. But what I find one answer, that revenge will not put any results on both sides.

/// The Inner Path from Revenge to Heroic Reconciliation

Here the story becomes more profound as we see Ibrahim as a champion of reconciliation:

I was in touch with Israeli people and what's happening to my son was in the newspapers, the Israeli newspapers and on the radio. One of my friends in Tel Aviv he ask me, "Who is this boy? Who is this family?" And I told him, "That's me." And they know my son and they know me well. So he starts to cry at the mobile [phone] at this time. He, the Jew in Tel Aviv, "starts to cry at the mobile at this time," at the time that he hears of the boy he knew and loved, a Palestinian boy, now dead. He knows that his friend Ibrahim will never be the same ever again.

Every time I read this line, every time I remember Ibrahim's care-worn face as he said this to me so close to my face, eye to eye, I have to read it again and again, as if I am searching for an answer. Every time, my eyes moisten and my throat tightens like a strangulating knot, my breathing accelerates. After 35 years of this Arab/Israeli war that I have fought against, 35 years of resisting this abundant killing of innocents, I read these lines as I edit them, and I still burn with sorrow.

Why in particular does the weeping of the Jew on the mobile phone upon hearing of the death of Ibrahim's son affect me this way? Is it because I have felt his pain before when I have been on the other end of the telephone consoling Palestinians and my fellow Jews? Is it because I also have two daughters and a son, just like Ibrahim? Is that Jew on the mobile phone a role model for me, a kin relation that permits me to mourn, to let go of

a polarised view of Jew and Palestinian and just feel the pain of humanity? Am I proud of this Jew amid all this insanity, and is it the pride that makes me weep? Or perhaps exposure to this pain of the Jew in Tel Aviv and to Ibrahim, to their shared moment, is just an open trauma for me now after so much of the same that I have seen, so much that I have had to hear.

Perhaps there is a more hopeful motivation to my reaction. Perhaps it is the absolute truth of parenting and loss and solidarity and the unconditional evil of violence against children. Maybe that moment on the phone gives me hope, a moment where all ethnic and national narratives fall into a pile of rubbish before the kinship of parents who love their innocent, beautiful, amazing children – children now buried beneath their feet.

I wish I could capture that moment in time. I wish I could have a photograph of the parent on each end of the mobile phone, a photograph of the Jewish parent weeping, and a photograph of the Palestinian parent Ibrahim, and a recording of the conversation. I wish I could make this conversation into the Eleventh Commandment, a commandment that says, “Thou shalt not stand idly by the tears of parents for their dead children.”

Ibrahim continues:

After two days or three days they [the Jews] will ask me, they will call me that they would like to be with me. A group of thirty-five persons would like to visit me... to be with me. I say, “This is my privacy, this is my house, these are my friends that I have succeeded to build good relations with them since ten years ago. I am going to see them at my house.” And thirty-five persons came to my house, and we prepared breakfast, lebneh and hummus, something like that. And we sit.

We start to cry. That’s it. Because when you’ve lost something from your family, it means a lot. It means no Fridays with the son. No social occasions with the son. Everything gone away. The things that stay are the memories and the pictures.

/// Towards a Life Committed to Justice and Peace

The power of shared mourning is apparent here, but what is less apparent is the resilient strength of the peacemakers, the social genius combined with superhuman strength to go on, carrying their pain, and proceeding to work with everyone, even with those who created the atmosphere that has led to so much injustice and pain.

Ibrahim's concluding message for the diplomatic elites:

So my message to the people here... the change starts from the house, from the family. If there is no change... from the family, from the childhood, from the mother of the family, from the school, from the university, they will never have change from the leaders. We need a change and we are not going to do it alone, as Israeli and Palestinian, because we live inside the mud and we need people to rescue us, to help us...

/// The Origins of Compassionate Reasoning in My Life

It has been 20 years now since my conversations with Ibrahim. After that time, I became deeply immersed in peacemaking and religious diplomacy as a citizen diplomat in Syria and elsewhere. I visited Damascus, Syria every year from 2005 to 2011. Right up until the fateful days of the Arab Spring, I brought my students from George Mason University to study and practice diplomacy with me in Syria. But 2011 ended all that because it became essential to side with the victims of genocide in Syria, to take care of them and apply the lessons of interfaith conflict resolution to their survival and to the management of severe trauma among the war refugees in Turkey and Jordan. My work, and research for several books, moved my focus towards developing training for “conflict healing.” Secondly, I developed a psychosocial, neuroscience-based form of moral reasoning called “Compassionate Reasoning,” as I recounted in my most recent volume for Oxford University Press (Gopin 2021). This book was written in response to the intense pain that I experienced while trying to help Syrian refugees survive and resist their cultural and physical destruction.

This work led to some serious trauma in my own life and many upheavals. I had to face the effects on my psyche of war and my work among war victims. I realised that I could not persist in the practice of conflict healing and peacebuilding without a much deeper analysis of the human being's interaction with suffering. This brought me straight back to “old friends” of my younger years, that is, I remembered my work on a philosopher of religious moral sense, Samuel David Luzzatto (1800–1865), conversations with the Dalai Lama (2012), study of Viktor Frankl (2013), the *Tao Te Ching* (LaFargue 2010), and many other psychologists and philosophers. I reread many books on resilience and depression and I especially followed the evolution of Dr Martin Seligman from his focus on depression to a focus on

positive psychology and cognitive therapy (Seligman 2011; Seligman et al. 2016). Steven Pinker's work on war and positive social change also had a deep impact (2011). I further delved into the amazing work of neuroplasticity, particularly the neuroscience of compassion.

/// Every Moment a Teacher: A Stranger's Fate in a Hotel Room on the Border of War

I remember a time in the field when I had minutes to convince a young man not to go over a border and into a war. He felt driven to seek out the murderers of his brother, who were part of one of the worst terrorist organisations in recent history. A friend of his begged me to intervene but without giving me any advice on how to save this complete stranger. I agreed to see him, and he entered my hotel room in a Middle Eastern country. I looked him in the eyes, this underweight and agitated, oddly smiling and barely 20-something survivor of absolute horror, which I will not describe here. Considering whom he wanted to go up against, I was certain that – despite his considerable intelligence and strategic ability, which was obvious after I listened to his story – he would die if he left my room and went over the border. I had no idea how to organise my questions and my thoughts.

The moral choice was what to say to him and how to say it in a way that would save his life. It was clear to me that although he was very intelligent, strategic, and capable, he was making a decision driven by survivor guilt and desperation in order – most likely – to join his brother in death, as atonement. I had many confusing thoughts instantly about the ethics of the situation. How could I convince him not to die, not to join his brother? How could I convince him to spare his own life? Should I lie or bend the truth to convince him not to cross the border, to save his life at that moment, and then build a relationship of trust with him later? What were my moral priorities at that moment? What were my goals? What methods could I use to decide what was right for me to say or do? Should I focus on principles or stick to the likely consequences for him of not following my advice? What was more important, his independent right to choose autonomously or saving his life?

I felt his pain, I had no time to reflect, and I felt agitated with emotions of radical empathy, a sense of responsibility for this complete stranger. As is so often the case with me, I was agitated because I felt all the emotions of the person in front of me *in addition to my own*. This is a well-known

symptom of empathic distress. I frequently faced these fateful moments and choices, as many of us working in war zones have experienced.

When confusion rooted in overly active empathy affects us about serious matters, it can lead to despair and withdrawal. Science tells us we human beings can deal with *some* confusion, but the more that confusion piles on, the more tired we get. And the more tired we get, the more we lose our ability to reason through problems and difficult decisions. An agitated moment of empathy triggers memories of other agitated moments, and together they build to a traumatic paralysis and social withdrawal (Timmons & Byrne 2019).

/// The Need for Training in Ethics, Empathy Management, and Internal Conflict Management

The goal of clarity in moral thinking is not to have simplistic answers for every situation because that is (a) impossible and (b) unwise. It is impossible and unwise to pretend that there are simple moral prescriptions for every situation, just as surely as we would never train a doctor or any diagnostician in such a primitive way. Rather, the goal is to discover a way for us to work dynamically with the mind and heart, both ourselves and in concert with those we are trying to help. The goal is also for more of us to make better decisions together for each situation – “better” in the sense of decisions that are the “best” they can be, that maximise goodness, in the moral consequentialist sense of that phrase. This would become part of the Compassionate Reasoning methodology that I outline in the books.

Most of us choose to believe in certain truths and certain paths of right and wrong, but we are unprepared for the task of wading through the confusion of everyday choices in light of the values we hold dear. From personal choices to political ones, from local choices to global ones, we need help with the confusion over how to *practise* and *apply* our values, how to make them part of our lives. This is a lifelong challenge that will have its successes and failures, but we can become better at the habits of thinking and feeling that will make those choices more consistent and more satisfying. In so doing, we will contribute to making a better society by providing a model of ethical thinking and action for ourselves as individuals, as well as for our role as part of collectives of citizens. But we will at the same time contribute to our mental health and sustainability as citizens and moral agents by developing the habits of ethical reflection and debate in the context of exercising our best prosocial emotions. This is a practice of the mind and the body, as I outline in the research.

/// From Reflection to the Compassionate Embrace of Others

There is more than one legitimate way to evaluate the goodness or badness of a course of action, as is attested to by the variety of schools of philosophical ethics globally, not to mention the variety of religious approaches to complex ethical questions. These discrepancies can leave humans at each other's throats, or people can respect differences when their principles contradict each other. This is where Compassionate Reasoning enters. The embrace of compassion *concomitant* with moral-reasoning deliberations compels us to listen and truly hear multiple moral perspectives and frames, which in turn positively sharpens our collective effort at moral reasoning. This way, all parts of the mind work in concert to discover the good and the right in complex situations. Compromise also clearly presents itself to the mind as an important way to manage multiple well-argued moral positions.

The individual's cognitive recognition that other humans may come to very different moral conclusions about a situation, all based on moral reasoning, on positive moral intuitions, and calculations, is the beginning of nonviolent coexistence, conflict resolution, and compromise. Out of these compromises comes a greater valuation of and attention to principles of goodness, as seen from many angles. The glue that holds them together is the skilful cultivation of compassion through thoughts and deeds. Those thoughts and deeds can be secular or religious, or based on multiple motivations and world views in concert with each other.

From training our thoughts and emotions to focus on compassionate action and practical aid, we then build the rational ethical principles necessary for a good society and good civilisation to flourish, and we do it with the sustainable mental and physical health necessary to be strong.

/// Alternatives to Too Much Empathy

Some of us who have worked in war and conflict management for decades have come to realise just how debilitating this work can be. We have experienced how constant empathy for those countless victims who suffer in war can deplete you, make you angry, or cause you to be lost in despair. Empathy can even make you self-harm in conscious and unconscious ways in order to relieve the distress of impotence, the sorrow of not being able to do a damn thing for those you thought you would help, for those you came to love. And yet there are others among us in this work who seem continually energised and ever ready for more experience.

I have asked myself for years how these opposites are possible in the same field of dedicated practice? What makes for a happy practitioner in war zones? It was hard for me to understand my own experience of empathic distress as a scholar/practitioner until I started to reevaluate my field and my practice of conflict resolution.

I reevaluated my field and my practice by way of a conscious comparison of my field to the field of medicine and healthcare. In a previous book, I have suggested that a comparison of healthcare and public health may be an effective way to discern complicated questions of conflict resolution and the ethics of peaceful intervention (Gopin 2009).

In light of this, I made the analogy to the provision of health care. Why do some caregivers, nurses, and emergency doctors flourish under the worst of circumstances while others fall apart? To further explore this analogy, I want to briefly mention some personal experiences. In 2014 I was immersed in caring for my sister as she fought for her life against the H1N1 virus. The intensive care unit where I stayed with her for many weeks gave me the chance to observe a very large number of her doctors and caregivers. She remained in the intensive care unit, hovering every day on the edge of life and death. I was suffering grief and fear. Her chances were considered rather bleak.

I learned many things from observing my own empathic distress while simultaneously watching many medical caregivers in those weeks – all the shifting doctors, nurses, surgeons, and technicians. I compared and contrasted their every move with the many suffering families who passed through the intensive care unit as their relatives either survived and moved to regular beds – or died. The contrast between these two groups transfixed my mind.

I watched as the caregivers focused on actions, on the *tasks of healing*, on *using all of their rational minds and hearts in those tasks*. Many family members by contrast watched passively, empathetically, sometimes looking paralysed, and becoming traumatised, just like me. There were two types of sympathetic actors in that setting, and there are two types every day of every year in every hospital around the world: activist caregivers and traumatised observers. It is not that the pain of empathy with the victim did not affect the proactive professional caregivers. The caregivers, most of the nurses and technicians, were engaged through minute-to-minute observations and intense care. Watching is passive for many of us; it is a passive act of observation. *But these people watched and engaged as warriors*, in a kind of dramatic battle that – in my sister’s case – they were waging with

H1N1: shifting medicines and doses from hour to hour, or sometimes by the minute, to fight off the effects of the virus, to stay ahead of the virus. It was dramatic for them and in some sense invigorating as a battle for life. I could see it in their every move.

What I now call Compassionate Reasoning was the weapon of war that they deployed, in my opinion. It is the lens of rational, ethical medical expertise combined with intense knowledge of the patient's minute-to-minute condition. These professionals had time only for detailed care and no time for sadness or frustration, since there were so many other patients to care for. More importantly, critical decisions needed to be made from hour to hour (or sometimes from minute to minute) on oxygen levels, fluids, meds, and so many other variables. They watched my sister continually, like hawks guarding a nest, as if fighting an Angel of Death and being victorious every moment. In response to this situation, they evinced strength and power. They even seemed exhilarated at every challenge to her survival. To watch the healers at the Mass General Hospital's intensive care unit was truly a marvel of modern medicine to behold. But it was also a marvel of human ethics at work with the maximum compassion needed to save one single life.

There was a young doctor who worked incredibly hard for my sister. One disastrous night he worked for hours, till his hands were numb, in order to stop her bleeding, to save her. I was astonished, however, by the emotional difference between me and these caregivers: we were both dogged in determination, both exhausted – but they were exhilarated and I was in a state of bodily and mental distress.

This contrast started to make perfect sense years later as I began to learn about the contrasting neural pathways of empathic distress versus compassionate care. This was the exact distinction that the neuroscientists had observed as they traced in fMRIs two radically different neural pathways, one for compassionate care and one for empathic distress.

This realisation led me in the years afterward to strenuous mental efforts to change my own mental habits in international interventions. Every time I felt despair in the company of the victims, or felt overwhelmed by the pain of the victims of genocide whom I was serving, I started in very halting ways to try to redirect my solidarity with them to an exclusive focus on what needed to be done in the moment, as if I were a nurse at a bedside. I started to focus only on the moment, without giving a thought to the enormity of the tragedy I was watching. I especially did so at moments of my own deepest pain, when I had heard stories of horror from people

whom I loved. This gave me the sense of power I needed in order to provide the care I had to give.

Later, as I practised my own intuitive distinctions between the experience of empathy versus the art of compassion, I started to realise something. Many ancient religious traditions and wisdom traditions had often made a fine distinction between empathy and compassion, between *feeling* the pain of the other versus the *actions* of care. But very rarely had anyone, either in old religious ethical communities or secular systems of care or in my professional field of conflict resolution, conducted training to help the mind make this fine distinction at the moment of an emergency intervention. There was no training to redirect the mind away from destructive empathy and towards the nobility and power of an exclusive compassionate concentration on what must be done next, on what are the most reasonable and ethical actions to be taken. No training on how to exult in the passion of that practice of love, in the nobility of that moment, in its meaningfulness for one's life.

The subject of compassion was not new to me, and in fact, it had been a fixation of my scholarship for decades. By 1993, I had finished my PhD dissertation on Rabbi Samuel David Luzzatto, a much-overlooked nineteenth-century philosopher and theologian, as he centralised compassion as the core “moral sense” of Judaism, building on the philosophical moral sense theory of Francis Hutcheson and the Third Earl of Shaftesbury. I published a book in 2017 expanding on that dissertation, entitled *Compassionate Judaism* (Gopin 2017).

Luzzatto argued – just as Viktor Frankl would write over 100 years later after surviving the death camps of the Holocaust – that the human being can discover the highest experience of meaning through altruism or compassion (Frankl 2013). Luzzatto asserted that compassion is even a powerful *pleasure* that no one can ever take away from you, no matter how battered you have been by life, no matter what you have lost. You could lose your partner and most of your children – as Luzzatto tragically did – you could lose all of your money and worldly possessions, as he did many times; but no one could take from you the meaningful experience of caring for another who was suffering. *That*, Luzzatto believed, is the essence of true religion, a true embrace of God, through the embrace of the other human being. This message seems to me to echo deeply what Viktor Frankl discovered 80 years later in Auschwitz.

Subsequently I wrote on compassion as a core of ethics, but I never practised this framing and experience of compassion or trained myself in the joy

of compassionate care in my fieldwork with survivors. I never made it satisfying and healthy, as there was too much empathic distress all the time. I found work with survivors to be devastating to me personally – to my body, to my state of mind – such was my bodily identification with their pain. I did not realise at the time that some of us need training in this kind of joy of compassion, especially if we have been habituated to empathic distress.

The surprise to me and others is that I persisted in the work of peace in war zones anyway, despite all the pain I was bringing home from the Middle East. As I look back, I think it was a sense of stoic duty that drove me, in a rather Kantian way. From early childhood, I was under the influence of a teacher, mentor, and friend, Rabbi Dr Joseph Soloveitchik. He was in many ways the most important Modern Orthodox Jewish theologian of the twentieth century, and he embraced a kind of stoic neo-Kantian legalism as the core of ethics and the core of religion, at least in many of his significant writings, hundreds of lectures I attended, and in the many private conversations I had with him as I was growing up. Rabbi Soloveitchik's PhD work before World War II had been at the University of Berlin on Kantian and Hermann Cohenian logic. The core choice of life for Kant, and I believe for my teacher, was the exercise of the moral will, for duty and principle, no matter what the circumstances, no matter how difficult. In fact, the more difficult the circumstances the more you were exercising your will out of a pure sense of duty to humanity, the Kantian categorical imperative. Meaning and salvation came for Rabbi Soloveitchik from obedience to duty and to law (Soloveitchik 1983).

I was inspired by Kant more and more over the years as I charted my journey of social change, beyond the confines of the religiously conservative world of my youth. I dove into saving lives in war with a dogged determination to fix what was wrong with life on earth, to challenge and fix what was unjust, and to champion what universal laws of fairness and dignity for all demands of us in an increasingly interdependent global community. But my somatic empathy with pain caught me off guard and hammered away at my ability to function.

It is risky to engage in activities that provide constant stress, but my work trying to prevent global violence came out of a place inside of me of perseverance—of duty, not joy. On the contrary, it often felt like being in hell. I don't regret the work, but I now realise that there are healthier ways to pursue such vital activities, and these attitudes need to be carefully and consciously cultivated if the work is to be sustainable. Dogged determination is a good quality to have, but not in a state of perpetual misery and guilt.

/// How Traditional Cultures Can Amplify the Positive Effects of Compassion

Out of this experience of my youth and my unique background in both conservative religion and Enlightenment philosophy, I realised traditional cultures need to be at least a part of the solution to global problems. There must repeatedly be an invitation of inclusion. We must work harder to establish superordinate ethical goals that transcend faiths, moral differences, and lifestyle differences. All my work in the Middle East has provided me with evidence that traditional peoples, even those divided by conservative religions, could be at the table of peace and coexistence with more liberal-minded folks in every culture, and in fact, have a great deal to teach. But it would take the hard work of relationship building, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution to convince everyone that this is possible.

I also realised that we need to study the long history of ethics, both secular and religious, in search of what values can be shared and built upon to establish a moral community and peaceful processes of conflict management and resolution. I have seen it happen countless times among people of goodwill all over the world, but it requires painstaking work and far greater global investment in education and training than at present. For example, one of the highest experiences of Judaism, with “rewards” promised in this world and “the next world” (Heaven or the World to Come), is called *Gemilus Hasadim*, the bestowal of abundant kindness (Pirke Avot 1:2). Feeling the pain of others is indeed lauded as a sacred quality in the sacred texts of Judaism, but such feelings are not at the same level of spiritual achievement as compassionate *actions* – actions that express or come out of a motive of compassion to help, to care, and to love.

Perhaps this suggests the reason why these ancient sages were so confident that there were “rewards” in this world for compassionate actions. The “compassionate” actions are decidedly not empathic distress, which, as compassion research is proving, causes a great many health problems. These ancients were not just making promises of Heaven to lure the believer into righteous behaviour, but rather they were earnestly asserting on the basis of experience that compassionate actions lead to joy and health, that compassionate feelings and behaviours are indeed their own reward – as has recently been shown by evidence of metabolic shifts in blood pressure and many other interesting indicators.

From the ancient rabbis to Hutcheson, Shaftesbury, Luzzatto, and Frankl, we have a clear line of philosophers, ethicists, psychologists, and

practitioners of ethics who were offering a pathway to positive social change, health, and happiness through compassion. This path is decidedly *not* through extensive personal suffering and empathic pain with victims. On the contrary, it embodies a victory over suffering through love and compassionate care, even in the direst circumstances of poverty and premature death, and even in Auschwitz.

In the context of societies where sacred virtues are relevant, the positive impact of training in compassion – a social emotion known to improve health, mood, and socialisation – becomes combined with the spiritually or religiously sanctioned emotion of compassion, or religious compassion. This reinforces the positive motivation to be ethical *from several parts of the mind at once*. In other words, part of the mind imagines compassionate action as a positive religious deed, an exalted imitation of God's ways in the world, for example, or even in many traditions as a way to see the face of God through the face of the sufferer whom you are helping (Gopin 2000, 2002). At the same time, science enters with specific methods of compassion training that reinforce parts of the mind known to increase happiness, socialisation, and health (Singer & Klimecki 2014).

This, it seems to me, puts training in Compassionate Reasoning onto a very solid footing in conservative societies but also on a solid scientific footing at the same time. An opportunity arises for a crucial peacebuilding bridge, an area of collaboration and cooperation between secular and religious constructs, which so often keep everyone divided in modern societies and situations of destructive global conflict.

As I have argued elsewhere, however, the key detriment to ethics in conservative societies is effectively the opposite of Kantian universalism, namely the mandated or militant restriction of an ethical act to a very limited set of believers (Gopin 2000). Such restrictions of moral obligation to only a small set of believers undermines ethics altogether as a binder of a multicultural and multireligious society. When this happens, the observer will notice that broad ethical principles and practices become suppressed in militant societies. In their place you will notice that obscure rituals, clothing, and tribal markers peculiar to the group become the markers and tests of piety, the markers of who is in and who is out, who is deserving of moral care and who is shunned, even who deserves salvation and who deserves bigotry and aggression.

What I am arguing, however, is that the stronger we make compassion training in conservative societies, the more health benefits it offers, the more it will become a natural bridge to others *beyond* the conservative

community. It will be the same for those who find it difficult to tolerate conservatives. Reasoning based on compassion will ineluctably lead, then, to reasoning out and discovering shared principles, values, and public policies across liberal/conservative divides and across secular/religious divides, such as the passionate love of and care for children. This will create the context for shared superordinate moral values and shared habits, and then the higher mind will use reasoning and planning for compromise, strategy, and joint principles.

As opposed to empathic distress – which makes people, including religious believers, angry and withdrawn as they mourn the losses of their beloved group – the expansive quality of compassionate socialisation is our best contribution to inducing conservative societies to ethical engagement with others. I have seen this work in global interfaith activities for 30 years across lines of religions and across enemy lines themselves. I continue to be amazed at how much compassionate work with children and other victims, for example, binds together very conservative and very secular people, across all boundaries of ideologies.

The *motivation* to even conceive of universal laws applying to all requires some significant degree of compassionate interest in the good of all others and society as a whole. It is hard to do that if your brain is stuck in anger, withdrawal, and apathy. This goes for both secular and religious people, left-wing and right-wing political ideologies. Empathic distress that gets out of control, turning into excessive anger about victims, is an equal opportunity destroyer of universal values.

Habits of compassion, by contrast, have provided crucial bridges across the world, and at many times in history they have actually prevented outbreaks of violence and created beautiful integrations of religious communities. In other words, an excessive experience of pain for one's own side can be a dangerous political tool, whereas compassionate action, such as for the poor, for children, or the environment, can more easily build a bridge between competing groups. It all depends on generating cognitive frames that move the mind into becoming a tool of healing and resilience, even if scarcity or tragedy strikes.

Training in compassion can change pathways in the brain, strengthen what brings us joy, deepen paths of a meaningful life, *and at the same time* strengthen good health, *even* when dealing with the pain of others. This takes a subtle combination of Compassionate Reasoning – namely, cultivated compassionate feelings and habits, in one part of the brain – and then the logical and planning steps it takes to act on those feelings by

helping others with enthusiasm and pleasure. It is the difference between being a grieving, burned-out, ex-peacemaker versus an oncologist who daily bounces down the hospital hallway to treat his next cancer patient. (I am contrasting deliberate stereotypes just to sharpen the point.)

Compassionate Reasoning as a practice should pave the way to be better professionals, better change-makers, healthier people, and even, for those who are religious, to be better people of faith. I suggest this should lead to a revolutionary approach to the ethics of care and the way we practice conflict resolution and peacebuilding in every society. It is not ethical or logical that the change-makers should suffer and burn out, even as they are offering such vital aid to others. It is unfair to those doing the most, and it is an illogical waste of a precious social resource.

Training in ethics, therefore, should dovetail these neuroscience discoveries about empathy and compassion in order for the ethics of care to be strong, sustainable, and based on reason's training in the full range of moral theories and best practices. This way the reasoning part of the mind could be at its peak performance in Compassionate Reasoning. Due to the discoveries of a remarkable level of neuroplasticity, this kind of training can lead to significantly altered brain patterns over time, a kind of further ethical and spiritual evolution of humanity. Perhaps it is the key element we need in order to help each other overcome our global threats and build a flourishing future.

In summary, for me and my trajectory in book writing and peacebuilding, Compassionate Reasoning has become (a) the optimal way to use the faculties of the moral mind, and (b) the best way to integrate the best lessons of moral reasoning from all the schools of ethics, and thus to help my students and myself to flourish in the difficult circumstances of compassionate care amid conflict, war, or social strife. I have been struck by the fact that not only my training in compassion but also my training in multiple schools of ethical reasoning has led to my greater calm in coping with conflict, and a greater ability to work with difficult circumstances together with others. It has generated a more rational language of debate and discussion, which is by definition more subtle, less angry, more prone to compromise, and more adept at earnest curiosity, inquiry, and mutual learning. In other words, compassion, unlike empathic distress, leads good people into far more sophisticated forms of conflict resolution, and these are enduring due to the people's engagement with the most advanced forms of moral reasoning and the most prosocial forms of care, service, and love.

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/// **Abstract**

This article reflects on the author's life's journey as a peace practitioner and scholar. Gopin recounts his lifelong quest to understand and mitigate violence in the world through peacebuilding, influenced by personal tragedies and extensive study in religious and philosophical ethics. His peacebuilding interventions in war zones have shaped his interdisciplinary approach to conflict resolution, integrating philosophical ethics, neuroscience, and positive psychology into a methodology he has developed entitled Compassionate Reasoning. Gopin explores the personal impact of empathic distress and trauma, advocating for a healthier path of joyful care and compassionate reasoning in peacebuilding. Through the story of Ibrahim, a member of the Bereaved Parents' Circle, Gopin illustrates the transformative power of self-examination and dialogue over revenge. The article underscores the necessity of Compassionate Reasoning as a means to foster nonviolent coexistence, ethical engagement, and sustainable mental health among peace practitioners. Gopin calls for a revolution in training conflict resolution professionals, emphasising the integration of compassionate actions and rational ethical principles to achieve a flourishing future.

Keywords:

Compassionate Reasoning, empathic distress, interfaith conflict resolution, neuroscience, peace practitioner, positive psychology, self-examination, trauma management

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MARC GOPIN, SCHOLAR AND PEACE PRACTITIONER: A FRIENDLY INTERVENTION

Tory Baucum
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Prof. Gopin writes of his life as a pioneering peacebuilder. He charts the itinerary from a religiously conservative Jew with a Kantian deontologist bent to a theorist and practitioner of international peacemaking. It is a rich and rewarding journey of discovery – into himself and his own moral and spiritual development, as well as a discovery of others who are on their own journey of peacemaking.

There are a number of stops on the way. But I would suggest the journey has three key junctures on the arc from being an ethical deontologist focusing on the choices that make for peace to becoming a *virtuous peacemaker* who pioneers improved encounters of care that lead to joyful engagement rather than contagiously acquired burnout. I delineate three junctures on this journey: disintegration, integration, and reintegration.

/// Disintegration: Peacemaking and Choice

The moral framework of deontology, Kantian or otherwise, works best in a community whose plausibility structures remain intact, unexamined, and uninvolved. But once any of those characteristics is shattered or shifted, in the complexity of the world – especially a world damaged by conflict – that ethical world view inevitably shifts, if not shatters. The story Prof. Gopin tells of a separatist religionist (conservative Jew) come of age in a hard-edge “immanent frame” is not unique. What is unique is the degree

to which it puts him on a search for a more adequate frame. In a world of systemic, unresolved conflict, deontological reasoning is insufficient to get one on the solution side of peacebuilding.

/// Integration: Exemplars of the Inward Journey

While doing field work in conflict zones, Prof. Gopin met many remarkable peacemakers. They modelled for him a peculiar kind of inward reflection, resourcefulness, and resilience in the face of shattering violence. Their reflective habits were both inward and outward, leading to renewed strength to engage the damaged world in peace. One example stood out: a Palestinian father who lost his son to a senseless act of violence in the West Bank became a singularly providential teacher. Ibrahim was already known in Israeli society as a peacemaker and bridge-builder across enemy lines. But when his son was run over by an Israeli soldier, his faith was cruelly tested. Through personal reflection and corporate dialogue, Ibrahim forged a four-fold “path out of the hell of cyclical rage to the mysterious region of peacebuilding.” Ibrahim’s witness inspired Prof. Gopin back into his own religious tradition of peaceful contemplation and compassionate reasoning, especially to that of his intellectual mentor, Rabbi Luzzatto. Thus, he arrived at the third juncture of his journey of being a teacher of peace.

/// Reintegration: Compassionate Reasoning

At this stage of his development, as both theorist and practitioner, Prof. Gopin is marrying the cutting-edge neuropsychology of mindfulness with moral reasoning into an integrative theory he calls “compassionate reasoning,” which reintegrates all the previous threads of theory and practice together. But just under the hood of this theory, I detect a different engine driving his peacemaking: he has shifted from the *act of peacemaking* to *becoming a peacemaker*. The shift in theory – though unstated and possibly unrecognised – is from deontology to virtue, from Kant to Aristotle. The goal of becoming a peacemaker was certainly present in his earlier theory or proposal. But now it is front and centre, waiting further development and deployment.

/// Conclusion

If we want to be better peacemakers, we must first become peaceable humans. Indeed, we simply must become better humans. We must learn, as another Jewish teacher of peace once said to the City of Jerusalem, in a moment of nationalistic fever, “you must learn the things that make for peace.” Rabbi Gopin is teaching us the things that make for peace. My hope is that his further theorising will expand his dialogue partners to Aristotle and Pope Francis, along with Prof. Seligman and Kant. This is my one and only intervention or suggestion to his wonderful itinerary.

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THOU SHALT NOT BE OVERCOME

MARTIN SELIGMAN ON ACADEMIA, LEADERSHIP, AND GOD, IN CONVERSATION WITH MICHAŁ ŁUCZEWSKI AND PIOTR CZEKIERDA*

Piotr Czekierda: A quarter of a century ago you founded the entirely new field of positive psychology (see Seligman 1999a, 1999b; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000). Prof. Seligman, what is the state of positive psychology today?

Michał Łuczewski: After you became president of the American Psychological Association, CNN once gave you a three-word limit to describe the state of psychology in general (see Pawelski 2022), but here at *State of Affairs* we have no such limits.

Martin Seligman: Now virtually every major American university teaches positive psychology, whereas 25 years ago, no one did. In 2003 the Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) programme at the University of Pennsylvania was established under my leadership. When it comes to interest from the general public, we have a website called authentichappiness.org and about 4,000 unique users a day visit it and take the tests. Young positive psychologists seem to get jobs at a higher rate than other psychologists. In terms of citations, positive psychology is roughly tied across the world with cognitive neuroscience. So, it's close to the most popular new discipline in psychology. Funding has been very good, par-

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ticularly through private sources and business, for example, through the largest executive coaching company in the world, BetterUp. That company is valued in the billions of dollars at the moment.

PCz: Over the last decades, the field of positive psychology has grown from a fledgling idea to a worldwide movement. Which of the measures of success is most important for you?

MS: I've taught everything in psychology over the last 55 years. I guess I never taught statistics, but almost everything else. But I never heard the word "life changing" from my students. Even when I taught abnormal psychology, which I did for 25 years. But in teaching positive psychology at the undergraduate and graduate level, I hear "life changing" all the time. Taking positive psychology has a major effect on people, and that's most rewarding for me.

PCz: Is there any downside to the rapid development of positive psychology?

MS: I'm not particularly impressed with its scientific achievements yet. I'm looking for a real advance in knowledge. I'm still looking for a killer app. We're missing a set of applications that are for the general public to say "This really transformed my life." Also on the deficit side, positive psychology is still not really respected by the most hard-nosed, experimental, and mathematical psychologists. I've been told I've been voted the most influential psychologist in the world (Barham 2023), but I'll never be in the American National Academy of Sciences. So that's a tension between rigour and application.

ML: Your academic critics seem to prioritise academic rigour over application, possibly overlooking the interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of these apparently divergent values. Building on Barry Johnson's (1992, 2020) work, we can define positive psychology's objective as creatively leveraging the polarity between rigour and application, rather than favouring one at the expense of the other. Rigour ought to complement application, just as application should enhance rigour. Your project aligns closely with the polarity management perspective. Are there any ways in which your work on positive psychology has changed you as a person?

MS: Writing my autobiography, *The Hope Circuit* (Seligman 2018), was a great opportunity to reflect on my life. And it's the only book I've written in which I knew my subject better than anyone in the world! I've tried to be dispassionate about it rather than reputation managing. It was a great fun for me to do – it's the book I most enjoyed writing. And it's the least commercially successful!

MŁ: What did you learn from the experience of writing the biography?

MS: It helped me to see that my life actually made sense. In the course of my life, three things happened together. The first was that personally, I changed from being a depressive, anxious young person to being a non-depressed, optimistic, forward-looking old person. The second thing that happened was that my field changed over that time course from being about what was going wrong in the world, pathology, weakness, misery, suffering, conflict, competition, to being about success, meaning, good relationships, love, and accomplishment. And the third thing, the most important thing, is that the world got better. I'm one of those people who very closely follows statistics on human progress and life expectancy, GDP, literacy, etc., etc. And my lifetime has been a period of enormous human progress, perhaps unprecedented human progress. The best recent book on it is *Superabundance* (Tupy & Pooley 2022). It's a mostly mathematical treatment of progress. It basically tracks how much cheaper everything has gotten and how much more resources we have, contrary to what the doomsday alarmists say. Bertrand Russell said that the mark of a civilised human being was the ability to read a column of numbers and then weep. Another mark of a civilised human being is the ability to read a column of numbers and jump for joy. While we see what's happening in Ukraine, COVID, downturns in the economy, the statistics about every material thing in the world are remarkably optimistic. I mean, Putin's a bad guy, but he's not Stalin. Stalin was a lot worse. The coronavirus is bad, but it's not the black plague and it's not the post-World War I influenza. It's the statistics – it's the column of numbers that gives me enormous hope for the future.

MŁ: However, people don't share in celebrating these statistics with you. As your colleague and positive psychologist Jonathan Haidt has argued, younger generations in particular tend to grapple with anxiety and depression (Haidt & Lukianoff 2018). Are we losing touch with our civilised, human nature?

MS: When you ask people in Great Britain or America whether the world is getting better or worse, only about 5% believe it's improving. In contrast, 40% of people in China express optimism about the world's improvement because they've witnessed it within a generation (Roser 2018). I believe that the prevailing malaise about the future is a significant distortion stemming from the media, which tend to highlight all the negative aspects without historical context. Consequently, the only exception, amidst progress in nearly every aspect of life, lies in how people perceive these advancements.

ML: Regardless of all the general statistics, what is the state of Martin Seligman today?

MS: We had two new grandsons born in the last year. My daughters, Lara and Nikki, both had our first grandsons, Max and Denis. I'm 80 now and almost all of my colleagues are either dead or retired. My closest colleagues died during COVID: Albert Bandura, Aaron Temkin Beck, Mihály Csikszentmihályi, Robert Rescorla, Stanley Rachman, and Ed Diener. But because my field has really taken off, I'm as intellectually active as I've ever been. In the next 10 years, following *The Hope Circuit*, I'll likely write another book, because the field is evolving so rapidly.

ML: Let's come back to the beginnings. In the late 1960s, you introduced the notion of "learned helplessness" (Seligman & Maier 1967; Overmier & Seligman 1967; Maier & Seligman 2016). This concept travelled from psychology through social psychology to sociology, from America to Europe, and was used in Poland to stigmatise people who after 1989 could not find their bearings after the fall of communism (Bilewicz & Olechowski 2014).

MS: In general, communism induced learned helplessness. Learned helplessness was not a stigma, but a description of reality. Under communism, the societies became pacified and passive.

ML: The ubiquitous long queues snaking around communist shops were a potent instrument for instilling a sense of disempowerment (Verdery 1996). The communist system, with its centralised control over resources, effectively pilfered the citizenry's time. Indeed, the effect could be learned helplessness.

MS: We did a comparative study of West and East German society (Oettingen & Seligman 1990). In 1984 we picked 35 *Kneipen* and we measured smiles, laughter, and open posture. When we went to the eastern side of the wall, people were sad, not laughing, with a closed posture. We also compared the East German and West German newspapers reporting the same events from the winter Olympics and looked at optimism versus pessimism. We found in general that the East German reportage was much more pessimistic, even though they were the best Olympic team in the Sarajevo Olympics (see also Zullo et al. 1988). In the German literature also the difficulty assimilating East Germany into West Germany and the difficulty the older East Germans had was attributed to learned helplessness as well. The older people in East Germany had a lot more trouble with the unification than the younger ones (Schmitt & Maes 2002).

PCz: What about Poland?

MS: When I think about the Eastern European countries, as distant as I am from them, Poland seems to me to be the least helpless. I have enormous gratitude to Polish people, for their support of Ukraine and for their solidarity for Ukrainian victory...

MŁ: I appreciate your choice of the word “solidarity” – “solidarność,” the name of the most hopeful and least helpless movement of the twentieth century.

MS: ...I speak for many Americans. I have a great deal of contact with Poland these days. I’m an international bridge player and my entire bridge team, except for me, is Polish. My teammates are Jacek Pszczola, Michal Kwiecień, and Włodzimierz Starkowski. They are all world champions. We’re probably the leading European team now.

MŁ: The famed Polish team which goes by the name of “Seligman”!

MS: I’m also playing with Piotr Bizoń, a professor of physics, and Marek Malysa, a mathematician and a close colleague of mine.

PCz: Didn’t he recently win the Alan Truscott Award presented by the International Bridge Association?

MS: Yes, last year. For his pioneering work. He developed a system for teaching bridge to individuals dealing with dementia, yielding very positive results. By the way, when Michal wrote to me, I asked Marek to do due diligence. Which he did. He said you were respectable.

MŁ: (Laughter) Thank you! I still believe I am respectable, but the atmosphere in Polish academia is changing, becoming increasingly politicised, much like in the US. Remarkably, you begin and conclude *The Hope Circuit* with your family. This serves as the underlying theme of your biography. Your book echoes the Greek motive of *nostos*, coming back home, as depicted by the story of Odysseus, who, after travelling the world and exploring new lands, returns home. The opening scene of your biography shows you in the garden with your daughter. Little Nikki teaches you an important lesson about leadership, fatherhood, and life. She says that because she could stop whining at five years old, you can stop being grumpy too. It is the moment of an epiphany that will fuel you for the rest of your life:

Psychology could be explicitly about building the good life. The current practice and science of psychology was half-baked. Psychology started with the premise that not getting it wrong equaled getting it right. If psychology could somehow eliminate all the ills of the world – mental illness, prejudice, ignorance, poverty, pessimism, loneliness, and the like – human life would be at its best. But

the absence of ill-being does not equal the presence of well-being. Psychology could be about the presence of happiness not merely about the absence of unhappiness. Not getting it wrong does not equal getting it right. (Seligman 2018)

MS: I understand the Odysseus reference. However, interpreting my story as circular is not accurate. *The Hope Circuit* isn't about returning, as you suggest; it refers to a specific neural circuit here in the forebrain, the medial frontal lobes. When ignited by mastery and hope, it counteracts helplessness. That's why I called it the hope circuit. The cyclical view of history is entirely alien to me. The magnitude of human progress and its unpredictability in the last 200 years, particularly since about 1780, has been so astonishing that notions like coming home just don't make any sense to me. The future will be amazing and will be almost unrecognisable for us.

MŁ: Do you believe that our academic work can foster that progress?

MS: One of my nightmares about contemporary social science is that it's badly contaminated by prescription and politics. As a scientist I think it's important that science should be purely descriptive and *not* prescriptive. That means that when I write a journal article, prescription has no role in either the method selection or the results. However, prescriptions matter in the discussion and in the introduction in regard to why we choose problems, and where we think the results might lead. Now, if one works on topics that are inherently either positive or negative – take happiness, for example – then there are naturally prescriptions that follow from the results. If you're working on a depression or schizophrenia, those are inherently value-laden and the results often have prescriptive implications. In my role as a public intellectual or leader, prescription is very important and it's not a violation of uncontaminated, pure science, but it rather says that the fields that I choose to work on have a direction.

PCz: You related your leadership roles to a sense of direction, and you've written a lot about leadership. You described a "humane leader" as someone who leveraged the polarity between effectiveness and relations: "The effective leader is additionally humane when he or she handles inter-group relations 'with malice toward none; charity toward all; with firmness in the right'" (Seligman 2002: 151). From your perspective, what do you consider the most critical competencies for being a good leader?

MS: I actually have a firm view of that. For me, leadership is about followership and followership is about raising the PERMA of followers.

PCz: Let's unpack this acronym, which encapsulates five keys to happiness, well-being, and human flourishing (Seligman 2011b): P stands for positive emotion (being happy, feeling good, with high subjective well-being), E for engagement (being deeply involved in work or with someone you love), R for relationships (having friends, family, intimacy, or social connections), M for meaning (being part of and contributing to something larger than oneself), and A for achievement (accomplishment, mastery, and competence). What you're suggesting amounts to nothing short of a revolution in leadership studies, as you shift the focus from the leaders to the followers. It seems you're proposing that, in leadership, followers hold more importance than leaders.

MS: This would be my criticism of the field of leadership. People are hypnotised by the personality and techniques that leaders apparently have. My view is – forget all that and just measure PERMA over time and promote the ones who build it. No one has ever done what I'm suggesting.

MŁ: This brings to mind Florian Znaniecki (1998), the distinguished Polish-American philosopher, social psychologist, and sociologist, the president of the American Sociological Association. Almost a century ago, he presented the report “Leadership and Followership in Creative Action” to Columbia University. His work, based on massive empirical research involving the biographies of 700 leaders, aimed to establish the groundwork for the first global school of leadership. Znaniecki viewed creative action as the leveraging of the polarity between leadership and followership. Unfortunately, his work went unnoticed. There are striking parallels between your work and that of Znaniecki, along with his esteemed collaborator Pitrim Sorokin (Nichols 2005).

MS: In the PERMA Workshops (also known as the Penn Resilience Program), we've trained thousands of leaders, equipping them with mental resilience, strengths-based leadership, and crucial social skills, such as self-awareness, mental agility, optimism, connection, strength of character, and self-regulation. I met a lot of leaders, political leaders, scientific leaders, Nobel Prize winners, generals, corporate leaders, economic leaders. They lead in very different ways, and the techniques they use, even within a field like the United States Army, are very different. I think the techniques of leadership and the personality of leaders are very heterogeneous. What is homogeneous is followership. And followership is about PERMA. Everything I know about productivity, happiness, physical health tells me that people who have high PERMA, are more productive, they're happier, they try harder, they're more creative, they live longer. And on and on. While the

techniques of leadership and the personality of leaders may be very different, for me effective leadership is about instilling high PERMA in followers.

ML: What about the PERMA of leaders? Don't you focus on followers to the neglect of leaders?

MS: Aristotle hoped that truth, beauty, and goodness were all the same thing. Well, they're not remotely the same thing. And they can go in different directions. So, one can have high well-being, as I think Osama bin Laden and Putin, but I still would consider them despicable. Because of their lack of concern for people's PERMA.

PCz: How important is it for leaders to know their people?

MS: It is very important. They should know if you like orchids, good jokes, or bridge. There is only a handful of universal exercises building our PERMA, such as the practice of gratitude. A lot of building PERMA is local. For example, I could give Michal bridge lessons if I knew it would raise his PERMA.

ML: A quarter of a century ago, I represented Warsaw in the Polish University Bridge Championships! What's your bidding system?

MS: We use the two-over-one (2/1). It's a fairly simple system, but my teammates are highly skilled. See, that's what I mean by a specific, localised approach in building PERMA.

ML: What kind of leadership should we exemplify within universities, throughout institutions, and last but not least in our Two Wings Institute?

MS: If I were part of your organisation, I would measure rigorously the PERMA of those who follow leaders. What I want organisations to do is, at time one, measure the PERMA of the employees, and, at time two, measure it again. Then use techniques to get leaders to find out what they can do with the specific individuals under them to raise PERMA. From my point of view, one holds managers responsible not just for increased productivity but for increasing the PERMA of the people who work under them. That has both the benefit of more productivity and more profit, but more importantly to me, it has the benefit of more happiness. Those who increase it the most are the people I want as my leaders.

ML: What is your evidence for this prescription?

MS: In a recently published five-year longitudinal study of more than 900,000 soldiers we asked the question what predicted success in the army (Lester et al. 2022). Happy soldiers are the highest performers. Now, importantly, the army has 150 different jobs; it's not just infantry. There are psychologists, IT people, all sorts of jobs quite representative of any work generally. The army gives something called an exemplary work award. In the

course of five years, 12% of the army gets it. We asked the question: could we predict which 12% would get the award from day one. On day one, everyone took the questionnaire that we had designed and it turned out there were three robust predictors of winning the award. The first was high optimism, the second was high positive emotion, and the third was low negative emotion. So those are universals. The particular techniques for producing those, I think, vary from leader to leader. But the important aspect of this is if you want success, you want to promote optimism, high positive emotion, and you want to curb negative emotion. These are very robust findings. This is not a sample. This is everyone in the army.

PCz: Several decades after Florian Znaniecki, Warren Bennis emerged as one of the founding fathers of leadership studies. *Harvard Business Review* featured his article “Crucibles of Leadership” (Bennis & Thomas 2002) among the collection of classic articles on mental toughness and post-traumatic growth, alongside your “Building Resilience” (2011a). Bennis emphasised that leaders evolve through crucible experiences, overcoming adversity to emerge stronger and more committed than before. Your biography reflects numerous instances of such crucibles and triumphs. Now, my slightly provocative question is: in terms of leadership, whom would you trust more – a professional trained in positive psychology or a practitioner who hasn’t engaged in any leadership programmes?

MS: I’ve attended faculty meetings for 55 years and I’m about to go to one in about an hour. I have yet to meet a faculty member I would trust my life to. On the other hand, I had the good fortune of training thousands of sergeants from the United States Army. These people were heroes. In Afghanistan and Iraq, I met dozens of people I would trust my life to among them. Which is to say, I think pointy-headed intellectuals are not great candidates for leadership. They’re good candidates for scientific leadership, but not for political leadership. And I certainly wouldn’t want them to be generals.

MŁ: One of the greatest American scholars and theologians of the twentieth century, Henry Nelson Wieman (2008: 155), wrote something that resonates with our view of academic leadership: “Except by way of tragedy we do not become conscious of the titanic struggle and the ever-recurring triumph of creativity over the destroyers of value and the life of man. [...] Tragedy opens the way for man to find the meanings most rich in quality, most important for human living and most universal. [...] [The art] mediates through symbols the impact of events too severe for man to endure in direct encounter.” It seems that suffering is an important part of

the human condition, which cannot and mustn't be eradicated. Isn't positive psychology an attractive but dangerous utopia?

MS: Good, good, good topic. One of the most common misconceptions about positive psychology is that people think it's aimed at getting rid of negative emotion. I'm all for negative emotion, and I've spent at least half of my life working on it. Negative emotion has a pivotal place in human evolution. And it's not to be wished away. When we're fearful or anxious, it's a signal that danger is about, and again, it's a signal without which none of us would be here today. And when we're angry, it's a signal that there's trespass going on. When we are sad, it signals loss. I'm all for those emotions, but when they get out of hand and dominate your life and make it impossible to experience any of the positive emotions, we call that mental illness. So, well, I think I want to get rid of mental illness as best as we can, although the negative emotions that underlie it are essential to human life.

ML: Positive psychology isn't then merely a reaction against traditional psychology, which overfocuses on mental illness to the neglect of mental health. Instead, it embraces both the negative and positive aspects of human life to offer a more comprehensive and compassionate perspective that acknowledges the presence of tragedy. This sentiment was implied by Marlena Kossakowska, who is recognised as the godmother (with you as the godfather) of positive psychology in Poland. Her final book, *Living Well with a Serious Illness: Personal Growth in Chronic Conditions* (Kossakowska 2018), culminated from her lifelong research involving individuals coping with chronic diseases such as multiple sclerosis, type II diabetes, and cancer. Her work and life demonstrated the possibility of discovering meaning amid adversities.

MS: What an outstanding psychology professor she was. She did a postdoc with me in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, she passed away in 2018... That brings me to the question of suffering and wisdom. I think wisdom arises very often – although not exclusively – from suffering. I wish we could mitigate some of the unnecessary suffering, but human history and individual lives inevitably involve suffering. There is a misconception about creativity, wisdom, and suffering. And it's often said with people like Sylvia Plath and Dostoyevsky that creativity arises out of depression and misery. But these people were bipolar depressives by and large. And as best we can tell during the depressing part, the miserable part, none of the creativity occurred then. The creativity occurred in the hypomanic part as they processed the suffering of the past; so, suffering was a contributing condition. It's been an important contribution and certainly part of our heritage, but that doesn't make me an advocate of unnecessary suffering.

PCz: How do you distinguish between unnecessary suffering, which should be eliminated, and suffering that is part of being human?

MS: I think the distinction for me is human cruelty and violence. They are intentional actions. Human cruelty and violence are not to be defended. I think the part of suffering that we must tolerate is the suffering that the world brings us for being born and undergoing rejections and living in the world of scarcity and having to die.

PCz: What is then the connection between positive psychology and morality?

MS: I think positive psychology is amoral. Amoral, not immoral. A positive psychology is a description of PERMA. For example, why does one disapprove of Putin or Osama bin Laden? And I think the answer is on grounds external to positive psychology. Positive psychology is not about justice. It's not about morality. It's about well-being. My thoughts about this again assert that positive psychology doesn't tell us about justice or morality. In that sense, positive psychology is apolitical. Plenty of people disagree with me (see Davies 2015; Horgan 2011). Most of my positive psychology friends are political one way or another, and I've tried to keep it apolitical. Politics is about who should accomplish the goals the society wants; the left wanting the government to do it and the right wanting individuals to do it. But positive psychology is about what those ends should be, not who should do it. Positive psychology says the end should be human well-being, but it's neutral about left-right questions.

MŁ: How about your personal political views? Do they influence who you work with?

MS: Where I come from personally, is that the American army rescued much of my family and well, I'm not at all a triumphalist about the United States. I do believe it's a beacon of freedom and that democracy, as I understand it, is the best system that we have, and these are the people who defend it against people who want to destroy democracy, such as Putin. I have no regrets about working with the American military, just as I have no regrets about working with the corporations (Reivich et al. 2011), since I think the free market is a very good economic system. So it happens that my political beliefs influence who I work with. But those don't derive from positive psychology, and I understand that there are people who don't approve of the American military and who don't approve of capitalism and who don't approve of the free market and I have different beliefs from them.

PCz: Do you see any specific traits of academic leadership in comparison with other types of leadership?

MS: Yeah, I'm dismayed by academic leadership in America. I could have chosen a path of university president and deans and the like. And I deliberately didn't and I'm glad I didn't. And what I've watched is 40 years of cowardice by academic administrators and leaders in the United States. They basically are responding to not a vision of what academia is about but rather to the politics of the students and fear of being cancelled. And there are almost no academic presidents and deans that I have admiration for at the moment. They're not standing up with a vision that opposes the kind of majority politics that the students are espousing these days. Many of the academics come from the far left; they were the radicals of my day, and they went on not to do great academic work, but to become the deans and presidents. Polish academia is fortunate in that your academic leaders are not the radicals of the 1960s and 70s, because Poland had to win its freedom from Marxism. And so I hope you're not cursed with a bunch of administrators who are essentially Marxist. America did not have the good experience that Poland had of breaking away from Marxism. I mean that you actually experienced what communism did, so hopefully you've been vaccinated against it.

ML: In that case, what's your secret for staying alive in academia?

MS: Well, I don't have a secret and I don't want to be a martyr or a scapegoat, and I've avoided that, and part of it is by contending that my work is apolitical. And I mean that's part of the reason I want to promote positive psychology as a well-being discipline as opposed to sociology or psychology. Many of my colleagues frown on me, but I have avoided being an explicit target. Churchill said that: success was the ability to go from one failure to the next with undiminished enthusiasm. For me, and what my life has been, has been finding out what I was best at and matching that to what I think the world needed.

ML: Our friend and mentor, American Presbyterian pastor Michael Murray, who has trained more than 300,000 American managers, opined, when discussing academic leadership: "I have rarely met a happy professor. There is something about life in academia that is spirit draining. It might have something to do with the tendency to analyze, criticise, find faults, focus on mistakes and errors. The human spirit thrives, I think, on valuing, appreciating, affirming and delight" (Łuczewski et al. 2021: 263). In this statement, Murray defines the prerequisites for fostering creative interchange in academia, emphasising the necessity for authentic interactions and an appreciative understanding for academia to evolve and thrive (Palmgren 2008; Wieman 2008).

MS: I strongly agree with that. We teach people how to better identify what's wrong in academia. It's called critical intelligence, and we aren't very good at teaching people to identify what's right. I think we should point people in the direction of finding what's uniquely good about a paper we read or a student. And having people identify what they're best at and where that meets what the world needs, is a good formula for what career a young person should pursue. So we should be teaching people better about identifying what's right than we're doing now.

PCz: What practical approach should we take to academic leadership?

MS: Most importantly, it has to be more than an ideology. I think you have to have data which shows that your interventions produced more trust, more positivity. I think merely exposing our undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoc students to a positive sociology, as opposed to the victimology that most sociology I know is about, will raise their well-being. And so, beginning by presenting data on increases in well-being and trust among your students as a result of the courses and the workshops would be an important place to start. I guess I would advocate measurement and evaluation that what you're doing is actually working.

MŁ: What are your thoughts on interdisciplinary research and groups? I'm aware of your collaborations with esteemed sociologists, economists, philosophers, and historians, such as Robert Nozick or Ewa Morawska. This interview is being conducted for a journal that explicitly advocates for an anti-disciplinary approach.

MS: I'm anti-disciplinary! Disciplines in many ways are deans' fictions that were used about housing people together. You know what building should people be in? Well, I think that internet collaboration in many ways dissolves discipline. The discipline I'm in at the moment I would call well-being. And you and I would be much closer colleagues than I am with the scientist who is next door to me in my office building. I'm very interested in the possibility of a curriculum built around the well-being arts and the well-being sciences. Housing those people together so well-being now seems to me much more of a natural class than psychology or sociology or physics. Well-being cuts across the arts, the humanities, neuroscience, sociology, anthropology, business, etc. I would regroup around the notion of well-being.

PCz: Let's delve into the affinities between positive psychology and theology. There's a well-known anecdote where a famous professor, a biologist, was asked about God, and he responded, "Probably He loves beetles

a lot.” This leads me to ask you, if I may, a psychologist, a most famous professor: what can you say about God, our Creator?

MS: Well, I’ve written about that at some length (Seligman 2014).

ML: Let me quote: “God has four properties in the Judeo-Christian tradition: omnipotence, omniscience, goodness, and the creation of the universe. I think we must give up the last property; the supernatural Creator at the beginning of time” (Seligman 2002: 258–260). However, you see the world progress “toward a God who is not supernatural, a God who ultimately acquires omnipotence, omniscience, and goodness through the natural progress of win-win” (Seligman 2002: 260). This vision is not solely historiosophic but also profoundly therapeutic:

This is the door through which meaning that transcends us can enter our lives. A meaningful life is one that joins with something larger than we are—and the larger that something is, the more meaning our lives have. Partaking in a process that has the bringing of a God who is endowed with omniscience, omnipotence, and goodness as its ultimate end joins our lives to an enormously large something. (Seligman 2002: 260)

More significantly, this concept of God carries a deeply personal and intimate resonance:

I also hunger for meaning in my own life that will transcend the arbitrary purposes I have chosen for myself. Like many scientifically minded Westerners, however, the idea of a transcendent purpose (or, beyond this, of a God who grounds such purpose) has always seemed untenable to me. Positive psychology points the way toward a secular approach to noble purpose and transcendent meaning—and, even more astonishingly, toward a God who is not supernatural. (Seligman 2002: 14)

So, your vision of God is akin to Spinoza’s pantheistic vision and portrays God as God of (as) nature (who in the course of time, unfolds as omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent), God of society and history (who heals our wounds and gives us strength after traumas), and our personal God (who bestows intimate meaning).

MS: Indeed, I view the universe as a physical matter rather than a theological one. I imagine – not of our future as a human species but of

the very long-term future – that intelligent life may achieve the Godhead. God, perhaps, is the end point of this process, not the beginning. I think that this is what Isaac Asimov had in mind when writing his short story, *The Last Question*, in which basically he outlines God coming at the end (Seligman 2014). My belief is that there *is* no God, there *was* no God, but perhaps there *will be* God.

ML: The Book of Revelation reads: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending of all things,” says God, who is the Lord, the All Powerful One who is, and was, and is coming again! (Rev 1:8). Though your God is not the Alpha of creation, He is still coming (but not again!) as “the Omega Point” (de Chardin 1969; see Nichols 2005: 32). But if God is Omega, what characterises the process leading to Omega? Is God part of this process, and if so, how? Could He be the process itself? Your theological vision seems very close to process theology. Its founder, Alfred N. Whitehead (1929) depicted God as a creative force within the universe’s ongoing processes – a principle embodying both boundless potentiality as well concretion, actualising all potentialities (Hartshorne 1941: 550). Henry Nelson Wieman (2008) termed this divine God-process “Creative Interchange,” suggesting it transforms what we cannot transform by ourselves, including our psyche (Palmgren 2008). I sense that your concept of God aligns with the principle of Creative Interchange. He is the principle of human good and cosmic flourishing, embracing life, love, and creativity, destined for fulfilment at the end of time. You previously mentioned the potential for future forms of intelligent life, potentially transhuman or posthuman, to attain the Godhead. Is this the same Godhead you encountered in your prophetic, numinous dream as recounted in your biography (Seligman 2018)?

MS: No, I hadn’t put those two things together, but I guess they do go together.

ML: It would mean then that the personal God and the cosmic God are one! In your vision, the old, male Godhead (intriguingly, without a body, as if He was an embodied intellect) blessed you on a new academic, or life, journey: “Seligman, at least you are starting to ask the right questions.” This bass, booming voice catalysed a sort of scholar conversion (Łuczewski 2015) where you shifted from an experimental psychologist to a clinical psychologist, from an experimental researcher to a longitudinal researcher, and from an animal-researcher to an explorer of human psyche (Seligman 2018). Similarly to great writers, great scholars also undergo a conversion, one that ultimately holds a spiritual dimension. This

transformation isn't necessarily religious, but it invariably involves religious symbolism (Girard 1965: 215). You've experienced this conversion and advocate for others to embark on a similar journey. It signifies the transition from a good life to a meaningful one:

The good life involves finding happiness through the daily use of your inherent strengths across various aspects of living. The meaningful life, however, incorporates an additional element: employing these same strengths to advance knowledge, power, or goodness. A life that achieves this holds profound meaning, and should God be present at its culmination, such a life is sacred. (Seligman 2011b: 224)

So maybe, instead of being akin to Odysseus endlessly navigating circuits of hope, you embody a forward-looking prophet.

MS: My entire book *Homo Prospectus* (Seligman et al. 2016) is about the notion of prophecy. In *Future Tense*, one of my friends, Jonathan Sacks (2009), who was the Chief Rabbi of England, wrote about the Hebrew Bible, and he argued the Jewish religion was the first philosophy that was not circular but linear, whereas the other religions much more easily were circular. I very much believe in the forward advance of human progress and not at all in the past golden age. Much of the history of psychology has been dominated by a framework in which people's behaviour is driven by past history (memory) and present circumstances (perception and motivation). The premise that if we understood everything about the past we'd be able to predict the future is all wrong. There's very little empirical evidence to believe that that's the way we predict the future and that psychology should start with the way human beings think about the future and work backwards rather than forwards. The notion of the fault circuit (the word comes from neural circuits), and the human mind as being prophetic about the future, is our great evolutionary advantage. We're the species that does the best on that and much of the frontal lobes, from my point of view, are oriented towards predicting the future. I think the past is overrated. That's what the book *Homo Prospectus* was about.

MŁ: Rabbi Marc Gopin, whose autobiography accompanies our conversation, found solace in this book, revisiting it multiple times during his struggle with severe trauma after extensive work in war-torn zones worldwide. He found particular inspiration in your shift from concentrating on depression to emphasising positive psychology. As scholars-practitioners

with Marc and Tory Baucum, we want to support Poland and Ukraine by founding the IDEAS Lab dedicated to human flourishing and peacebuilding. What guidance would you offer on this front?

MS: I was fortunate enough last February in 2022 to meet in the US Alla Klymenko from Kyiv. This was right after the invasion; she happened to be filming a meeting I was at. She's a positive psychology and public figure in Ukraine. She asked me that question. I said, I didn't want to overpromise, and I don't have a lot of money to contribute to Ukraine, but I do have something I can do. So she and I decided to create a course for Ukrainian students and Ukrainian faculty. She spent this whole year filming the course, in which a dozen of the leaders of positive psychology talk about positive psychology in the future, and try to answer part of the questions that you're asking. We will release this course for free for all Ukrainians. We're not sure about the timing. And that's because I think in the middle of a crisis like an invasion, it would be overpromising to say that high positive emotion, realistic optimism, low negative emotion are all good things. I think positive psychology has more heft and realism when the crisis is over. Alla and I are trying to time this to coincide with the Ukrainian victory, or at least peace with Russia. I would prefer a Ukrainian victory. And so there will be 12 different lectures, and then each of us will be doing an open Q&A with Ukrainian students as well. I have Angela Duckworth, Steve Pinker, Eranda Jayawickreme, and many of the leading figures, who will be giving a free 12-hour course for Ukraine. I want to do my best to help Ukrainian young people prosper, become positive psychologists, study in the United States, and make contact with us. This is all oriented to the future of young people in Ukraine.

MŁ: This reminds me of my students, Jan Kiljański, Emilia Selwa, and Tomasz Niezgodą, who researched the Greek-Orthodox ministry of Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw. As they shared the stories of the Ukrainians, their faces lit up with energy and optimism. Despite the dire circumstances, hope shines through, showing that perhaps we don't need to wait for the war's end to embrace hope in our hearts.

MS: Ukrainian hope is quite realistic.

MŁ: And what role should positive psychology play in shaping the future?

MS: When I consider what positive sociology and a well-being discipline may hold for our future, I think about Juliana of Norwich. Juliana was a monk. You had to take a male name to be a monk so she's referred to as Julian of Norwich. In the middle of the black plague, which was a hun-

dredfold worse than what we're going through now, she wrote, "He said not "Thou shalt not be tempested, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be dis-eased"; but he said, "Thou shalt not be overcome, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well" (Norwich 2019: 150).

ML: You quoted a Christian neoplatonic mystic. Let me to reciprocate with a Hebrew psalm that began my day: "The length of our days is seventy years or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. [...] Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. [...] May the favour of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands" (Ps 90: 10, 12, 17).

MS: It's not just for us to observe a better world; it's been vouchsafed to us to help *create* a better world. I think it's our job to have that vision and to bring it about. Unlike most of academia, we are in the disciplinary position to do this.

ML: We take it as an obligation to follow you.

MS: You're welcome. I'd be happy to help.

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COMPASSION, SCIENCE, AND THE SEARCH FOR MEANING: COMMENTARY ON MARTIN SELIGMAN

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Martin Seligman's interview is such a joy to read. I am thrilled with the confluence of journeys between myself and Dr Seligman on the alignment of prospecting science with the central importance of vision and future planning. I have always seen this as core to Jewish culture, ethics, and religiosity. I have made a lifelong pursuit of the marriage of science and religiosity, particularly as it focuses on the most enlightened elements of the human emotional and cognitive capacities. I saw Seligman et al.'s (2016) book on prospecting science as to some degree a secular embrace of the prophetic mindset of the latter Old Testament prophets (mainly Amos and Isaiah), as well as ancient rabbis such as Hillel, and this filled me with awe and hope. I didn't know that our mutual friend Rabbi Sacks (2011), of blessed memory, emphasised the optimism of linear history as fundamental to moral theology and messianic hope. I must admit that I never wanted to be too explicit with Rabbi Sacks about my veering towards Spinozism at the faith level of understanding God, as he might have been disappointed in me as a rabbinic colleague. But my path to Spinoza, combined with the traditional practice of my religion, constituted a deeper and fuller sense of God-consciousness – of a kind Spinoza would never have imagined practising himself.

A point of disagreement. This placement of God in the distant future that Dr Seligman proposes does not sufficiently capture the daily awe and

reverence that I think Spinoza, Maimonides, and many great scholars experience. The point is that nature and science can embody all that theology hoped for without the parts of religion that Spinoza rejected. I actually think scientists have a hard time internalising Spinoza's message. Spinoza already believed in something whole and complete, so he seemed completely unafraid of death. That is a classic faith position, but believing in the future and one's role in building it is much more fraught with risk. Speaking as someone who has spent so much time knocking on brick walls of conflict or hatred that I didn't know were brick, I think at some point your faith, optimism, and confidence have to be in something that you have not created but that is beyond you – something that hope will have created, brick by brick, in the march of progress. That seems like a challenge for me personally. I have simply lost trust in human creations, including organised religion when left to its own devices.

Spinoza intrigues me, but it was the deep personal writings on *compassione* as the essence of Judaism of my old friend Samuel David Luzzatto, a nineteenth-century Jewish Italian theologian and scholar, that launched me on my own decades-long journey of compassion research. I also took inspiration from Lord Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson, two Europeans whom I found through Luzzatto. Luzzatto hated Spinoza because he felt Spinoza had no place for kindness, altruism, and generosity in his system of ethics and his psychology of the human being. I agree with that critique of Spinoza. Luzzatto (Gopin 2017) was deeply devoted to compassion but, at the same time, a very poor and unhappy man. Would Dr Seligman approve of Luzzatto's loving compassion and altruism, teaching it to generations of students, and being so unhappy? This is an interesting question for the psychology of happiness. Luzzatto stood staunchly for compassion and empathy with suffering – in a way that so many philosophers abandoned. I have tried to answer this dilemma in my latest book (Gopin 2022) by delving into the neuroscience of compassion versus what scientists call "empathic distress" through experiencing the pain of others. The only thinker I have seen who embraces compassion, happiness, and meaning all at once is the Dalai Lama, with his scientific take on Buddhism and the mission of the Bodhisattva.

There are some theological fine points here between PERMA's amorality of research and its application. By PERMA I mean Seligman's guide for happiness: P – positive emotion, E – engagement, R – positive relationships, M – meaning, A – accomplishments/achievements. There is Nature's operation on a-moral scientific rules. But its steerage towards

a compassionate, enlightened, and redeemed world does move PERMA minds to ultimately be drawn towards fashioning a world of less violence, more compassion, more equality, etc. It would be a nightmare for PERMA to end up as yet another tool of libertarian billionaires looking to leave humanity to its own devices while pursuing narcissistic pleasures and goals. Dr Seligman would undoubtedly agree.

There is a very important point here that the purely secular construct of scientific investigation may miss. The astonishing human progress that Steven Pinker (2011, 2018) and others (Tupy & Pooley 2022) demonstrate with numbers and statistics from the last 500 years has only happened due to that extra spark in the billions of human souls who insisted on applying all that science to life-saving over death-inducing goals, for example, towards generosity over greed, towards life, and away from the needless death of humans or the death of the Great Barrier Reef. Sure, hundreds of millions of people have died in tech-enhanced wars, and millions have died in the past in the name of religion. But we would not be here at all, with 8 billion souls and a massively increased lifespan, without endless altruism combined with endless science. It cannot be forgotten that there has been a humanitarian essence of motivation in the hearts of millions of scientists throughout history. That essence is compassion and love for life, which surely has natural roots in the evolution of natural cooperation and sacrifice. But this trend towards life-affirmation also just as often has deep roots in an incredible diversity, across the planet, of spiritual faith, hope, and visions of the future.

This drive to compassion and humanitarianism that cuts across religious and secular lines in the hearts and minds of millions of scientists is an essential element driving science towards far more good than harm when you add up the results statistically. I think that is why Einstein and others were so saddened by the dual possibilities of splitting the atom – precisely because they did not have a cold-hearted fascination with whatever nature’s power might be or human manipulation might make of it. Some scientists have taken that route, but most are with Einstein and have sought a way forward for humanity – a way of curiosity, of compassion, of wonder, of love of the universe and love of humankind. Dr Seligman has uncovered hard evidence that generosity and care for others is the highest form of human happiness (as has been observed by philosophers throughout history but has been unproven). I think the use of PERMA is a great way to steer the world towards the good and ultimately towards a powerful merging of optimistic science and redemptive theology.

In reacting to the increasing worry that I and others share with Dr Seligman over academic radicalisation, we should look at historical and sociological trends in the uses of ideology for generational replacement. Superior research being absent, ideological fads and groupthink have brought about the replacement of successive generations of academicians. This reality throughout time puts wokeness in a different light. I think we need more research into rational and irrational trends in academia and into the negotiation and competition over power that is generational and manufactured by identity-based separations and illusions. I have watched the degradation of my field at its origins due to an ideological shift away from empirical discovery and towards PC ideology and fashion. It was not like this 30 years ago. We had different forms of generational academic struggle, which, as I said above, is a normal generational process of replacement and evolution of thinking and research. But there is now afoot a strange undoing of academia itself, of empirical investigation itself, which is unnecessary. Postmodern critiques of previous work could easily provide an evolution of scientific knowledge, not its destruction. In my mind, the situation arises from the angry drive of the amygdala to fight, which overtakes the rational mind of inquiry. The postmodern critique of flaws in objectivity to date due to cultural and gender differences are most welcome and are easily incorporated into the rational mind of empirical science, but not by undoing it at its core, not by questioning any one group or religion or identity's capacity to investigate. That is just the return of the brain stem's tendency to go to war, as opposed to an attitude of shared inquiry that keeps growing and evolving, combined with a realistic optimism about positive growth and evolution:

The good life involves finding happiness through the daily use of your inherent strengths across various aspects of living. The meaningful life, however, incorporates an additional element: employing these same strengths to advance knowledge, power, or goodness. A life that achieves this holds profound meaning, and should God be present at its culmination, such a life is sacred. (Seligman 2011: 224)

This quote is amazing. Sometimes what you thought was good was not so good, so the crisis is not one of meaninglessness versus meaningfulness, but of meaninglessness because what was good was not as good as you thought or maybe even not good at all. The added layer of aging is that you

cannot get back the years it would take to switch. I get the sense that what Martin Seligman is studying is science, but what he is asking of people with resilience, a futuristic or optimistic outlook, is really an act of faith. Because the future is completely unknown, the time one has to build the future could be one year, twenty years, or a day. Faith and hope in one's own legacy and the legacy of the world are deeply altruistic and beyond any possible narcissism.

This interview is phenomenal. So much of my previous two books (Gopin 2017, 2022), as well as my next book on prospection and building the future, are indebted to Seligman's pioneering work on positive psychology, and now also to his revolutionary work on prospection science (Seligman et al. 2016). I have to report the same reaction from my students, who consider the simple turns of phrase used by positive psychology inquiry and the intervention recommendations of positive psychology to be life-changing for them on a personal and family level, let alone in their application to political and social change. On their own, my students have applied these ideas to family conflict management and resolution without my prompting, and they have then written about the results in their essays for class. I am very excited about the future of this approach.

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**WHAT IS ACADEMIC
LEADERSHIP FOR?**

SOMETHING GREATER THAN OURSELVES: TOWARDS GOOD ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT*

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/// The University: An Evolving Organisation

Universities have been with us for centuries if not millennia (dating at least from the Greek *Λακαδημία*). The academy is one of the oldest organisational types (Mintzberg 2023) still in existence. Its European traditions link ancient Greece, the medieval *studia generalia*, the universities of the Age of Enlightenment, and the Humboldtian universities to today's dilemmas and uncertainties (Collini 2012; Fleming 2021; Ginsberg 2011). Some of the actual incarnations of the organisations founded in radically different circumstances are still with us, having undergone many shifts and changes while holding on to the central ideas of the academy. The University of Bologna was founded in 1088 and is getting ready to celebrate a millennium of its existence; Jagiellonian University, the first such institution on

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Polish soil, was founded in 1364. Universities have been constantly evolving throughout their history, experimenting with new forms of organisational structure: they have functioned as student associations, as private companies, and as ecclesiastical, state, and local government institutions. Their management and governance structures have changed just as drastically and have included collectives of peers, centralised hierarchies, loose federations of faculties, and deeply democratic collegialities.

The university does not produce things or services in the same way as a business does. Nor is it a public institution in the strict sense of the term, that is, an institution serving as an administrative *dispositif* of state power (see, e.g., Mintzberg 2023 on the different types of organisations). Its functioning requires its members to have an ethos and a calling (Giza 2019), as in religious organisations, which is a category to which it does not belong either, because it does not serve the purposes of religious worship. Like artists, scholars often do not know what the exact results of their work are supposed to be, either in teaching or in research: both are creative and exploratory activities. In scholarly work, proficiency requires not only mastering the established principles, but also rising above them, as the brothers Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus described in their model of skill acquisition (1980). However, much more than in the case of craftspeople, for scholars the principles themselves are particularly relevant and require constant re-examination: it is through them that the parameters of legitimate knowledge are defined (Kuhn [1964] 1970).

In Poland, a series of reforms of the higher education system have been presided over by a succession of ministers hailing from different political parties and often professing strongly opposed convictions, as is the case for the most relevant politicians involved: Barbara Kudrycka, Jarosław Gowin, and Przemysław Czarnek. These changes have put universities under severe pressure to conform to outside demands, including, most significantly, by adapting their services and structures to the expectations of the so-called global education market (Giza 2021). As Anna Giza argues, there is a need to reflect critically on how these ambitions intersect with the long-standing aims of academia. Furthermore, it is worthwhile – as Bent Flyvbjerg (2001) advises in such a situation – to ask the socio-political question: why? Why and in whose interest will this change take place? Who will gain from it and who will lose? The most common justification for far-reaching reforms appears in very different statements and discussions and is more or less on this order: “Polish science is of low quality, as can be seen from the low position of Polish universities in international rankings, and therefore we

must take decisive steps to finally catch up with the West” (cf. Giza et al. 2019). In the present text, we wish to discuss this fundamental proposition, examining it in a larger sociological, moral, and managerial context.

/// To Manage or Not to Manage?

The main direction of managerial changes that have been imposed on universities almost globally (though in strongly varying degrees) follow the tenets of New Public Management (Broucker & De Wit 2015; Giza 2021), and use the toolkit of audits (Power 1997) and metrics/rankings (Muller 2019). Such an approach requires quantifiable measurements of the factors deemed relevant. In the context of evaluating Polish academia, the most important are university rankings published by *Times Higher Education*, *Quacquarelli Symonds* (QS), *Reuter's World*, or the *Academic Ranking of World Universities* (ARWU) compiled by Shanghai Ranking Consultancy. It is important to note that these lists were not created as an aid for improving education; instead, consulting and media companies developed them for branding and managing brands in the global student market. Building brands, equipping them with financial value, and subordinating them to financial transactions is the very essence of modern management. At this stage of capitalism's development (or decline), the main measure of success is the financial value of the brands under a specific management's control, not the health of the company, the innovation of its operations, the quality of its products, or the efficiency (or even profitability) of its production (Mazzucato 2018). The global success of companies such as Tesla or Meta (formerly Facebook), which had not recorded profits before achieving a dominant position on the market, serves as a flagship example. The switch of focus towards branding is certainly a modernising strategy, albeit the question of whether it is the right one for universities (Giza 2019) does not evoke an immediately positive answer.

The managerial value of a university brand is boosted by ranking positions, accreditation certificates, and recognition among potential customers, but not necessarily by their loyalty. Media presence, flashy campus buildings (preferably designed by world-renowned architects) and, of course, extensive advertising help to boost these values, which are also dependent on the indicators used to construct university rankings. This is where a number of problems arise. As early as the 1970s the British economist Charles Goodhart (1975) noted that any economic indicators (and

not solely economic indicators) are useful only if the actors – in this case, organisations – under scrutiny do not specifically target those values. In other words, if universities consciously try to bump up specific indicators while ignoring outcomes that are not measured, the usefulness of indicators as stand-ins for general quality diminishes considerably. Aspects of the academy that are not included (or are undervalued) in the rankings are inevitably neglected. Thus, for example, the working conditions of academics are not a particularly significant concern for contemporary global universities. It is increasingly common to hear stories about precariously employed British or American lecturers at prestigious universities who live in cars because they cannot afford to rent even a room, while the deans of those universities boast that they are constantly reducing the share of salaries in the operating costs of the institution. Some of the universities that consistently excel in various rankings employ the highest percentage of staff on precarious contracts. In the case of a prestigious institution such as Oxford University, this figure is as high as 70% of staff, one of the highest rates in the UK (Williams 2023).

The “tyranny of metrics” (Muller 2019) brings with it an even more rudimentary problem. The logic of management by metrics is based on the ability to find a common denominator by which to compare all the evaluated institutions. Such an approach inevitably leads to the formation of winning strategies, and this in turn drastically reduces diversity. However, in both sc and advanced education, diversity is crucial not only for a specific institution, but also for society as a whole. In addition to promoting uniform patterns of success, international rankings also assume homogeneous, global students who can choose whether to study in Kielce or Shanghai. Rankings tracking the careers of graduates ignore local context and economic conditions, and undervalue the contribution of smaller universities from poorer regions – and in such comparisons, most of Poland forms a relatively poorer region.

Finally, while alternative rankings have been developed, their media presence in the official discourse is minimal. It is possible, after all, to rank universities according to a very wide range of assessment criteria, measuring, for example, adherence to values specific to the scholarly community, such as those formulated in the Magna Charta Universitatum (1988), which contain a commitment to protect the autonomy of universities and research, and a commitment to a broad social mission, or in the UNESCO document (1997) defining positive principles for universities, which cites scholarly autonomy as one of the key quality criteria. In an independent

research report, Terence Karran and Lucy Mallinson (2017) developed a ranking of universities based on a set of criteria drawn from these two documents, and in particular on the autonomy of science, understood as a requirement for the professionalism of the academy. In these rankings, Polish scholarship was among the European leaders (before the most recent wave of reforms). However, the Anglo-Saxon universities generally turned out to be a source of concern (Karran et al. 2022), and yet it is precisely this model that is being imitated and “benchmarked” in Kudrycka, Gowin, and Czarnek’s current reforms.

A managerial approach focusing on ranking, branding and marketing is not good news for the quality of learning (Giroux 2007). Marketing in the global education market today is an extremely costly investment and requires focused effort and specialised knowledge, techniques, tools, and networks. Executing a marketing strategy in a highly competitive industry such as global higher education is not a task that can be solved by a top-down reform ordering universities to “catch up” with the West, even when, as is the case in Poland, the authorities are willing to sacrifice a largely functioning local system in the process. Brand management in the higher education business is a highly specialised and resource-dependent management machine. The success of Western universities is built upon very high expenditure, generally from public funds (though, it must be noted, the endowment and student fee funding structure of the top-performing American universities requires relatively little direct public expenditure). Lucrative income from tuition fees, particularly from international students, is also a very important consideration (both as a source of funding and as a reward for success). But even successful execution of this strategy brings huge human costs, which are rarely taken into consideration when assessing strategies for higher education (Fleming 2021). These include the passing on of risk to employees, an exponential rise in very serious and growing mental health problems among academics and students (Fleming 2021), and private devouring of the common good (Standing 2019). Students are turned into customers and no longer regarded as participants in the academic community (Giroux 2007). The work of academics in universities that have been thus reformed is increasingly associated with alienation, and with the abandonment of professional standards and university values (Docherty 2014; Hall & Bowles 2016). While the brands are overvalued, the work that academics do is typically not valued. This management strategy results in a “product” that is dramatically expensive: the average UK student graduates with almost £50,000 worth of debt (which they are unlikely to repay throughout

their professional lives) (Sellgren 2020). The process of repaying the debt (and its possible statute of limitations) is regulated by statute, so today's students are unsure of either the terms of the loan or its interest rate. Some of the student debt owed to the state has already been sold by the UK government to private companies.

The university, once a bastion of ethos and meaning, has, in an era of neoliberal globalisation, become a hollow brand, a shell without content (Ginsberg 2011). Investing in the higher education brand has, finally, a huge and fundamental cost – the loss of identity (Docherty 2014). Universities-brands have become pseudo-businesses, designed to compete with real businesses, at which they lose from the start. A business is by definition a better business than a university, which has never been a business and whose main “products” – truth, enlightenment, radical criticism, creativity, and imagination – are not in market demand, because they cannot possibly be; the university has no sustainable meaning except in being what it is (Izak et al. 2017).

When the institution's shared values and academic ethos are missing, the functioning of the university must rely on regulation and administration (Fleming 2021). In UK universities, administration now accounts for more than half the workforce, and often three-quarters of the workforce or more (Spicer 2017). This by no means entails a relieving of academics from administrative work: on the contrary, one of the university administration's major occupations is the outsourcing of administrative work to academic and teaching staff and the supervision of its completion. As a result, it becomes indeed crucial to translate all the goals and outcomes of scholarly work, as well as teaching, into the institution's standardised language of administration. The metrics make it “easy” to manage things that are unmanageable. This is of course a superficial ease, which covers utter managerial irresponsibility: a good manager should never attempt to manage something he or she does not understand (Mintzberg 2019).

We argue that there must be two factors at the heart of any real, non-superficial reform of the management of Polish academia and higher education. These factors point to two fundamental directions for seeking solutions to the perceived problem of the poor quality of Polish scholarship, and they are (1) funding and (2) democratisation. Academia must have stable funding because universities depend on a funding institution outside of themselves, and their functioning should be free from the current constant disruptions and managerial impulses. And democratisation is necessary in order to help universities become more sustainable and adaptable to the environment and

context. We propose that the university should be democratised not by destroying its structures and institutions but in accordance with them, in building on the existing institution of university governance – that is, collegiality.

The issue of providing funding for universities does not mean solely increasing the share of spending on science and higher education in the state budget, although this too is necessary to maintain and improve the quality of research and teaching. It is also important to create conditions in which students, faculty, and staff can devote themselves to their work, which is understood to be learning, teaching, and research. Here the example of Anglo-Saxon universities, where there is incessant distraction, precarisation, and attacks on attention, shows the path towards the death of the university – an outcome we should avoid at all costs (Fleming 2021). We have already mentioned the UK's prohibitive prices, which most students pay by taking loans. On the side of the employees, the situation is not much better. More than two thirds of the UK's research staff and almost half of teaching-only academics are employed on fixed-term contracts, and the proportion of the precariat in university employment has only recently stopped increasing (University and College Union 2021). Crucially, this state of affairs is not linked to the poor financial situation of universities. On the contrary, it is the richest and most prestigious universities that are most likely to turn to various forms of precarious employment, following the logic of treating staff primarily as a source of costs (Blackham 2020).

As for the second proposition, collegiality remains, despite the de facto abolition of decision-making collegial bodies in many countries, the typical management system for universities (which is a pretty good measure of the vitality of the institution of collegiality). Recently, Swedish scholars have been exploring and analysing the subject. With recent Swedish governments diminishing the pressure on universities to become more like businesses, we see a return of collegial structures in many Swedish universities. Kerstin Sahlin and Ulla Eriksson-Zetterquist (2016a), management scholars and experienced academic leaders, identify the basic principles of democratic collegiality as a modern form of governance. These include a focus on the overarching, guiding value of knowledge and truth, a professional group making the most important decisions (the collegium), an elected leader – the *primus inter pares*, and a separation between academics and line management (administration) dealing with a sphere of activity unrelated to the professional core. The fundamental core is defined as knowledge-creation and teaching.

Universities, from a managerial point of view, are similar to guild and craft organisations, which are based on skill, tradition, invention, and advancement (Sennett 2008). As the Dreyfus brothers (1980) show in their model of learning, once individuals have reached a certain level of competence – that is, a mastery of rules and regulations – they can move to more advanced levels only if they can distance themselves from the rules, see the big picture, make intuitive decisions, and navigate the situation. A master is like a great actor on the theatre stage, for instance, like the Polish actor Janusz Gajos who, when performing a role, remains an indivisible presence, simultaneously bringing the characters he plays into existence while never ceasing to be himself. He does not accentuate his position or focus on it, yet he inspires the audience and his colleagues. Similarly, there is a need for mentoring of this kind in academia: dedicated, experienced scholars should not be “entrepreneurs” but should offer their example to younger scholars, inspire others, and be living symbols of the profession. Therefore, at a certain level of scholarly development, the ability to define one’s own work and the area of knowledge one is working in is very important (Hasselberg 2012).

In a university system, equality does not mean that everyone is the same or that their knowledge counts equally. For this reason, university collegial bodies are not just the implementation of the demands of workplace democracy. Neither should universities turn into political systems, because that does not further the advancement of knowledge. Collegial bodies are not meant to represent the interests of different staff groups or their research and teaching areas. The special characteristic of collegial bodies should be their subordination to, and shared respect for, the common overarching good, which is science and knowledge. The purpose of collegial structures is first and foremost to foster organisational and institutional respect for these values. Hence, participants who have achieved the level of masters have more say in the collegial council than the beginners. It is crucial that an accumulation of power is actively avoided. Mastery of knowledge should be a matter of profession and devotion – not power. To repeat once again, the main responsibility of academic leadership is to make sure that issues of micro-politics, power, and personal advancement are avoided and ideally eliminated from collegial processes. The reality is of course often far removed from this ideal, and thus the disciplining mission of eldership and academic leadership is the more urgent. This naturally includes setting a good example and sincerely leading by example, but such an approach is possible only with a strong ethos and high autonomy. Academia is a strong

profession with its own standards, rules, and moral integrity, which provide the members' inner motivation and morale (Svallfors 2020).

Collegiality itself has its dark sides. The most obvious one is the drift towards politicisation, which should be monitored and actively counter-balanced on a constant basis (Engwall 2016). It has to be remembered that whenever there is too little conviction and inspiration, collegial management degenerates into a micropolitics where cliques and coteries compete and fight with each other. A good academic leader needs to cultivate academic values consistently and inspire people to respect and even love the common good and to have a sense of being part of something larger than themselves (Sandén 2007). Another detrimental tendency of collegial management is to become a dead, formal mechanism where no one has the motivation to express different or dissenting ideas and the collegial body serves basically as a “voting machine.” Sometimes it becomes a structure that blocks the advancement and initiative of the young; it may become overly conservative, focused on form and not very interested in content. All these issues can and should be remedied with communication, openness, and leadership with the right balance between trust and control (Bjuremark 2002).

For these reasons, collegiality does not work all by itself. It is a very intricate institution, based on particularly strong values, and requires socialisation and acculturation as well as something more – an ethos, a vocation (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist 2016a, 2016b). This is why universities such as respectable, large, old Uppsala University and the smaller, newer Södertörn University in southern Stockholm offer training in university and academic values for new employees. The collegiality that we have is only as good as we are ourselves and as our colleagues are. If we let psychopaths, sociopaths, and cynical people (by no means in the ancient sense), who are interested only in their own success, into the structures, we will not build a good university. This is increasingly a challenge because in neoliberal, reformed universities, bullying is increasing dramatically and other pathologies are common (West 2016). However, if we allow academia to be open to people from different social classes, from different backgrounds, all genders, and different social temperaments – and if these are independent people who are not willing to submit to a conformist culture of power but who believe in knowledge and truth and have a sincere vocation to the academy – then we will have a vibrant academic community (Bjuremark 2002; see Jaquet 2014 for an argument about the benefit of openness to class issues). Such an academic community is strongly needed.

The university is a common good to which we all can and should contribute (Sahlin & Erikson-Zetterquist 2016a). It is far more important than anything we can achieve on our own, under our own name and for our own success. A scholar who has not acquired the discipline to control personal ambition will not be a good colleague. Often one overly ambitious person is enough to capsize the entire boat. The university can be regarded as a sailing vessel where everyone needs to cooperate, not compete. Competitive and selfish behaviour (Smyth 2017), or much worse, a management style that encourages such attitudes, is strongly disruptive and destructive even though highly lucrative for those who practise it (Standing 2019).

This brings us to the important question concerning the larger whole, the common good – the university’s identity. Why insist on it, rather than “modernising” and “rebranding” it according to the principles that are currently popular in the world of business and administration? To borrow the excellent expression from the title of Stefan Collini’s (2012) famous book: what is a university for? To answer this question, we need to accept and appreciate organisational diversity as a value in itself. Organisations need to be diverse in order to thrive and flourish in their proper context (Mintzberg 2019). Creating the impression – and then succumbing to it – that there is only one “right” form of organising (whether business-led, as now, or planned from the top down, as in the times of state communism) is very damaging. Martin Parker (2018) points out how business schools bring about a seriously flawed and limited framing of the world of organisations. Contemporary management education encourages students to regard all species as one. In calling for the demolition of business schools, he argues that the curricula prevalent in globalised business schools are responsible for the pathologisation of management prevalent today not only in corporations but in organisations of all types. This is the result of forcing incompatible and diverse organisations into the Procrustean bed of the “good-for-everything” business management philosophy.

This fate has also befallen universities. Yet a university is, by its very definition, a highly complex organisation. What is more, it is an organisation whose most valued outcome, even under current conditions, is to find new solutions and to allow a disciplined diversity of voices to be heard in order to make a contribution to knowledge. For this to be possible, it is necessary to provide conditions of security and stability for employees, who need to work in demanding social and intellectual conditions. Human beings are consensual, and culture is based on conformism; therefore, an orchestrated non-conformism and disagreement is extremely difficult to

achieve. Even in the best of times there is a risk of stress, burnout, and violence. In ordinary organisations such as businesses, as Albert Hirschman (1970) demonstrated, loyalty is the traditional norm. A dissenting voice is relegated to the outside of the organisation (exit) or, as is common in contemporary Western academia, drives the employee into internal exile. Universities are workplaces where disagreement is part of the job and has to be made acceptable and normal. In order to achieve this, top-down or regulations-led management styles are not functional. Such an administration will not work in the development of an agonistic (albeit civil) culture, because it operates on procedural bases, and needs strong mechanisms of conformism to be functional. Introducing administrative rules and norms for whole university communities on such a large scale as is currently the case in the neoliberal academy is unprecedented. It is a dysfunctional management system: the sense of the activities performed is lost in a sea of procedures and indicators (preferably quantifiable, preferably easy to standardise). Small wonder people in academia now inhabit communication bubbles and are unable to exchange views with those holding different views – this is a sinister side effect of the NPM management of universities.

The neoliberal academy as a whole has turned into a “productivity machine” for pursuing various measures, metrics, and “key performance indicators” (Muller 2019; Aronowitz 2001). Academics are mobilised to publish more and more texts, and it is the ambition of Polish reformers to have Polish academics meet this requirement as well. And yet, the world is already flooded with a wave of formulaic publications that are no longer read because nobody has the time or inclination to do so (Alvesson & Gabriel 2013). After all, there is no metrics for reading, let alone thinking, and so they seem to have fallen out of the definition of a scholar’s work. Under the constant pressure to acquire grants, researchers increasingly pride themselves on the amount of money they get, while the actual academic work comes second – at best. A huge amount of time is spent writing proposals, which are for the most part not awarded funding. When the funding is awarded, projects require a significant organisational and administrative effort. This is how substantial amounts of academics’ time – and thus public funding – are spent. This is a good example of Witold Kieżun’s redeployment of objectives (1971). Academic teachers, meanwhile, are held accountable for their work not by internal standards of the teaching and learning process, but based on student surveys and grades. In Anglo-Saxon universities, where a significant part of the institution’s income comes from tuition fees, an academic tourism industry

has grown in which lecturers function as tour guides and entertainers. Small wonder there is an inflation of grades and a decline in actual learning outcomes (Schneider 2013).

We, Polish social scientists, should be well aware of the pitfalls of the game of metrics. After all, we are familiar with it from the recent history of our country, when the economy was managed by a system of metrics and plans. The indicators and metrics were often satisfactory, while everyone was aware of the inefficiencies of the system, which were not represented by the indicators (see, e.g., Kieżun 1971).

Democratic collegiality can provide an antidote to such pathologies. To begin with, in order to develop workable management processes, the participants of the academic community, in Polish universities and research centres, must lead the discussion around the failings and successes encountered so far. Round tables are a necessary starting point. We should not rely on media or political images, which, on the one hand, present a steady procession of academic celebrities, who are rewarded, publicised, honoured, and constantly valorised, and, on the other hand, promote harsh anti-intellectualism (cf. Rigney 1991). This is not to paint an overly rosy picture of the status quo, or of the state of Polish academia before the reforms: a variety of problems, both structural and local, have been identified and described (e.g., Zawadzki & Jensen 2020), and many more are certain to be brought to light given the opportunity. The blame for the pathological incentives and double binds imposed on the higher education system lies mainly with the decision-makers (Giza et al. 2019). The steadily worsening working conditions mean that there is an underlying strong proliferation of burnout (Han 2015). All that gives meaning to the pursuit of knowledge is increasingly missing: there is no enthusiasm, no conviction, no dedication, no amazement, no passion, no enthusiasm, no risk of ridicule, no vocation. The public gets to see lifeless faces and ossified, uninteresting research results. They see prominent individuals, who are often notorious for bullying and using force to emphasise their position, demanding obedience. They also see numerous powerful “academic feudal lords,” who are disdainful of anything they perceive as making a person vulnerable, which includes honest dedication to the profession. These lords are always ready to fight for further impact and influence, and thus they make the entire culture demoralised and corrupt. This visible core is sterile but increasingly influential. It is not beneficial for academic work. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that it is precisely this core of power that defines management

indicators and metrics. Such a situation is typical of any centralised reform, which brings about a consolidation of power (Chang 2010).

/// Some Reflections and Implications

We would like to share some of our reflections on teaching and forms of employment in connection with our experience working at universities in different countries. We are choosing this focus in order to present a relatively simple and clear case. The same point can be made regarding research and the university's broader missions, but these have already been discussed on the basis of arguments made by other authors. Whereas research is regarded as a "noble" task of the university, and one which may be difficult to manage, teaching and employment issues are often considered mundane and practical and thus perfectly manageable. We disagree and this is precisely why we would like to devote special consideration to them. Most of the material in this section is based on our own experience but reflects back on it critically, in light of what we are presenting in this essay. This section can be said to be an autoethnographic reflection (Zawadzki 2015).

The teaching engagement of academics is based on their relationship with their students. Students used to be considered participants in and co-creators of the university community. Their participation was primarily limited in time, but they had the rights and responsibilities that came with it. Currently, they have been cast out of the institution and are assumed to be "customers." This has dramatically reframed the role of academics who are teachers – from being mentors they have become service providers. In Anglo-Saxon countries, the roles are immediately related to the market, as students indeed pay high tuition fees and there the market model is taken as literally as possible. But this shift in roles exists even in those countries where students do not pay for their studies. Students' rights are increasingly considered in terms of customer rights, for example, the right to rate the "product" they are buying in a similar way as, for instance, hotels are rated on booking.com. Students are able to make complaints (which are very often successful) when they do not like the behaviour or even the outlook of a lecturer, or when they feel offended by the demands made on them, even if those demands are legitimate according to the requirements of learning. They also usually "gain" a massive debt, as paying the ever-increasing tuition fees is beyond the financial means of most students and their families.

Instead, they have lost the right to make a mistake, to learn from their mistakes, to search for answers, or to have the special protection of a discreet learning situation (classes are increasingly recorded and made available on the internet, or at least the intranet). The right to study has been lost to marketised roles. The responsibilities of students are also limited. Only staff are expected to “protect the brand” of the university; the former duty of students to care for the good name of the university has been blurred or disappeared altogether.

Studentship comes with the precarisation of an entire group of staff who used to be called assistants: early career participants working on the preparation of their doctoral theses. Today, the members of this group have become doctoral “students.” In Anglo-Saxon countries, they pay tuition fees. At the same time, however, they are effectively part of the university staff: as teaching assistants, they compete for the opportunity to earn an income with those who already hold a doctoral degree and who must apply for employment at the university. In addition, teaching assistants used to have a limited – but nevertheless extant – influence on the content of their courses; today they are mostly only passive executors of the instructions they are given. At the same time, in order to have any chance of being hired, they also have to publish and earn credits for their publications. Yet doctoral programmes allow neither the resources nor the time for such work. This period of employment is currently being extended to scholars holding a PhD. The situation of the “post-doc,” which is typical of neoliberal academia, is increasingly reminiscent of that of the pre-doctoral staff.

The conditions for university promotions in general are rather strict. It is not enough to have a body of work. A candidate has to keep publishing, because the achievements of a few years ago have no value. The practice of “point scoring” reigns supreme, as converting anything into points (even if the conversion criteria are absurd) facilitates seemingly objective decisions. In addition, student evaluations in surveys often have an effect on the decision to refuse to promote or extend the employment of a lecturer (even though many studies have shown that gender, age, and the perceived attractiveness of a lecturer make a significant difference in the marks they receive).

Even a professorship does not erase the insecurity and dispossession of our academic home, as the professor also has to continually demonstrate increasingly difficult quantitative achievements, both in terms of publications and in the amount of money gained for universities. As late as the beginning of the twenty-first century, the professor was in many countries an appointed

state employee with a guarantee of employment, but this is now increasingly rare. In some countries, there is a growing precarisation of professors: instead of conducting research and teaching students, they are expected to win grants that finance their own salaries and the activities of the university administration. When they fail to secure external funding, they can simply be dismissed (the term is “made redundant”). But a professorship is the most stable position available for academic staff: at the lower levels of the university career ladder, job stability is even more difficult to find.

Of course, the precarisation and alienation of the workforce is taking its toll on students, who are also struggling under increasing pressure to perform above average or even excellently if they want to get a job after graduation and be able to start dealing with debt. Their former right to be in more or less constant contact with tutors is being replaced by various inadequate constructs. In the Anglo-Saxon system these are often called “tutoring,” but they have little to do with the original meaning of the word, which referred to a system involving deep, long, and direct conversations between student and teacher. Today “tutoring” is rather a kind of highly formalised service. Lecturers are also obliged to simulate academic life in order to provide the “student experience” – a significant element in the marketing of the university. This manifests itself in organising trips to theatres or galleries, trips abroad, and visits to historical monuments. These initiatives are rarely linked to the curriculum and rarely provide a basis for discussion or in-depth analysis; they primarily serve the purpose of providing “customers” with entertainment that is commensurate with the amount spent on tuition fees. Referring to students as customers and describing studies as an amazing experience is mainly the domain of Anglo-Saxon countries, but this terminology can also be found in other contexts, even in Scandinavia, where studies are free of charge and customer-product categories can only make sense in a deeply metaphorical sense.

However, in spite of this increasingly marketised structural context, it is extremely difficult to turn higher education into a product in any meaningful sense. In general, the concept of “market” used in the context of the university is a metaphor, and a very poor one at that. A university is a very complex institution, and even in the educational part of its activities (universities also conduct research and disseminate the results) it is not easy to clearly define what is a “product”: does the university “sell” diplomas to students? Students to employers? Citizens to societies? Skills to students? Knowledge to the world? The list could go on for a long time. And yes, probably all these are products of the university – after all, different groups

(students, the state, entrepreneurs) turn to the university to obtain some kind of benefit (i.e., a product). But at the same time, it is difficult to actually speak of a product in any of the cases mentioned, because descriptive categories only make sense when they illuminate the situation, allowing analogies to be built. If the product is underdetermined, if the student is at the same time a “customer,” a “product,” and a “participant” of the university (as well as its “co-creator”), such a term has no cognitive or utilitarian value.

The more explicitly product-oriented activities of universities, in the form of MOOC courses, have not caught on – even if the classes themselves, and above all the course materials prepared for them, have their enthusiasts. However, these are mainly hobbyists, people looking for accessible knowledge on new topics, who are not very interested in systematic learning or in diplomas and certificates of completion (which were supposed to be at the heart of the online simplification of university courses).

The state also plays its part here. The principles governing higher education remain heavily regulated; this also applies to the awarding of diplomas, degrees, and titles. Moreover, it is possible that deregulation would not lead at all to a flourishing of private initiatives providing education services at competitive prices but to an implosion of the system. If a diploma does not guarantee the maintenance of external standards, why have one? This is why we do not expect or fear the Uberisation of universities through the introduction of a new technology that subverts the status quo. There will be a place for classroom lectures and seminars, for mentoring, for consultations, and also for on-line teaching that is not fully automated but demands active personal participation. The use of new technologies does not necessarily threaten personal teaching and learning relationships – a point which we think can be more or less considered to have been made during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The practices of the modern university are far removed from the aims and objectives of the original. Yet, even in this context, there is an explicit need for at least some of its original functions to continue. This is the moment that can be regarded as a turning point. We will address this reflection in the concluding part of the essay.

/// Concluding Thoughts on Identity and Management

The university is suspended between various promises, ideals, strategies, and goals, and at the moment it is sorely lacking institutions and mechanisms to support its functioning. The massification of university education

in the last few decades has succeeded as a business project, but essentially failed as a society-based education one. The main cause is the lack of an entity willing to fund a massive global university (Connell 2019). This situation has coincided with other global crises and is not unique to universities. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is no funding for such a university to operate in the form of a traditional Humboldtian system, while still providing mass higher education. Added to this is a related identity crisis, a crisis of social legitimisation for the role of the university, and increased individualisation of educational achievement: universities are presented, in media and policy papers, as serving the individual advancement of their alumni rather than as contributors to societal advancement.

Above all, the agenda of mass university education as a route to a modern economy and state model is problematic. Most of the professions available to society do not require the level of education that is offered today. The crisis of labour and economic mechanisms goes well beyond educational programmes. Innovation, scientific development, and preparation for participation in civil society require different conditions and skills than those that have been implemented and reinforced for years (for example, competitiveness and individualisation are considered by many cited authors to be counter-productive or even harmful). However, at the moment, it is mainly the lack of institutions and mechanisms to manage and support the functioning of the university that is brought up whenever a critique is directed at neoliberal reforms of universities.

But some paths have already been taken. The first and most obvious one is proposed by the neoliberal reformers. Anglo-Saxon countries and their followers have moved away from the traditional identity of the university and seek funding from whatever sources are willing to provide it, that is, from private business and the students themselves, understood to be largely customers of foreign origin (primarily from Asian countries). This path is often portrayed in the Polish media as “inevitable,” “exemplary,” or otherwise worthy of emulation. However, it is important to remember, first, that Poland’s context and that of the Anglo-Saxon countries is quite different due to language, brand management (the latter’s huge efforts and funds aimed at achieving higher rankings, which is a matter unrelated to the core business, but requires separate resources and commitment), accreditations, and finally, mere marketing activities and contacts with global business. Second, and very importantly, this is by no means the inevitable or most modern path, but rather has recently become increasingly controversial and, in the view of academics themselves, is increasingly considered to be destructive.

Third, the price for following this path is abandonment of the university's identity. Funding from the "outside" means letting the "outside" into the university, and thus more or less gradually eroding academic institutions and turning them into a mass business providing dubitable services that rely on the promise of enabling future careers for students via "training." This is becoming increasingly contestable and the services themselves are growing ever more expensive. Anglo-Saxon universities have abandoned their autonomy and self-governance. Their internal governance structures have become dependent on the interests of external economic and political forces, and thus they are deprived of agility and prevented from realising their social role as a great buffer and independent frame of reference in society's search for direction (Docherty 2014). At the same time, universities in Anglo-Saxon countries have lost their uniqueness and can easily be replaced by more efficiently organised and cheaper businesses. The working conditions and ethos of the academic profession have been greatly eroded in these countries and replaced by other systems and structures. There, for several years, words such as "teaching," "professor," and "research" have been filled with a different content than in, for example, Poland or Sweden.

But the Scandinavian countries have been experimenting with a different path. They aim at a return to the identity of the traditional university and to qualities typical of academe, such as collegiality, and to work on adapting them to the requirements and conditions of the present day. A university understood in this way must be funded by the state and by local governments. Studies have to be free of charge for students, and the state needs to provide space and finances for research. There must be a gradual move away from individual grants to institution-focused financing plans designed to provide autonomy for individual researchers and teams. Through such arrangements, academic research can retain its independence and allow for the kind of blue-sky and serendipity-oriented projects (Merton & Barber 2004) that are not possible in other types of innovation-creating frameworks. Such arrangements dovetail with a return to autonomous, collegial forms of management. There is also frequent talk of the need to provide funding for research without shifting the extremely time-consuming and labour-intensive work of administration and proposal-writing onto researchers. Currently, these activities probably consume the majority of researchers' time, and this is an inefficient and wasteful approach to the public funding of science. For several years now, Scandinavian academics (e.g., Pallas & Wedin 2017; Svallfors 2020) have been exploring and discussing the possibilities of broadening collegiality, bringing

greater inclusivity to university organisation and governance, and replacing traditional academic “feudalism” with an active democracy tailored to the needs of the academic profession. It is our conviction that Poland would do very well to explore this possibility while there is still some institutional memory left in the system, and while some of the structures are still functioning. We only need to fill them with meaning. In emulation of the above-mentioned Swedish authors, we believe that the academic leadership should adopt this goal and that it is an urgent one.

Let the following citation serve as a compass for those who wish to prepare the ground for good university management practices in Poland.

The university in its spiritual dimension exists only through a community which upholds in its actions the values on which it is founded. The organisation of the university, which is so readily changed and reformed, can of course make it more or less difficult to act in accordance with the academic ethos, but it does not touch the essence of the university. The real danger, then, is precisely the erosion of the ethos, taking place not under pressure from external actors, but through the “ethical spotlighting” of a different system of motivation. (Giza, 2019: 167)

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/// Abstract

Universities have been with us for centuries if not millennia. The academy is one of the oldest organisational forms still in existence. Throughout their history, universities have evolved, experimenting with various kinds of organisational structure: from student association, through private company, to ecclesiastical, state, or local government institution. They have been continually altering their management structure: from a collective of

peers through a centralised hierarchy and a loose federation of faculties to a structure based on deeply democratic collegiality. Currently in Poland, as in many other countries, a series of reforms have put universities under pressure to “marketise.” This paper discusses some of the urgent dilemmas that have arisen after the transformation of the sector and offers some ideas for where sustainable managerial solutions could be sought.

Keywords:

universities, management, HE Business, collegiality, organisational identity, values

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TOWARDS A HOPEFUL UNIVERSITY

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Contemporary universities vary in the quality of their research, their teaching, their legal and administrative support, the well-being of their academic community, and even in their autonomy. Their mission and vision statements usually stress the inspirational and transformative power of education, and the institution and its alumni's contributions to society. They talk about advancing new ideas, making a difference, and being a community of respectful dialogue and inclusivity. The statements describe communal and personal goods that are both highly desirable and difficult to obtain. They describe hopes and attitudes as well as the capabilities necessary to realise these hopes.

The ideals to which universities aspire are similar regardless of their geographical location, although in Eastern European universities, a certain inconsistency and clumsiness in formulating missions can be noticed. Still, the ideals are similar, even if the challenges are not equally distributed. After 1989, universities in Eastern Europe were desperately seeking their own identities, while trying to keep their local specificity and autonomy, to prevent brain drain, and at the same time, to open up to international exchanges of ideas. They are still buckling under the weight of communist-era remainders, such as excessive bureaucracy and the arbitrariness of decisions, to name but a few. They fear managerism, which could compromise the values to which universities are dedicated, but on the other hand, they recognise the need for numerous reforms that would improve work conditions, support creativity, and, last but not least, make universities better places in which to grow, teach, learn, do research, and simply be.

In this essay, I do not offer direct solutions to the problems described above. Instead, I would like to draw attention to the skills, capabilities, values, and attitudes that could be useful in designing and shaping the future of academia. Some of these could be represented by one word: hope. In this article I argue that paying more attention to hope could make the academic community more futures literate, and also, first and foremost, more aware of its mission and the challenges of leadership.

The importance of hope for human experience is unquestionable, but difficulties arise when trying to define what hope is, what its dynamics are, what its individual and social conditions are, and finally what its functionality consists in. Studies devoted to hope have to contend with negative associations with wishful thinking, unwarranted and naive optimism, or utopian projects that have often turned out to be tragic. The usual fatigue with political rhetoric (Tischner 1994; Blöser et al. 2020: 2–4), which paradoxically must appeal to positive emotions and optimism in order to be effective (Seligman 1998: 187–198; Bennett 2015), is also not without significance. In Western civilisation, hope's reputation has always been an ambivalent one (Cairns 2016; Skarga 2017: 239–247; Sztompka 2003: 24–25). Given the positivistic framework in which contemporary universities often operate, the idea of hope, with its partly theological and metaphysical roots, seems to be a concept devoid of intellectual seriousness. Expressing cultural criticism is viewed as the mark of a sophisticated, learned attitude, in contrast to the unscientific naivety of those who would see the glass half full (Tallis 1997; Bennett 2015: 10). An uncritical attachment to the Enlightenment's ideas of unlimited progress and of science solving all human problems has resulted in deep disappointment and a questioning of the need and very possibility of development. Writing about hope could thus be professionally risky and troublesome, because there are too many peripheral problems to be solved; too many intellectual challenges emerge on the way. Moreover, hope is also often perceived as a merely personal quality, which one either has or does not have. From this perspective, even if the negative aura surrounding hope could be dispelled, it could not be stimulated, and it could not translate into social or communal action. Without getting entangled in definitional and theoretical disputes, which have been well presented in the literature (Schmid Callina et al. 2018; Mittleman 2009; Blöser et al. 2020; Webb 2013: 397–398; Lopez et al. 2003), it is worth highlighting the distinction between hope and optimism.

By hope I do not mean an optimistic vision of the future, a set of positive expectations, an “all will be fine” attitude, or a denial of the existence

of serious social or political challenges. I do not mean turning a blind eye to the scale of human suffering, and I do not mean the kind of optimism that Voltaire ridiculed in *Candide*. Instead, I understand hope as a “socially mediated human capacity with varying affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions” (Webb 2013: 398). Hope also has social, spiritual (religious or transcendental), and existential dimensions (Krafft et al. 2023: 25), and thus hope could be characterised as a virtue or an art. It is an enduring capability based on the knowledge of personal as well as communal strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. Hope is about desiring and acting to achieve future goods, often with the help of others. Obtaining these goods may be difficult or not even likely. Hope understood in this way is “the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out” (Havel 1991: 181); it enables a person or a group to act. It is the art of avoiding both presumption and despair (Thomas Aquinas n.d.; McGeer 2004; Lamb 2016). Hope properly understood allows a person to avoid the extremes of excessive optimism or pessimism. Hope is associated not only with measurable goals but also with attitudes that enable their achievement and as such is active.

It is impossible to offer a universally accepted definition of leadership. However, it is obvious that leadership happens when the acts, ideas, and attitudes of a person or a group deliberately affect the acts, ideas, and attitudes of other people more than the other people affect them (cf. Helland & Winston 2005: 43). Leaders, as Helland and Winston write, “initiate the generation of organization vision, values, change, shared power, engagement, conflict capital” (2005: 43). One of the most important features of any leader is his or her capacity to transmit and generate hope (Helland & Winston 2005; Luthans et al. 2007; cf. Bennett 2015). Thanks to this capacity – accompanied with a dose of realism, emotional intelligence, and confidence – people can be agents of change.

In the scholarship on leadership, which is deeply inspired by positive psychology, hope is defined as an activating force or a motivational force. Hope is about setting goals to attain a positive outcome; it is about agency and pathways thinking (Snyder 2002). Hope is “one of the catalysts for the concentrated effort and vigorous activity that is needed to fulfil an organization’s purpose” (Helland & Winston 2005: 43). Hope is positively related to job satisfaction, work happiness, and organisational commitment, and also has an effect on performance (Youssef & Luthans 2007). Helland and Winston, citing research, have pointed out that the presence of high hopers makes a group more enjoyable as well as more productive and that high hopers focus not

only on individual but also collective goals. They are also better able to cope with ambiguity and uncertainty (2005: 45). “Hoping can be seen as a deeply creative process” (Ludema et al. 1997: 12; cf. Helland & Winston 2005: 45).

Hope may be a rare species at many contemporary universities and among academic leaders. There are many reasons for this. Universities pass on knowledge and award diplomas, but they rarely aspire to be places of moral and human formation as well. They rarely teach dialogue, cooperation, and the building of relationships. Secondly, Eastern European universities still too often suffer from poor management, bureaucracy, and unclear employment policies. These result in lack of creativity and a sense that work is meaningless, and consequently in learned helplessness. The logic of survival within such an institution limits creativity, divergent thinking, and the formation of positive relationships. Last but not least, many contemporary universities dedicate their efforts to analysing and meeting social, economic, and political challenges – which is proper and should by no means be abandoned. The problem is that too little attention is paid to positive aspects of life: to inspiring, sustaining, enhancing, developing, and sharing good practices. The sciences and humanities are not only about preventing all the evils of this world but also about flourishing. The positive aspects of life are as genuine as the negative ones. Paying attention to them is not immoral, as some might think. On the contrary, it is deeply realistic and moral. Only when people can act within trusting and supporting communities, and can make the best of their personal and communal strengths, can the many diseases of contemporary times be adequately addressed. While trying to liberate the world from its maladies, people of academia should not take the presence and persistence of a positive disposition for granted. An understanding of the phenomenon of hope seems to be one of the key strengths that contemporary universities need in order to fulfil their mission and realise their potential, because hope is the prerequisite of any action.

In order to better understand questions of leadership from the sociological view, sociology as a discipline must pay more attention to how it deals with futurity (as, to some extent, sociology already does) and with the phenomenon of hope (as sociology seldom does). Also, while not abandoning its usual interest in the challenges of the present, it should broaden its perspective and pay more frequent attention to the positive aspects of human functioning. The presence of limitations or the underdevelopment of imaginaries in sociology could translate into the condition of academia in general. The purpose of this essay is to show the direction in which

sociological reflection could develop and provoke discussion. The goal is not to analyse and evaluate all possible paths.

My argument will unfold in the following way. First, questions of hope and how imagined futures have been addressed within sociology will be discussed. Second, various insights from contemporary psychological research on hope will be discussed. These could shed light not only on human emotions but also on leadership and ways of dealing with polarisation (Bar-Tal 2001). This article will explore features of hopeful communities and offer suggestions on what could be done to make the university such a community. My paper draws mostly on the social sciences but also provides supporting arguments from philosophy (Blöser & Stahl 2020). I will end with recommendations for what could be done to transform contemporary Eastern European universities into more hopeful places.

/// Sociology and the Question of Hope

There is nothing like a “sociology of hope.” The entry “hope” does not appear in dictionaries and encyclopaedias of sociology. For sociology, this phenomenon has always been a methodological and theoretical challenge. Even today, the topic of hope usually appears at the junction and, unfortunately, often on the margins of debates on agency, social and political change, migration, health, education, emancipation, and emotions, and sometimes as a question in the field of the sociology of knowledge (Karl Mannheim, Henri Desroche). It is easier to write about sociological hopes, that is, about visions of the desired new society expressed directly and indirectly by adepts of sociology, than about social, communal, or individual hopes as such using an idiom elaborated within sociology. For example, the father of the discipline, Auguste Comte, foretold the advent of a new type of society, “a new Christianity” that would replace the “old” Christianity. The new Christianity would be united by the cult of humanity and altruism. Early sociology thus bore the hallmarks of a secular religion, imbued with a belief in progress and full of eschatological hope. Practicing sociology would be a means to fulfilling certain social hopes. An echo of this desire – this time without reference to religion – could be heard in the sociology of social movements and public sociology. The desire to bring about a better world thanks to sociological understanding and work seems to lie at the heart of the discipline, but do we know more about the social dynamic of hoping? Culturalist and affective turns within sociology have

not brought satisfying solutions, even though thanks to them the question of hope and hoping is more often posed.

The problem, as it is often the case, starts with the definition. Guido Gili and Emiliana Mangone (2023; and before them, e.g., Gunderson 2013; Killian 1971; Neves 2003; Seidman 1983; Tallis 1997) sketched the history of the idea of hope within sociology. Hope and hoping are defined as individual and/or communal, future- and present-oriented, static or dynamic, and as an expression of personal agency or a lack thereof. Cook and Cuervo (2019), in reviewing some contemporary empirical studies, proposed a conceptualisation of the idea of hope as representational and non-representational, and related these two modes to a sense of agency or its lack. Representational hopes are directed towards a specific future; they are hopes for various specific goods and events. Non-representational hopes are not directed towards any specific future; they could be characterised by feelings and sensations of hopefulness (Cook & Cuervo 2019: 1106). In the following paragraphs I will elaborate on this distinction.

Social scientists are today interested in socio-cultural conditions that make it more probable that people will have some kind of hope (Hage 2003; Cook & Cuervo 2019; Alacovska 2018), and they talk about “political economies of hope” to describe a situation in which hopeful people are exploited (Cook & Cuervo 2019: 1115). Hope is regarded as a psychosocial resource (Alacovska 2018; cf. Cook & Cuervo 2019: 1104). Gili and Mangone advocate for identifying, case by case, the bearers of hope, the leaders of change, as they emerge in specific contexts (2023). The good news is that the sociology of expectations and the sociology of futures take up these questions, and are growing research fields (Suckert 2022; Halford & Southerton 2023). However, they still suffer serious limitations: they lack theoretical integration, empirical consolidation, and more cumulative modes of knowledge acquisition, as Lisa Suckert put it (2022: 395). Like hope, the future is not an easy subject for sociologists. “While concern for the future was explicitly embedded in the origins of sociology [...] this was progressively lost as the academic discipline was formalised throughout the 20th century” (Halford & Southerton 2023: 264; cf. Suckert 2022).

The question of hope is closely linked to how people address their potential futures. Peter Berger took up the subject of social feeling and the sense of transcendence. One of the five prototypical human gestures – “certain reiterated acts and experiences that appear to express essential aspects of man’s being, of the human animal as such” (Berger 1970: 53;

cf. Berger 2004: 29) – that he saw as signals of transcendence is hope.¹ He referred to transcendence not in the philosophical sense but “literally, as the transcending of the normal, everyday world” (Berger 1970: 53). Human beings orient themselves towards the future, and “an essential dimension of this ‘futura’ in man is hope,” wrote Berger in *A Rumor of Angels* and continued: “It is through hope that men overcome the difficulties of any given here and now. And it is through hope that men find meaning in the face of extreme suffering. A key ingredient of most (but not all) theodicies is hope” (Berger 1970: 61; cf. Gili & Mangone 2023: 20–21).

Yet the sociology of futures, or interdisciplinary futures studies are not necessarily the same thing as the sociology of hope. Whereas the sociology of futures seems to be mostly concerned with representational modes of hope, the sociology of hope also takes into consideration non-representational modes of hoping. Anticipating, imagining, or even expecting a certain event is not the same thing as desiring this event. Non-representational modes of hope could be the precondition for an action aimed at bringing about the desired future.

How did it happen that hope and the future have somehow been neglected in the course of sociology’s development as a discipline? How did it happen that hope is regarded rather as a phenomenon unconnected with agency (see the literature review in Cook & Cuervo), a phenomenon that is “contemplative, detached, distanced, noncommittal” and falling within the discourse of fate (Sztompka 2003: 24–25)? The future is unknowable, immaterial, and difficult to study, and thus sociology, which tends to focus on the empirical present, does not take it seriously (Halford & Southerton 2023: 264; Karlsen 2021). The existential tensions of sociology are often explained as structural tensions. The fathers of the discipline often defined it in contrast to the philosophical and historical approaches present in the arts and humanities (Halford & Southerton 2023: 264; cf. Levitas 2013), and also in contrast to theology. Even though there were some early sociologists who could be regarded as optimists (George Herbert Mead, Karl Marx, August Comte, Herbert Spencer), there are influential others who certainly could not be so labelled (Ferdinand Tönnies, Thorstein Veblen, Émile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, Max Weber). To summarise the whole of sociological thought is beyond the scope of this article. Yet underlining certain trends of early sociology may shed light on its potential and limitations, as well as indicating where sociology could go in order to be

¹ The others are the propensity for order, play, the idea of damnation, and humour.

more sensitive to the questions of hope and futurity, and how, from their perspective, it could tackle the phenomenon of leadership.

The writings of Durkheim, Weber, and many other early sociologists were marked by the melancholy of a rapidly changing world (Durkheim 1999; Weber 1985; cf. Neves 2003; Seidman 1983; Gunderson 2013). There was no nostalgia for the departing type of society, but there was also no optimism about the future. Durkheim wrote about the growth of social anomie and Weber wrote about the disintegrating social structures of meaning. They treated the slogan of progress with suspicion and considered it ideologically entangled (cf. Weber 1949), and even though there are good arguments for doing so, this approach did not further positive reflections on the future. They also wanted to distance themselves from the religious worldview. Weber declared sociology to be values free, whereas hoping is not a values-free process (desiring a future good or event entails perceiving it as at least positive, functional, beneficial, morally good, etc.). It is not surprising then that it was left to the humanistic sociologist Peter Berger to say that hope is “an essential dimension of futurity in man.”

In criticising modern optimism, Durkheim did not want to be seen as a pessimist. He recognised that the sense of meaninglessness accompanying modernity – anomie-induced suicide and disordered expectations – do not characterise the whole society. He viewed hope as a collectively developed resource for difficult times. Hope, according to Durkheim, can be learned, and I consider it an important starting point for any sociological approach to questions of leadership.

According to Weber, the problem of meaning, which is indelibly linked to the question of hope, is the central problem of modernity. Neither religion nor science can explain the world to the modern person, nor can political ideologies fulfil this role. Meaning, like values, can only be given to a person's life by that person. Meaning is not based on socio-cultural unity, but on having a personal attachment to certain values, translating them into temporal goals and striving for them in everyday life and in institutions. Weber believed that rationalisation does not lead to making the world more “meaningful,” but to understanding it even less. Humans have a metaphysical need to live in the cosmos of meaning (Weber 1946: 281; Weber 1949: 84–85). It can therefore be said that the prospect of a harmonious, communal hope is discarded by Weber, but just as individuals by themselves must give meaning to their lives, so in society there are many competing hopes.

No social hope is based on a universal sense of meaning, but this does not imply that people do not experience other hopes when they refer to

the future. The hope resulting from instrumental rationality, the ethics of responsibility, will be one thing, and a different hope will result from sharing certain values, from the ethics of beliefs. The significance of hope will also vary (taking into consideration as well its rhetorical representations in the case of legal and traditional powers) and will be different in the case of charismatic power (Weber 1968; Gili & Mangone 2023:16–17). In Weber’s writings on religion, a parallel can be seen between eschatological hope, the hope for compensation and eternal reward, and the spirit of early capitalism, which assumed that effort would be rewarded (Weber 1946; Gili & Mangone 2023)

Weber’s aim was to show how the rationalisation of social life and the lives of individuals leads to banality and a sense of meaninglessness, a sense of loss of meaning that, following Weber’s Nietzschean interpretations, can only be overcome by Dionysian pessimism, the pessimism of power (*The Birth of Tragedy*): suffering, cruelty, and meaninglessness are overcome by self-affirmation and hardness (cf. Gunderson 2013: 147). Meaning is a matter of a decision of the will. Whether meaning is (only) a matter of such a decision of the will is a matter of dispute among social scientists. Peter Berger would say that a sense of meaningfulness or meaninglessness is more an existential question: it is more a matter of the simple human condition than a decision of the will, but still there are some important lessons that could be drawn from Weber’s above-mentioned reflections. The first is that a sense of meaning is necessary for hoping. The second is that an organisation’s rationality may lead to a sense of meaninglessness and thus despair. The third – not the last but the last to be mentioned in this essay – is the question of the interplay between the individual and the communal in the state of hope and process of hoping.

Evoking some of Durkheim’s and Weber’s ideas should teach us that the legacy of the early period of sociological reflection is twofold when it comes to the questions of hope, futurity, and the possible sociology of leadership. On the one hand, this legacy makes it difficult to ask certain questions, but on the other hand, there is still some potential hidden in the early sociology. This is why proponents of the sociology of futures advocate moving beyond sociology and adopting an interdisciplinary approach (Halford & Southerton 2023; Suckert 2022).² In the following sections of this essay, some insights from psychology will be discussed. Sadly, a simultaneous reading of psychological, philosophical, and sociological articles

² This could involve, e.g., economics and data sciences (Halford & Southerton 2023), anthropology, philosophy, or management studies.

and books on hope often produces the impression that the authors of the latter are preaching to the converted. Reviewing the whole body of psychological literature on hope is not the point of this text. Rather, I would like to point to some potentially enriching encounters.

For example, psychologists teach us that hope, being a cognitive and emotional state of mind, is a precondition of human creativity and flourishing and is a sign of mental health (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal 2006; Schmid et al. 2018: 9). What is interesting is that hope, as Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal point out, “is based on higher cognitive processing, requiring mental representations of positively valued abstract future situations and more specifically, it requires setting goals, planning how to achieve them, use of imagery, creativity, cognitive flexibility, mental exploration of novel situations, and even risk taking”; it also “requires development of new ‘scripts’: programs about future actions” (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal 2006: 373). Hope “is based on the ability to imagine a not yet existing reality and on anticipation of future goals, as well as on the intellectual capacity to construct a program of action” (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal 2006: 374). It is also worth stressing that hope feeds itself on a plurality of perspectives and curiosity, and thus helps to leverage polarisation (Bar-Tal 2001). Hope is considered a human strength and developing a basic sense of hope during childhood predisposes people to the ability to overcome personal crises (Bielous & Trzebiński 2014). Hope, as other emotions, may be contagious. From the psychological perspective, hope cannot be characterised as passive as such. Even hoping while experiencing little personal agency cannot be regarded as passive. Some sociologists have recognised this aspect. The “work” of maintaining hope in unfavourable circumstances may demand more from individuals than other forms of hope, as Cook and Cuervo wrote (2019: 1115).

The psycho-social aspects of hope are important for the further considerations in this article. Bar-Tal, for example, studied collective fear and hope orientations in societies in intractable conflict. In order to enhance the peace process in societies such as those in Israel/Palestine, the Balkans, or Ireland, he found it necessary to foster a hope orientation. To explain this position, Bar-Tal and Jarymowicz reached for arguments from the neurobiology of the brain. Hope, in contrast to primary emotions such as fear, is developed on the pathway that links the thalamus and amygdala with the cortex (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal 2006: 370). It is the effect of a cognitive and then affective process. Most of the processes related to reflective and moral reasoning that influence the formation of hope happen within the

prefrontal left hemisphere (2006: 382). The researchers argued that “in order to construct a strong basis for hope, human beings must develop skills and abilities of reflexive deliberation and motivational mechanisms for this type of functioning” (2006: 381), because a “hope orientation can be induced only as a function of particular dispositions and ego-involvement” (2006: 382). In other words, dealing with a stressful situation and bringing peace require intellectual capacities and moral reasoning. Developing the reflective system is conducive to taking into consideration different points of view, hearing the arguments of the other side, and evaluating the situation according to abstract personal standards related to social ideals (2006: 382–383). The reflectivity may stop or control the activity of “the automa- tive” prime emotions such as fear, and thus limit potential aggression.

It is impossible to discuss the psychological scholarship on hope without mentioning Martin Seligman, who – in cooperation with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi – established a branch of psychology called positive psychology. It has as its goal the flourishing of individuals and societies and uses science to name, understand, and popularise the mechanism that brings about the flourishing (Seligman 2013: 26–29; see also Positive Psychology Center n.d.). According to its founder and his collaborators, positive psychology complements traditional psychology, whose goal is to study and treat various traumas, weaknesses, or psychological damages. The “disease model” of traditional psychology is thus supplemented by studies on human strengths, positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments (Seligman 2013: 241).

The approach that Seligman fostered and developed has been profoundly influential in the realms of education, academia, business, and management. It was also outstandingly generative in terms of psychological research and sparked a heated public debate about the role of optimism in the lives of individuals and societies. Seligman’s approach has been met with deep criticism but has also gained adherents. In regard to science, the list of accusations is long: scientism, excessive adherence to the positivist model of doing science, elitism, self-isolation and ignoring the research of others, lack of proper theorising, lack of conceptual and methodological thinking, lack of evidence and poor replication, lack of awareness of one’s own cultural situatedness, promotion of egotism, and last but not least a certain naivety and unawareness of one’s own entanglement when it comes to declarations of practicing value-neutral science (Brown et al. 2018; van Zyl et al. 2023). Such criticism is not unique in the scientific world and needless to say it does not apply only to positive psychology.

Most of the critics speak of a new and better version of positive psychology rather than the abandonment of this perspective (Brown et al. 2018).

The task of this article is neither to consider the validity of such criticism nor to respond to it. Certainly, positive psychology is not – as it is sometimes misunderstood to be – about being positive all the time and suppressing negative emotions, and certainly it could benefit considerably from greater recognition of the impact of humanistic and existential psychologists, such as, for instance, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Viktor Frankl, and from a greater inclusion of – for example – phenomenological or sociological reflection. However, for the aim of this article, it is important to highlight points for consideration that may also prove important for the sociology of hope, the sociology of the future, and the sociology of leadership.

Seligman started his academic career by researching the connection between pessimism and depression. He described a phenomenon he called learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is defined as a surrender, a cessation of action, resulting from the belief that nothing one might do will matter (Seligman 1998: 15). When a person faces a negative, uncontrollable situation and stops trying to change the circumstances, even when they have the ability to do so, what results is a state of learned helplessness. The sociology of hope, the sociology of futures (and consequently the sociology of leadership) should be paying attention to situations where hope and agency diminish, that is, the situation of futurelessness (Tutton 2023).

The second point for reflection is that Seligman believes, just as Durkheim did, that optimism can be learned (but contrary to Durkheim, Seligman stresses the creation of individual rather than collective hope or optimism). The optimism he writes about could be called hope, because it does not mean that everything will be fine, that all barriers are surmountable. He does not recommend positive thinking but rather “non-negative thinking” (Seligman 1998:15, 221). He argues that what really matters is what people think when they encounter setbacks: whether they believe that the obstacles are permanent or not, whether they perceive the scope of obstacles as limited or universal, whether they believe the obstacles result from someone’s immutable characteristics or whether in their opinion the obstacles are a matter of changing external circumstances. (Seligman 1998: 40–43). Seligman calls this an “explanatory style” and explains that

The concept of the explanatory style brings hope into the laboratory [...]. Whether we have hope depends on two dimensions of our explanatory style: pervasiveness and permanence. Finding tempo-

rary and specific causes for misfortune is the art of hope [...]. On the other hand, permanent causes produce helplessness far into the future, and universal causes spread helplessness through all your endeavors. (Seligman 1998: 48)

He lists hope as one of the seven human strengths related to transcendence (appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, spirituality, forgiveness, humour, zest) (Seligman 2013: 265). Seligman's work, regardless of the justified or unjustified criticism it has received, also raises important questions about the orientation of a discipline like sociology: its internal pluralism, its scope, and the ways it addresses different topics.

There is nothing like a "positive sociology," even though some thinkers have argued for the need to establish this kind of perspective, because, in their opinion, "a great deal of sociology, like psychology, has focused on a disease model of human functioning" to the abandonment of other aspects of communal life (Bennett 2015: 18; cf. Nichols 2005). In this respect they point at the exceptional sociology of Pitirim Sorokin, another emigrant from Eastern Europe in American academia and a peer of Florian Znaniecki. Sorokin wrote about altruism and love as attitudes to help overcome the social crisis caused by World War II. Nichols notices many similarities between Sorokin's work and the work of Martin Seligman: for example, rejection of negativistic sociology or psychology; response to the sociocultural crisis; recognition of transcendence; emphasis on education for altruism/virtues; and self-determination (Nichols 2005: 35). Sorokin's work differs from Seligman's in terms of methodology and attitude towards Christianity (affirmative versus indifferent), but still Nichols believes that more unites than divides them and argues that Sorokin could be called the forerunner of "positive sociology" (2005, 2012; cf. Gili & Mangone 2023: 19–20). According to Gili and Mangone (2023), Sorokin's unique sociology paved the way for contemporary studies of hope, even though Sorokin did not pay any special attention to the subject.

In summary, hope has not been an easy subject for sociologists. Even though, from Auguste Comte on, visions and dreams of a new social order have permeated the work of many sociologists, sociology as a discipline decades ago abandoned its interest in the phenomenon of human hoping, in experiencing futurity, and in expectations and anticipations. Also, it still too rarely observes and describes positive social phenomena as such. Berger's and Sorokin's ideas have not been widely followed. To where could sociology move from here? It could move in at least two

directions. First, it could move in the direction of a sociology of representational hopes. Here the growing body of sociological research and the theorising of imagined futures is especially promising. Second, it could investigate non-representational hopes, for instance, how they emerge, how they are cultivated, how they are activated, whether there are any communal practices that sustain them, and so forth. The work of humanistic sociologists such as Peter Berger or the sociologist Pitirim Sorokin could be starting points. These two directions should not be considered as “either-or” but as “and-and,” since the existential dimensions of hope often precondition and to some extent might determine the practical outcome of imagined futures.

In the last paragraph of this section, it is worth considering what conclusions flow from these considerations for the sociology of leadership. I think there are at least a few. First, they reveal the need to pay more attention than previously to the problems of the social formation of a hope orientation and to the questions raised by the sociology of futures. Attention should be directed not only to different types of leadership and the circumstances shaping them, but to the very “work” of leaders and communities in regard to their hopes: how these hopes are created, how they are sustained, and to what meanings they are connected. Here, a greater consideration of humanistic sociology could help. Second, the sociology of leadership must be in dialogue with other fields of knowledge. Third, the sociology of leadership should pay more attention to situations where there are feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, or futurelessness, in order to unravel the structural and cultural factors that lead to such states.

/// Hope and the University

In fulfilling its mission, a university certainly relies on the leadership of various groups of people: the faculty, students, and administrative body. An attitude of hope clearly has an effect on people’s school and academic performance (Seligman 1998: 136–154; Curry et al. 1997).

What makes the university a special place is that hope should not be understood solely as a motivational force in regard to performing a given task (e.g., obtaining a diploma, leading a research team, etc.) but also – and in fact in the first place – as a personal and communal disposition and strength that enables human beings to deal with various challenges in various situations. Hope not only has an instrumental and situational value but constitutes a value in itself.

Second, if mission statements are to be taken seriously, most of academia's efforts should be dedicated to enhancing hope and leadership skills within the group constituting the majority of it: students. These skills will be practiced *outside* the university and thus will contribute to the public good rather than to the good of the organisation, that is, the university. Third and most importantly, the leadership practiced and taught at the university should by no means be leadership for the sake of leadership, a mere technique for getting things done. Various alumni will hold positions of responsibility in the future and their leadership must be ethical and wise. Before we move on to specific recommendations for academic life, I would like to reflect briefly on the "philosophy" of academia, which could be critical in the formation of a hope orientation in the academic community.

It seems that the most important division within academia is not between the sciences and humanities but between different ideas of what a university is and how it should function. A university may promise mastery over nature, the ultimate unity of science, and the continual expansion of knowledge and skills. Or a university may practice suspicion and expose hidden oppression; it can re-evaluate values. A university may also be aware of its own limitations; it may be a place of meeting and dispute between different traditions of thought and different rationalities, each of which is aware of its own uniqueness, strengths, and weaknesses (cf. MacIntyre 1990). A university may bump into rocks of presumption and despair, but it can also try to choose a different path.

Christopher Lasch raised a similar issue more than 30 years ago. He recalled the once famous book, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, from 1959, where C.P. Snow described the conflict that was to take place between scientific and humanistic culture.³ Representatives of these two cultures could not communicate and talk to each other with understanding. Snow's book, which was immersed in the Cold War debates,⁴ was also an indictment of the English political elite, who, having been brought up in the liberal arts, were ignorant of scientific achievements and, consequently, pursued the wrong policies: selfish, imperial, racist, and anti-technological ones. According to Snow, humanists needed to return to the heritage of the Enlightenment and should not deny the value of scientific and technological developments. They must learn to speak in the democratic language

³ At the time of its publication, the book sparked widespread debate, which Marcin Napiórkowski recently cited and discussed with reference to literature (cf. Napiórkowski 2022: 193–228, 448–449).

⁴ In this respect see Snow's comparison of the American and Russian systems of school education, and competition between the Anglo-American world, Russia, and China (Snow 1961: 35–54).

of science about the human condition, ethics, or aesthetics (Snow 1961: 49–54; cf. Napiórkowski 2022: 220). The solution to the problem, according to Snow, was that humanists should overcome their ignorance and get acquainted with the achievements of the sciences (as Russia and its world did to a great extent). Lasch cited Snow's book 30 years after its publication not because he was interested in the situation of modern Western academia, where the liberal arts had already been in retreat for decades, but because he was interested in cultural criticism.

According to Lasch, the sciences and humanities of his time had a lot in common. Their representatives were guided by an ethic that Lasch called “the ethic of abundance,” “the ethic of unlimited disclosure,” or “the ethic of optimism.” Such an ethic expressed itself in “an unquestioning faith in the capacity of human intelligence to solve the mysteries of human existence” (Lasch 1990: 4), belief in a duty “to pursue ideas wherever they may lead, without regard to their moral or political consequences” (Lasch 1990: 3), and “an unfounded confidence in the moral wisdom of experts” (Lasch 1990: 12). This ethic sustained a culture of unlimited consumption as “the prerequisite of a good life” (Lasch 1990: 10). Lasch contrasted the ethic of abundance with the ethic of limits. The latter was more often characteristic of non-academics than of academics. An ethic of limits was based on the conviction that not everything that is technically possible is morally good, and not every human desire should be gratified. It also questioned material abundance as a means to human flourishing (cf. Seligman 2013) and sometimes placed untutored common sense higher than the ideas of experts. Lasch's description fit the broader context of his critique of rebellious elites adopting the mindless mentality of the masses, as described by José Ortega y Gasset almost a century earlier. Yet for this article, another observation is more important. The ethic of abundance, a belief in constant progress, is a form of “cheerful fatalism,” “an opiate,” which “assumes that we are carried along on an irresistible flood of innovation” (Lasch 1990: 13). In the end, it incapacitates people for intelligent action and seeing things through (Lasch 1990: 14). Lasch called this the ethic of optimism and juxtaposed it to hope, which corresponded with the ethic of limits. The hope Lasch advocated for was about “a deep-seated trust in life that appears absurd to those who lack it”; it was about a sense of justice, a belief in an inner order of things (Lasch 1990: 14; cf. Lasch 1990: 13; cf. Havel 1998). Hope relies on memory, virtues, and humility, and recognises human frailty and the need for transcendence. These, according to Lasch, were the preconditions for adequate action

when needed. Lasch found various promises to release human beings from all forms of necessity not only morally wrong but first and foremost simply untrue. Such promises were impossible to keep and making them would lead to frustration, apathy, and the breaking of social ties. The lesson that can be drawn from Lasch's reflections today – that is, after another 30 years have passed – is that we do not need to choose between the sciences and the humanities: we need the entire heritage of human knowledge, including those ideas whose roots predate the Enlightenment.

Furthermore, Seligman, who may seem to be an advocate of optimism, does not hesitate to talk about limitations. Like Lasch, he acknowledges the role of significant strengths (or in other words, human virtues) in human flourishing. The word “optimism” does not mean the same thing in Seligman's and in Lasch's writings. They are homonyms, not homologies. The psychological reality Seligman describes lies closer to what Lasch calls “hope” than to “the ethic of abundance.” Seligman reminds his readers of the need to notice good events and celebrate successes, but this does not mean living in abundance and the prospect of unlimited growth. It means that finding meaning in our lives and experiencing flow are extremely important to us as humans. Seligman wanted optimism to be “flexible” and “realistic” (Seligman 1998).

The phenomenon described by Lasch is perhaps more relevant to Western universities operating in a developed capitalist culture of consumption than to universities in Eastern Europe. However, universities in our part of Europe – perhaps as a persisting legacy of the materialistic culture promoted by communism – have in a sense lost their humanist sensitivity. They rarely think of themselves as places of comprehensive, self-conscious human development. Some universities may “sin” by presumption, some – probably those in Eastern Europe more often than others – may “sin” by despair. Falling into extremes carries dangers (Napiórkowski 2022). Meanwhile, the challenges of modernity force us to reflect on the ethics of limits and human ecology (McPherson 2021). There is an important lesson to be learned.

/// Recommendations and Conclusions

In referring to the works of sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers, it was pointed out that hope is deeper and more important than optimism. Hope also cannot be reduced to and identified with expectations, anticipations, or aspirations. The disposition of hope combines agency, creative

thinking, and a sense of meaning (transcendence). In hoping, the whole human person is involved. Hoping involves bodies and minds. The attitude of hope, which is primarily the result of cognitive processes and only then affective processes, largely depends on what and how we “feed” our mind. It also involves values and various social ideals, because they motivate us to act. Human hopes are intertwined. Even individual hopes have in some sense a social, communal dimension. The attitude of hope can be shaped and supported. It is one of the most important characteristics of any leader and a precondition for any leadership. Last but not least, if hope is to be a kind of virtue, and an enduring attitude, skill, or disposition, it must avoid two extremes: pride and discouragement, or in other words, presumption and despair. Based on the above, I would like to devote the last paragraphs to what could be done so Eastern European universities become places that practice and inspire hope and hope-based leadership.

First of all, there should be room for representational and non-representational hopes at Eastern European universities. These modes of hope should be studied and discussed. This means that sometimes an academic discipline – such as sociology, for example – has to develop new tools, concepts, and theories. It needs to revisit forgotten intuitions and enter into dialogue with other disciplines of knowledge. Sociology as a discipline could be an example of the clash of presumption and despair, and/or the forging of an intermediate attitude of hope.

Secondly, universities could be places that raise awareness and create future-oriented competencies (Miller 2018). In this way different representational hopes are formulated, expressed, and put under discussion. Futures literacy labs, as described by Riel Miller and colleagues (2018), or any other group activity that has elements of anticipation (both awareness of the future and prospective thought), appropriation (joint commitment, collective mobilisation, and sharing of values) and action (strategic resolve and planning) as proposed by Jan Erik Karlsen (2021), could be useful in this process. Elaborating on the postulates of Bar-Tal and Jarymowicz, universities should be meeting places for different points of view, research schools, and traditions of thought, which are individually aware of their uniqueness, but also of their limitations. Finding pathways and imagining the future relies to a great extent on free inquiry, understanding previous experiences, and the ability to stay in dialogue with competing points of views, since hope is more a result of thinking than of just feeling. It goes without saying that universities should play a crucial role in fostering

analytical and moral reasoning within society. They should also contribute to shaping social ideals. Universities must be places that cherish non-partisan thinking and teach respectful dialogue. To the degree that it is possible, curricula should avoid excesses of optimism and pessimism, and should foster critical thinking (Napiórkowski 2022). Only then will universities be able to respond to the challenges of the communities in which they function.

When it comes to non-representational hope, the humanities and social sciences could function as crucial exercises in hopeful thinking and self-awareness, since they can provide actions with justifications and meaning. They can help people to understand the ratios behind individual and communal hopes – their dynamic and character. They can help them to understand other than instrumental dimensions of imagining futures.

The humanities and social sciences also have a special role in addressing positive aspects of life and in enhancing the capacity for non-representational hoping. Universities are communities of people who not only have intellectual needs but also need good relationships, a sense of meaning in and from their work, a sense that their efforts are appreciated, autonomy, and so on. Students, faculty, and members of the administrative body all have these needs. The process of teaching and conducting research is more effective if basic needs are met.

Furthermore, universities should conduct sociological and psychological research to identify areas and situations that are conducive to learned helplessness or the downplaying of strengths, or conversely that build a sense of agency, creative thinking, and personal and communal strengths, and help to address weaknesses. Universities should be open to supplementing formal education with extra-curricular activities, non-partisan, apolitical programmes, and free initiatives that would enhance the communication and leadership skills of the students, contribute to the flourishing of the academic community, and inspire its members to lead lives that would make a difference.

In this essay I have tried to shed light on the relation between hope, the imagining of possible futures, and leadership. If universities are to be places for the formation of wise and ethical leadership, we should pay attention to this relation and revise the concepts and theories we use. What is at stake in the discussion is the thriving of academic communities and their fulfilment of their unique mission.

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/// Abstract

Drawing on insights from sociology and psychology, this paper points at hope as one of the key personal and communal strengths that contemporary academia needs in order to make use of its potential and fulfil its unique mission. It also shows the connection between futures studies, sociological reflection on hope, and the sociological understanding of leadership. The difference between unwarranted optimism and hope is explained, and hope is presented as a deeply creative, active process involving thinking more than feeling. The author argues that modern universities pay too little attention to the positive aspects of life, and thus universities become paradoxically less capable of executing their mission: to be leaders of positive change in every dimension of life, to conduct free research and free debate in which every bit of truth is respected, and to form ethical, wise leaders. Sadly, some fields of knowledge, such as sociology, lack a sufficiently developed theoretical apparatus to confront the problem. This paper concludes with recommendations for Eastern European academia.

Keywords:

university, hope, futures, leadership, social sciences

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UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP, ABYSSAL RESPONSIBILITY, SOVEREIGN EXCEPTION: AN ARGUMENT FOR A NEW FORM OF DISCIPLINARY DECISION-MAKING

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/// Abyssal Responsibility

I am in agreement with Thomas Docherty when he writes “we are facing something of a crisis of leadership in higher education in Britain” (Docherty 2011: 111). Its cause? The separation of the leader, in the form of a vice-chancellor, from that which she (or he) leads, the university. It results in a void between the two and gives rise to what I call the problem of abyssal responsibility when it comes to accounting for decisions of leadership. The focus of this paper is the consequence of abyssal responsibility in cases of alleged misconduct, where the vice-chancellor makes the decision in regard to sanction. But the problem extends far beyond disciplinary procedures; it is a problem of leadership as such if the structure of leadership positions the leader above and separate from the institution she leads. Early in the twentieth century Max Weber characterised such leaders as an ideal type: the “charismatic leader” (Weber 1968: 22ff). In my view, the separateness of leader from institution can be traced back further still: it is an inheritance of sovereign leadership. Contemporary commentators on Weber, for instance Sverre Spoelstra, contend that charismatic leadership leads to today’s problem of “post-truth” leaders (Spoelstra 2020). For Docherty the leading characteristic of isolated leaders is hubris, which leads to

“massive damage [...] to the intimacy of community internally” (Docherty 2011: 109). I argue that the separation of leaders from their institutions opens the way for abuse of power by the leader and her imposition of her own moral values upon the academic body. This can be clearly seen in the disciplinary procedures of those universities where the vice-chancellor has the power to decide upon sanctions.

In UK universities, it is common for a disciplinary tribunal to be convened in cases of alleged misconduct by an academic. The tribunal is drawn from the academic staff and overseen by the university’s council, which, if properly constituted, we might say represents the community of the university and its traditions. Following an inquiry into the employee’s behaviour by investigators both academic and administrative, the tribunal considers the evidence and on that basis makes a recommendation to the university’s leader, normally the vice-chancellor, in regard to sanctions. If the academic has been found guilty in any way, it is the leader who has the responsibility for deciding upon a sanction. The person with the responsibility for deciding, the vice-chancellor, does not sit on the tribunal, but receives a recommendation from it upon which to base her judgement. The person deciding on the sanction, then, is separate: not separate in the sense that a judge might be in a trial – for a judge would hear representations from both sides – but separate in the sense that she does not hear any evidence directly, does not necessarily have to agree with the reasoning of the tribunal, does not have to come to a consensus with the investigators as to the guilt or lack thereof of the person being investigated, does not have to engage directly or even meet with the person being investigated, does not participate at all in the deliberative discussion of the university community represented by the tribunal, and is not bound by any of its recommendations as to sanctions. Indeed, it is a model of leadership that works only to the extent that the leader “demonstrates their leadership precisely by establishing a distance or a gap between themselves and the very institution that they lead” (Docherty 2011: 110).

This separation between the university and its leader, between the tribunal and the person deciding, presents a fundamental problem of responsibility. On the one hand, the person with the responsibility for deciding does not herself hear the evidence; and on the other, the body which does hear the evidence is not responsible for the decision. Both parties, that is, both the tribunal and the person deciding, have responsibilities, but neither has full responsibility. Nor is responsibility shared between the two, because the gap between them splits responsibility into two different

parts, the second of which is sovereign. Yet despite this sovereignty, and the separation between evidence and decision, between the tribunal and the person deciding, the gap between the two allows for the possibility of neither party accepting full responsibility. This leads to what I call abyssal responsibility: the responsibility is not locatable, the process by which it is exercised is unfathomable, and its workings are impenetrable.

If the academic employee seeks to challenge the decision made about her (or his or their) conduct on the grounds of the unfairness of the process or the wrongness of the decision, the task is made inordinately more difficult by this separation. The problem is not so much that one or the other party, or both, can shift the burden for a wrong or an unfair decision on to the other, although this is indeed made possible by the process. It is that the person deciding, in being separate from the totality of the evidence, the investigation, the reasoning of the tribunal, and the person investigated, can come to a decision that need not be tied determinately to the facts of the case. Consequently, she can make a decision for which she need not accept full responsibility; and even if she does accept full responsibility, it is a responsibility impossible to assume fully, precisely because of her separateness.

If her decision is the outcome of a shared agreement with the tribunal on certain grounds, then it is an agreement that has to be accepted on blind faith. She may arrive at the same decision as the tribunal, but for her own, different, reasons. She may decide differently than the tribunal recommends, whether she agrees with the tribunal's reasons or not. These circumstances make the process an exercise in autocratic power, with the important corollary that it is difficult in the extreme to hold the decision-maker accountable for her decision, precisely because her separation from the evidence and from the tribunal's reasoning allows her to defer to the tribunal's assessment of the former and provision of the latter, or to substitute her own version of the grounds, or their lack, and ultimately to make her own decision as to the sanction. Thus, an excessive trust in the decision-maker is required. If you were designing a system where responsibility is made difficult if not impossible to locate, ascribe, apportion, or challenge, this would be the system you would want to construct.

/// Abuse of Power

The gap created by the isolation of the vice-chancellor, the separation of the person deciding from the evidence and the tribunal's reasoning, is a space which can be exploited for purposes of power – a power without

responsibility. Exercised in the abyss of responsibility, it is a discriminatory power. The decision-maker can use it to wield power over the individual, or secure her (or his or their) own power within the institution, or to reinforce the institutional power of the university over its employees. The gap allows for the possibility of making an example of the perpetrator's conduct; should the decision-maker have strong moral or religious views, or indeed personal prejudices, these could form the basis of her decision. Such views could make the guidelines for staff conduct, though articulated in qualified language, appear to the decision-maker as an absolute obligation. For instance, the tribunal could decide that the conduct of the person being investigated does not warrant dismissal, but that not having reported the conduct does. However, the decision-maker might think that dismissal is too harsh or disproportionate a sanction for not reporting, yet because of her own personal morality she may be motivated (consciously or unconsciously) towards dismissal because of the conduct. Her decision would agree with the tribunal as to sanction yet differ in reason. The important thing to note is that a system of abyssal responsibility accommodates and allows for such disjunction. Indeed, this system functions only to the extent that the separation allowing for the disjunction is maintained by the decisions it makes possible.

Moreover, the separation allows the difference in reasons to remain hidden. When pressed as to the unfairness or wrongfulness of the decision to dismiss, the decision-maker need only defer to the tribunal's recommended sanction. In a system of abyssal responsibility, the decision-maker need not have considered the evidence nor the reasons provided by the tribunal for its recommended sanction; she need not come to a judgement as to whether the sanction recommended by the tribunal is commensurate with its reasons; she need not have followed or even have a knowledge of the statutes governing the institute she leads; and she need not familiarise herself with the range of other sanctions available to her in those statutes if the tribunal's recommendation as to sanction fits her own view of the correct punishment. For someone with certain moralistic beliefs or religious convictions, a guideline articulated in qualified language could be interpreted as "absolute" because it involves conduct that the decision-maker may have a moral view about, even if that conduct is not prohibited in the guidelines. It may be that the academic whose behaviour is in question perceived the guideline as a guide to conduct in the best of all possible circumstances, where there are no mitigating factors; and it may even be the case that the investigators – fellow academics and others – investigating

her conduct perceive the guideline in exactly the same way. But the separation of the decision-maker from the evidence and the tribunal's reasoning allows for her moral or religious convictions to overrule the shared understanding of the university community in favour of her own decision as to sanction. As Docherty puts it, it is a model of leadership "all too common in our times: the leader becomes one who confronts their followers or community, proposes actions or beliefs that the community rejects and then proceeds in wilful ignorance of that rejection" (Docherty 2011: 109). And not just in ignorance. The model also allows for proceeding wilfully in full knowledge of the rejection or contrary recommendation.

Of the leader who acts in this way we could say that she is what Max Weber characterises as a charismatic leader, one whose authority is based on personal "gifts" and on the personal loyalty of "followers," people who believe in the leader's person and her qualities. Weber opposes the charismatic leader to a leader who rules by virtue of belief in the validity of legal processes, to whom people submit for reasons of custom and statute (Weber 2008). Weber distinguishes between the nonformal type of law created by charismatic power, and formal justice, which "diminishes the dependency of the individual upon the grace and power of the authorities" (Weber 1968: 86). Charismatic leadership can lead to authoritarianism, to leaders who "refuse to be bound by formal rules, even by those they have made themselves, excepting, however, those norms which they regard as religiously sacred and hence as absolutely binding" (Weber 1968: 84). Sverre Spoelstra takes this further. The separation of Weber's charismatic leader from the authority of law and the authority of tradition leads to today's "post-truth" leader: "the charismatic leader does not need to concern himself with factual reality because he embodies a reality that is perceived to be of a higher order than that of the actual world that we live in" (Spoelstra 2020). Again, so pernicious is his (or her) separation that such a leader "*should* disregard factual reality." Personalistic leaders are no strangers to the "absolutely binding."

There is situatedness and nuance and context and mitigating circumstance hidden within the abyss separating evidence from a decision and the tribunal's reasoning from a decision, and these are precisely what are lost in the transfer across the abyss from tribunal to decision-maker. It might be argued that these are the sorts of things that the decision-maker might expect the tribunal to have considered in order that she be relieved from having to do so, in which case she will likely be inclined to accept the decision recommended by the tribunal. But if she has made her mind up in advance,

then not being exposed to these human details makes it easier for her to make a decision of her own choosing. Indeed, if she is minded to dismiss the academic because she believes the latter had an “absolute obligation,” regardless of what the circumstances were or what the mitigating factors might have been, or what the guidelines as to conduct state in qualified language, then what she is in fact saying is that the institution is absolutely detachable from those nuances and context, even if that situatedness and any mitigating factors are irreducibly connected to and produced by the institution and are its responsibility, for instance, in the case of adverse working conditions or toxic working relations with colleagues or cultures of cronyism or bullying.

A leader whose norms are absolutely binding, at the expense of any living relation to the university’s statutes and the practices and the culture of the university community, is a leader unfit for the university of today. I would argue that an insistence on the “absolute obligation” is in fact a camouflage for the wielding of absolute power. To claim that what has been breached is an “absolute obligation” will assist in warranting the harshest punishment. To decide in favour of what she has already decided, in accord with what her mind has made up or the biases of her thinking, is, in the end, to decide in favour of the power that enables her decision. In short, the system allows for the wielding of extremes of power, leading to the harshest punishments. A reasonable or fair-minded individual might perceive such actions on the part of the decision-maker to be an abuse of power, yet they are actions acceptable within the law because the system of abyssal responsibility permits them. The responsibility for an unfair or wrongful decision is, strictly speaking, unassignable. The responsibility of the leader in this structure is so abyssal that her responsibility recedes to the point of invisibility.

/// The Sovereign Exception

There is a hierarchy of standards built into the structure of abyssal responsibility. The academic is subject to and subject of the most determinate relation between self and responsibility for acting. Her (or his or their) actions are tied in the most determinate way possible to evidence and the tribunal’s reasoning. Contrarily, the decision-maker is separated from precisely these things – the evidence and the tribunal’s reasoning – as if the decision-maker does not have to answer for herself in the way the person she is deciding about does. As we have considered, the decision-maker might say that the

academic had an “absolute obligation” to abide by guidelines to staff, but the decision-maker is not held to the same standards. She is exempted from them by her position as leader. Being separate from the evidence and the tribunal’s reasoning allows her to act as if her position of institutional leadership accords her the right not to be held accountable in the same way that she holds academic employees accountable. Such a leader is not held personally responsible for her actions precisely because her position as leader is personalist.

Perhaps this helps explain why, in the system of abyssal responsibility, the right to punish is so intimately linked to the right to forgive, the right to grant clemency. Such is the separation between leader and the university she leads that it is fully within her rights not just to impose the highest penalty available to her, which in cases of alleged misconduct is summary dismissal, but to issue no sanction at all, whatever the recommendations of the tribunal or the admitted conduct of the academic. It is as if the leader in such circumstances has a sovereign position with respect to those she leads, as if she had a sovereign right – the right to grant clemency. If the leader’s function were merely to apply the law, or to serve as the guarantor that the regulations of the university will always be applied, then she would, as Slavoj Žižek puts it, “turn into a mere figure of knowledge, the agent of the discourse of the university” (Žižek 2003: 110). To function simply as the guarantor of the law would deprive the leader of her authority. Therefore, the only way to demonstrate her authority is either to impose the highest penalty available to her, or to grant clemency. It is a situation in which the leader maintains her legal power by acting above the law. The leader’s legal authority is guaranteed only by *not* guaranteeing the law.

It is as if the exercise of the law is subjugated to the need to maintain the authority of the one exercising it – as if the law must first and foremost be exercised in such a way as to ensure the supra-legal authority of the sovereign leader. This helps explain why Kant concludes that “Of all the rights of a sovereign, the *right to grant clemency*...is the slipperiest one for him to exercise” (Kant [1797] 1991: 145). Even if the decision should lead to “injustice in the highest degree,” the leader must exercise it, says Kant, “in such a way as to show the splendour of his majesty.” To grant clemency is the leader’s *right*. The right to grant clemency cannot be separated from the right to exact the highest penalty – not solely because granting clemency might in itself be unjust, but because what is at stake here is not justice at all. For Kant, the right to grant clemency is the only right that deserves to be called the right of majesty. It is a right the leader herself cannot be penalised for exercising: she is above the law.

Clemency is a function of power; it has no place in the university. The freedom of the vice-chancellor to grant clemency is asymmetric to the academic's freedom before the law. It is an excessive freedom, beyond the requirement to apply the law. The right to mete out punishment of the harshest sort and the right to grant clemency are both rights above the law. The exercise of these rights puts an end to the disciplinary process. Within the university's disciplinary process, then, there exists a disciplinary right to exceed or to undercut said process. Such a right is the exception to the process within the process: it is a sovereign right of the leader. The leader is a sovereign exception to the very thing she institutes and this fact allows her to exempt herself from the standards to which she holds other academics. Docherty argues that this is a logic that has been "infiltrated from elsewhere, that has been neither debated, nor discussed, nor even established" (Docherty 2011: 120). Yes, this logic from elsewhere has been silently internalised by the university, but it has been established by the establishment itself, that is, it has been granted by royal charter. The state "grants" a royal charter to the university, and thereby the university becomes a legal entity, with legal powers and the power to wield the law. These powers have political, religious, and theological histories. Might not universities have been instituted the way they were, with rights granted to vice-chancellors according to the model of sovereign exception, not in order to guarantee, say, academic freedom, but in order to reinforce and guarantee the sovereign power of the institutions that instituted them? Sovereign power secures itself within the state by granting the leader of the university such power over the university's academics.

Does such sovereign power have any place today in the academy? Should a university leader who is essentially separate from the body of the university have the right sovereignly to intervene in academic-academic, academic-student, and student-student relations, as if the academics and students were her subjects? The answer to both these questions is of course no. The sovereign power of the vice-chancellor in UK universities is without legitimacy. The structure of abyssal responsibility I have outlined is, in my view, designed to put a limit on responsibility, and on thinking of responsibility, in favour of the power of the decision-maker, the leader, to decide in whatever way she thinks fit. It is autocratic power. It is personalist, overly dependent on trusting in the good character of the person deciding. To this extent it is profoundly at odds with the academic values of the institution it purports to govern.

There are two disjunctions at work in the separations between evidence and a decision, and the tribunal's reasoning and a decision, and they can

operate in different ways. The gap between evidence and a decision, and between the tribunal's reasoning and a decision, is internally divided, making responsibility impossible to objectify. The gap is a limit placed on responsibility, is designed to make that responsibility impossible to ascribe or apportion, and has no place in today's academy. It creates a conflict between truth-telling and the workings of an institution in which truth and honesty are supposed to be uppermost values. It sets in motion a series of substitutions and slippages, where one reason behind the "for good cause" provided by the university as justification for its decision as to sanction can replace another. What Docherty calls "a chain of agencies" I would call a chain of deferred agency (Docherty 2011: 115). It is an abyssal economy, a "delegation of guilt and blame" without end (Docherty 2011: 120), the limitless substitution of "good cause," a reverse infinitisation of excuse. It leads to an abyssal justice where what is left is not a matter of "good cause" at all but the ungrounded place of its demand, a demand for a final reason that will never be provided, yet at the same time can never be relinquished. How, today, is it permissible for an academic institution to grant its leader a sovereign authority to decide arbitrarily, rather than requiring that leader to have arrived at decisions on the careers of academics on the basis of evidence, criticality, discussion, fairness, deliberation, and proportionality? The task is to envisage another kind of responsibility, in opposition to abyssal responsibility.

/// There Where the Danger Lies Does the Saving Power Also?

Yet might there be something internal to the structure of abyssal responsibility that would allow for a corrective to it, namely, the very thing that is problematic about it – the separation? We have seen that in being separated from the evidence, the person charged with making the decision can make up her (or his or their) own mind. A person with the kind of power the structure of abyssal responsibility invests in her can decide upon any sanction she wishes, and for reasons which differ from those underpinning the sanction recommended to her. And this can lead to an abuse of power. At the same time, however, might this make the position of decision-maker in such a system one of creative leadership, and the decision-maker, a creative leader? Rather than merely following the recommendation of the tribunal, or being led by her personal moral or religious convictions, the person with the power to decide could lead creatively. What do we mean by this?

In the structure of abyssal responsibility within disciplinary procedures, the decision-maker and the process of investigation are in asymmetrical

relation to each other; only the one party – the decision-maker – can put a stop to the movement of abyssal responsibility. What would mark this person out as a creative leader would be her preparedness and willingness to use the inordinate power with which she is invested to question the very separation that enables the power in the first place. Rather than someone who simply makes up her own mind for reasons private to her, or who is led to a sanction determined by her moral or religious beliefs, a creative leader in such a situation would be one who, aware of the enormous power at her disposal, managed not to be determined by it, either in a subjective moralistic way or a sovereign way. She would be someone who questioned her abyssal responsibility and instead assumed a different responsibility: the responsibility to question not just her own authority, but the position of the authoritarian leader as such.

Abyssal responsibility is without ground, for grounds are what have been detached in effecting a separation between the reasoning and the decision-maker's decision. Therefore, if there are to be any grounds for her decision, they will have to be invented. Is it not justice that grounds all such grounds? A creative leader would be someone who, in perceiving that the law is not just applied but invented, sees her role to be interpreting the law and acting on the world, motivated by justice. It would be the responsibility of a just leader to invent the grounds for a responsible decision. A responsible leader would come to her decision not through wielding the power of the sovereign exception, but by refusing such power in favour of the very thing that abyssal responsibility excludes: evidence and reasons, context and criticality. This is what would differentiate a responsible leader of an academic institution from one who wields power in the structure of abyssal responsibility. A creative leader would encourage another way of thinking about responsibility.

Two things speak against this approach. First, to call for such a leader is again to invest in the person, in the character of the leader, when it is precisely the character of the leader that is always already in question. Second, to interpret the law creatively and to apply it inventively would be for the leader to become either or both a) the saviour, the one for whom we have been waiting; or b) self-sacrificing to the extent that not only would she put an end to the structure that allows the law to be applied in this way in the first place but she would also abolish the very position of leader. The only responsible decision of a creative leader would be to remove the leader. There are no such leaders. The isolation of the leader in the structure of

abyssal responsibility rules out all acceptable forms of responsibility. If justice is to be made possible – if justice is to be the motive force in setting up a disciplinary procedure – it cannot be entrusted to the decision of a leader.

What is needed is to open the opaque space of responsibility, to make the space more transparent, and this entails eliminating the position of leader. So separate is the decision-maker in the structure of abyssal responsibility that she does not even have to meet the person about whom she is deciding. Yet still she can pronounce on the feelings of remorse of the academic in question and come to a judgement as to whether he or she is likely to engage in the same misconduct again. She may deliver her verdict “in person,” but only within a framework of domination, as another abuse of power: hauling the hapless offender in, summoning her to appear before the decision-maker, flanked by other delegates of authority, in order that the sentence be delivered with the maximum possible authoritarian force and the offender be blinded by the decision. Might we contend, then, that the decision-maker who wishes to challenge the sovereign exception should be mandated to hear directly from the person whose fate she controls, and to listen to what the employee has to say before she decides upon a sanction? But a leader who is obliged to meet the person she is deciding about is no longer in a position to control and determine her own appearing. She is no longer a sovereign exception.

As Michel Foucault has shown, disciplinary power is exercised through its invisibility (Foucault [1975] 1979: 187). The separation of the leader in the structure of abyssal responsibility outlined here is of this kind: the leader subjects herself to a minimum of visibility. Meeting the person whose fate one is deciding might seem to a reasonable and fair-minded observer a minimal condition for exercising power over that person fairly. But that would be to ignore how the structure of abyssal responsibility is, as we have seen, indebted to the model of sovereignty. Any play of visibility and invisibility between the sovereign and her people will always be an economy in the service of the sovereign. Disciplinary regimes exercise their power “at the lowest possible cost (economically, by the low expenditure it involves; politically, by its discretion, its low exteriorization, its relative invisibility, the little resistance it arouses)” (Foucault [1975] 1979: 218). All of these are marks of separation. Contact or exchange between a sovereign and the subject whose fate she determines is one of the most uncommon things to occur in a kingdom.

/// Transparency and Visibility

There is another – perhaps more fundamental – reason why a meeting between the decision-maker and the person whose fate is being decided should be a prerequisite for questioning the abyssal model: to hold the leader herself responsible and accountable. For a leader to be held accountable for her (or his or their) power, it is necessary that she appear before the people over whom she has power. The leader must make herself visible to the person whose fate she is deciding; she must be seen by her and appear before her during the investigative process itself. It is not for nothing that Hewart's dictum is commonly referenced in regard to English law: justice must not only be done, but must also be seen to be done, and this includes being seen by the person whose fate is being decided (Hewart 1924). But this is not possible within a structure in which the leader is separate and sovereign and absent of personal responsibility.

With this, we have come to the matter of transparency. We have seen that in the abyssal gap between evidence and the person deciding, between reasons and the person deciding, a secret may lurk: it could be the secret reasons why the decision-maker has arrived at the decision she has; it could be the motivation that leads her to decide this or that sanction. Even the authorship of the decision can be obscured. In short, what is hidden by the structure of abyssal responsibility is grounds (reasons), justification (motivation), and accountability (authorship). The darkness of the abyss demands an inordinate amount of trust in the process. The degree to which this opaque system is open to abuse cannot be exaggerated. In my view, if the workings of the abyssal machinery were exposed, such trust would very often turn out to have been misplaced. This situation in part explains the enduring popularity – and not just the critical necessity – of artworks and dramas, from Shakespeare's histories and tragedies on, that expose the nefarious goings on right there in the structure of abyssal responsibility at the level of the sovereign. We might say that in the structure of abyssal responsibility that I have outlined, the ontological foundation of the decision as to sanction recedes into the abyss, yet paradoxically it remains present in its absence (cf. Heidegger [1957] 1991). The disappearance or withdrawal of foundation in the form of evidence and reasons does not leave us with nothing. Rather, it leaves us in the presence of an abyss, and this is what art exploits.

But what of the person subject to sanction and wishing to challenge the decision? It is within such an abyss that the person must seek to expose the workings of the system. Those in power can operate such slippages

that the recession of ground remains ongoing and always just beyond one's grasp. It is not a clean space. It is impenetrable; it can be corrupt and is often rife with machination. What is needed, as Joseph A. Raelin argues, is a flatter ontology, a space where disciplinary procedures are made transparent and visible to all, in which decisions are taken not by someone separate from the institution (vertically, through top-down imposition) but made within structures which are horizontal (collective, situated, reflective). Raelin is a leading exponent of the emerging field of leadership-as-practice [L-A-P], in which many of these questions are being taken seriously (he calls it "a kind of principled pragmatism"). Raelin goes so far as to say that a flat ontology is "post-humanistic," an ontology in which "the human being is no longer the centre of things" (Raelin 2022). What I am arguing for is that in disciplinary procedures, where human beings are necessarily implicated, the decision-making should be de-centred in the sense that the power to decide ought not to reside with a single hierarchised human being granted sovereign exception.

It may be that transparency either denudes the decision-maker of her autonomy (as Richard Sennett has contended) or produces an inhuman society of control (an argument made by Byung-Chul Han). However, neither critique is pertinent here. Sennett appears to be agreeing with John Locke that the ruled, in trusting their ruler, "grant him a measure of freedom to act without constant auditing, monitoring, and oversight. Lacking that autonomy, he could indeed never make a move" (Sennett 2003: 122). Yet I have shown that because the abyssal responsibility at issue here is structurally open to abuse of power, it requires an egregiously excessive degree of trust in the character of the leader and that "mutual understanding" is just not possible. Sovereign exception rules it out. And "lack of mutual understanding," as Sennett indeed concedes, "invites abuse of power." Han, who is in agreement with Sennett, seems to believe that transparency is equatable with surveillance: "mutual transparency can only be achieved through permanent surveillance," which can only become more and more "excessive," leading to "total control," and the "destruction" of "freedom of action" (Han 2015: 47). But how else to bring about transparency than through monitoring it in some way, and remaining vigilant over it? It is what Jacques Derrida calls "a painful paradox" (Derrida 2000: 57). The more open the space becomes, the more it needs to be surveilled or policed. The more it is surveilled, the more transparent it becomes. The democratisation of such spaces is co-extensive with the policing of them, and vice versa. Besides, in the structure of abyssal responsibility, mutual transparency is

not achievable, because freedom of action is granted to one side only, and excessively so. Han's critique rests, I think, on the presumption that the decision-maker is a singular person, whereas the kind of transparency I am arguing for is shared across a flattened structure. "Transparency and power do not get along well," says Han. Quite. What needs to go is the power of the single hierarchised decision-maker. There is no reason why the person whose fate is being decided by a disciplinary process should have to accept what they "do not understand" in the mind of such a decision-maker – a decision-maker invisible to them. The opaque equality Han and Sennett call for cannot be achieved in relations of power where there is asymmetric abyssal responsibility. Oversight (Sennett) and surveillance (Han) are less worrisome, less threatening, less open to abuse, when power is not located in a single hierarchised, invisible individual at the top of – yet separate from – a vertical structure of one-way responsibility.

The exercise of disciplinary power in democratic institutions is served neither by hierarchising the person deciding by separating her from the evidence and the tribunal's reasoning, as if she is above the people about whom she decides, nor by rendering her invisible by separating the reasons for her decision from surveillance by the people (cf. Green 2010). If leaders are to be held accountable for their decisions – including for those decisions directly impacting the careers and public reputations of the people being decided about, which is surely a primary condition for the working of a just and democratic academic institution – then the entire process needs to be made visible and transparent, and for the entire process to be made visible and transparent, the position of leader as separate and sovereign must be abolished. If the figure of the leader is to remain at all, then perhaps it can only be in the person of one whose function is to apply the law without exception, and where she is a member of a collective or a team.

By "a team" I mean a situated and interconnected group within a de-hierarchised and horizontal structure, in which the decision-maker is no longer at the head of a vertical structure of decision-making, separate from evidence and justifications, and invisible to the people about whom she makes decisions. It is necessary not just to close the abyssal gap separating the leader from the process but to eliminate it entirely. To this end it is essential to incorporate the decision-maker into the process in which evidence and reasons are deliberated upon, arrived at, agreed upon, and made transparent both to the body of the university, the academic and the student body, and to individuals about whom disciplinary decisions need

to be made. Making the working of disciplinary procedures transparent and inclusive will in turn effect a disciplinary force upon those involved in the process. Democratic exposure to the gaze and inspection of the people in effect trains those procedures – not because the look or the inspection of the people is an exercise in power, but because power relations are dissolved or we might say spread more equally in greater transparency, and the mutuality of acquiring knowledge and learning from each other, both of which are surely desiderata for informed decisions, is enhanced: “the leading might come from the follower in some way, however slight or substantial might be that way” (Docherty 2011: 110). Certainly, a decision-maker who participates in learning, in a structure that is relational rather than hierarchical, in a process that *leads her* to a decision, will minimise damaging isolation. It would be a working relation that discourages hubris and retracts the space for abuse of power.

Finally, if universities are to remain sites of original research, then they must resist the burden of external morality and avoid the imposition of the subjective and absolutist moral values of separated leaders. Judgements as to the sanction of academics deemed to be culpable of misconduct must reflect the values of the university. Rather than the imposition of universal or absolutist values by moralistic and personalistic leaders onto situated contexts of action and the actions of individuals in them, what is needed is a way for decisions to be informed by values emerging from those contexts. That is to say, the values by which the actions of the individual are to be measured and sanctioned will emerge in and from the socially interactive contexts of those actions, with all their socio-material and embodied contingency (Raelin 2016).

I argue that visibility and transparency, together with de-hierarchisation and horizontality, and greater inclusivity and equality of authority, are essential conditions for the fair working of a university that would place justice as the principle of its disciplinary procedures. If we wish to keep a system in which a “leader” is the person making decisions, then that leader cannot be separate from that principle but must embody it. This is not possible in the figure of a personalist leader, a leader separated from the led. Thus, if we are serious about the requirement of justice, we must de-hierarchise the entire structure of decision-making, especially the structure of responsibility for decisions over the very fate of the persons about whom decisions must be made, and re-think not just the place and function of the leader but whether having a leader is necessary at all.

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/// Abstract

A critique of university leadership, in particular as it is manifest in disciplinary processes. The basic problem is the separation of the leader from the institution she leads. Separation is an all-too-common problem with university leadership, and gives rise to a fundamental crisis of responsibility – what I name the problem of abyssal responsibility: a non-locatable responsibility for which no-one answers fully – making it unfairly difficult for the academic sanctioned to challenge the disciplinary decision. The gap created by the separation of the person deciding from evidence and reasons can be exploited for abusing power. In abyssal responsibility, the right to punish is intimately linked to the right to grant clemency, what I call sovereign exception. I ask whether the separation internal to the structure of abyssal responsibility might allow for a creative corrective to it. And I answer no, because then the only responsible decision would to abolish the leader. Responsibility in such cases must be made transparent and visible. I propose a form of leadership which is non-personalist and de-hierarchised, one which involves co-learning and co-responsivity, and above all is not separate. In short, a leadership which is democratic.

Keywords:

universities, vice-chancellors, crisis, responsibility, sovereign exception, autocracy, abuse of power, transparency, visibility

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versity: The Repression, The Counter, The Hope,” in a volume of essays on manifestations of social resistance in 1956–1980 to be published in 2024 by the Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław. Other papers forthcoming: “Secret Universities in Czechoslovakia,” “Overcoming the Legacy of Inner Freedom in the USSR,” and “Dovzhenko and the Repression of Montage in Ukraine in the 1930s.”

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DISCUSSING BOOKS

THE [SELF-]PROLIFERATION OF RUSSIAN FASCISTS

IAN GARNER, *Z GENERATION: INTO THE HEART OF RUSSIA'S FASCIST YOUTH*

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An excellent book, *Z Generation: Into the Heart of Russia's Fascist Youth*, which the *Financial Times* describes as a “chilling investigation,” offers a portrait of contemporary Russian youth. Dr Ian Garner has conducted an in-depth sociological study from which a strong thesis emerges: fascism in Russia is increasingly thriving.

The everyday image of Russia in the Polish media, as well as in more serious commentaries, is deceptively one-sided and monotone. Whether in connection with elections, such as the last presidential one, or new poll data, we are persuaded that Russian society is passive and behaves in accordance with the Kremlin's dictates, mainly out of fear of repression. We read with disbelief and horror about soldiers who perish wholesale, although not before the worst of them have committed criminal acts against civilians – torturing, raping, and looting as in 1945.

Not only in Poland, but probably in many other countries, a persuasion about the civilisational inferiority of contemporary Russia is becoming stronger. This allows “people of the West” to believe that even if Ukraine

is losing an unequal fight, truth is on our side, and therefore justice will sooner or later triumph. Or some other positive scenario will emerge, although it is unclear when and under what conditions.

Garner is not interested in some indeterminate entity, in “the whole of Russian society,” about which we know as much as we can glean from unrevealing percentage bars. He writes neither about soldiers nor generals, nor about veterans of the Homeland War, nor about IT specialists who have chosen emigration, nor about the middle class who spend their holidays in Thailand or Turkey. He focuses on the Russian youth who spend hours on social media, waiting for Taylor Swift’s new album and watching the same series as their peers in every corner of the world. Except that these Russian teenagers are budding fascists, who believe what Solovyov says:

We’re the greatest country because we have the greatest destiny!
We’re standing firm and protecting the children the UkroNazis
are killing with our bodies! We’re fighting on the side of good.
Your brothers and fathers are at the frontline. The aim of human
life is not to go on living happily [...] to buy a car or an apartment.
You can only live when you know what you’re prepared to die for.
(Garner 2023a: 123)

Garner documents the thesis that Russian Generation Z identifies with the “Z” painted on the tanks that are about to crush Ukraine. This is a shocking account, based on interviews and a review of the content of central propaganda messages and social media. The argument is supported by a historical analysis of Putin’s times and consists of seven chapters: 1. “God Is with Our Boys”; 2. “A Fairy-Tale Rebirth”; 3. “The Enemy Within”; 4. “Remaking the Young”; 5. “Fascism Unleashed”; 6. “The Unmeaning of Protest”; 7. “The Z Generation.”

Marcin Kowalczyk’s Polish translation reflects Garner’s style well, and its clear, literary language does not detract from the scholarly nature of the monograph, which deserves a place on the shelf next to recognised works such as Timothy Snyder’s *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America*.

Garner’s interest in Russian war culture has already resulted in an earlier work, *Stalingrad Lives: Stories of Combat and Survival*. It is worth adding that the book reviewed here has been translated into five languages to date. Its author studied, among other places, in Saint Petersburg, and received his PhD from the University of Toronto. Recently, he has been working at

the Center for Totalitarian Studies at the Pilecki Institute in Warsaw¹ and has been taking an active part in important debates. On the website of the Pilecki Institute, a video report can be found of a meeting in March 2023, prior to Hurst & Company's publication in London of this extremely interesting book, which the translator has given a very well-chosen title: *Za Putina. Mroczny portret faszystowskich ruchów młodzieżowych w Rosji (Pro-Putin: A Dark Portrait of Fascist Youth Movements in Russia)*.

One of the debates in which Garner participated at the Pilecki Institute concerned "Hitler and Putin on TikTok: Totalitarian Propaganda and Modern Media." I did not take part but I would like to speak after the fact to draw attention to three issues that I consider crucial, that is, creeping fascism, widespread viral propaganda, and the collective identity of young Russians.

Snyder calls Putin a schizofascist and writes about Russia that "real fascists call their opponents fascists, blame Jews for the Holocaust and treat World War II as an argument for the continued use of violence" (Snyder 2019: 190). The schizoid dimension of fascism can be said to be completely resistant to truth and logical contradictions, of which there is no shortage of evidence: "Schizofascism was one of many contradictions visible in 2014. According to Russian propaganda, Ukrainian society was full of nationalists but not a nation; the Ukrainian state was repressive but did not exist; and Russians were forced to speak Ukrainian though there was no such language" (Snyder 2019: 191).

There is no need to convince anyone about the growing danger of creeping fascism. It has favourable conditions for growth, and the Kremlin is becoming an international centre – not any longer of communism, but of fascism. There is no shortage of well-known and completely new generators of fascist movements, which some prefer to call "neo-fascism." Concerns about future employment are growing as labour markets are hit by the pandemic or technological revolutions. There are ongoing wars whose ends are receding, as in the case of Ukraine or the Gaza Strip. There is talk of other threats, such as in connection with Taiwan. There is the increasing, previously unknown problem of climate refugees, whose scale we are unable to predict, any more than we can predict the rate of global warming in the next decades. When it comes to the scale of migration processes, sta-

¹ The Pilecki Institute was established by the Polish Parliament on 9 November 2017. The institute's mission involves the significance of Nazi and Soviet totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century and their political and social impact on a global scale.

tistics and forecasts are pessimistic. The influx of migrants from the poor South is unstoppable, and so far, there are no effective policies to prevent it. Let us add to this the activities of the mass media, even the mainstream ones, which shape public opinion in the spirit of xenophobia. As if that were not enough, Russia has “enriched” the concept of hybrid war to include the use of migrants for targeted attacks on the borders of European Union countries.

Ian Garner does not deal directly with these global phenomena, but he is very aware that the spectre of fascism is not imaginary. If Russian youth is its breeding ground, we cannot rule out that there will be groups of teenagers outside Russia who will pick up some version of fascism that will be “pop cultural,” and thus the book *Z Generation* talks about pop-cultural schizofacism.

How did it happen that young Russian Internet users became willing to “go under fire for Putin?” Garner shows the phenomenon from two perspectives. On the one hand, the individual, biographical side. On the other, as a mass phenomenon that is best described by the metaphor of the radicalism virus. One of the characters Garner describes is Vladislav. “He is everything a Russian liberal ought to be”: a hipster who is the life of the party and knows Europe, where he has many friends, and who speaks English well. A media person, a videographer for a state media producer, he seems to fit the profile of a Navalny supporter who would take part in protests. The reality is completely different.

In the week that Russian forces invaded Crimea, Vlad’s VK page was transformed overnight. The young Vlad, then barely twenty, suddenly started posting a slew of nationalist imagery: a cartoon of a hulk-like, muscled Russian bear bursting free of his clothes; an image of Putin holding a gun to Barrack Obama’s head; and a cartoon of a Russian bear defending a helpless “Ukrainian” bear cub against a monstrous American hyena brandishing a “democracy” sign. (Garner 2023a: 88)

There are many like him.

In turn, for the youngest, those from primary school, there is the Youth Army (Junarmia), whose offerings are not confined to training camps and exercises with dummy knives, rifles, and uniforms, which look great in selfies. Junarmia gives these children something much larger: a common

pictorial and emotional language of collective identity – “Russia is my life. I can breathe here. Russia means home. Family. Love. Peace.” One of the young soldiers writes in TikTok style, “I’m here to save people” (Garner 2023a: 184). Garner sees the key problem of regained group identity, the chance to blend into a group, and extreme nationalist ideology. “Surrounded by models of fascist excellence, however, the young can fill up their emptied identities with the state’s ideology of war” (Garner 2023a: 197).

Putin’s war mythology of the Russian “struggle for peace” recreates itself spontaneously and lives thanks to young Internet creators who are free-of-charge Stakhanovites. They creatively develop propaganda that is the pellet feed of a central and monolithic message. Young, talented Internet creators take the place of ideologists and propagandists. They are creating, remixing, and uploading at every hour of the day and night. They are massively producing, for free, successive activist songs, poems, posts, memes, and videos whose meaning is clearly criminal: “Fuck those Ukro-nazi scum.”

Through interviews and media analysis, Ian Garner has gathered comprehensive documentation to illustrate the phenomenon of fascism planned from above, which multiplies on its own, wrenching Russian youth from a sense of isolation, emptiness, and hopelessness. Is there a risk that various forms of extremism, leaning towards fascism, will increase epidemically in other parts of the world? I’m afraid so, but the book’s greatest value is in tracking fascist youth movements in Russia. And also in that it does not allow us to remain indifferent and forces us to look for ways out. We read about one of them in connection with Dr Bruce White’s team from the Organization for Identity and Cultural Development, who have developed a data-driven approach, as know-how for building counter-narratives, under the slogan “Russians don’t need to stop being ‘Russian’ to be deradicalised.” Will White’s approach provide an effective way for young people – other than just Russian youth – to reject extremism? We don’t know, although I personally do not have such faith, because I think that radicalism, which does not shy away from violence, fits perfectly in network structures. It is breeding in many places, with or without the Kremlin’s help. “The aggression of radicalising groups hits not only their opponents but also completely incidental victims. The spectre of retaliation penetrates the daily lives of groups and individuals, accelerating radicalisation, which fuels political parties competing for every vote and those revolutionary social movements that dream of a better world right away” (Kuczyński 2023: 8).

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**HOW TO PUBLISH
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Translated book

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Article in another author's book

Bourdieu P. 1967. "Postface," [in:] E. Panofsky, *Architecture gothique et pensée scolastique*, Editions de Minuit, pp. 133–167.

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FORTHCOMING

ISSUES IN PREPARATION

2(25)/2023 /// Energy

Sociology is the child of nineteenth-century industrial society. This society would not exist without fundamental changes in the economies of the most industrialised Western countries propelled by machines powered by energy obtained from the combustion of coal or oil. The origin of sociology and its primary object, modernity owed its shape to the harnessing of these energy sources. Without control over new energy sources, there would be no world as we know it: no industrialisation or urbanisation, class society, globalisation, no modern transportation like railroads, cars, or airplanes, no consumer technology in our homes. Understood in this way, modernisation furthermore entails the material infrastructure of geopolitical relations, which binds states through networks of interdependencies reliant on transmission of energy and the raw materials that allow for its production.

Armed with historical experience, we are now facing another energy transition – or even revolution – but this time it will be a carefully planned transition driven by the need to halt global warming. If the plan succeeds, new ways of generating, transmitting, and storing energy will not only replace the existing ones but also change how entire societies function: whether one wants to participate in the change or not, it will unavoidably affect every area of life. The question remains open of how the transition will change social practices, identities, interests, and the balance of power between social groups and countries, including the centre–periphery dimension. Many believe that this is the new task for sociology: to describe and foster the transition process. This issue of *State of Affairs* explores what social sciences could contribute to furthering our understanding of the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of the transition process.

1(26)/2024 /// The Unbearable Lightness of Free Time

Artificial intelligence will also put people out of work – we generally hear about this fact right after hearing that artificial intelligence will enable widespread surveillance. And work, after all, is not just a source of livelihood. Even if our professions have long since ceased to be matters of divine calling, for many people – perhaps even for the majority – work still

provides a more meaningful social identity than does family status, nationality, or religion. Psychologists believe that losing a job is one of the most stressful moments in life. Furthermore, it is not only unemployed people who feel socially undervalued; to say at university that you have free time is to admit that no one wants to make use of it and also that you have no plans of your own for filling it. Thus, a series of issues appears for us to consider: who will we be when we are deprived of a job that occupies at least a third of our adult lives? What can replace work in its identity-forming function? Is free time a social problem?

A utilitarian – though we should say narrowly utilitarian – attitude to time is already inculcated during primary socialisation. From an early age we are taught not to waste time. Perhaps leisure should be viewed from a different perspective, one that might be suggested by Simmel's concept of socialisation (*Vergesellschaftung*)? Is free time not precisely time free from social control and left to the discretion of the individual? What are the sociological perspectives that seem more fertile in a society where work is losing its importance?

Other people are working hard at the competition to manage our free time. The culture industry is essentially an entertainment industry. It is, however, entertainment after working hours. If we do not do work, will there be nothing left for us to do but “amuse ourselves to death”? There is no *otium* without *negotium* – or so the Romans believed: first social duties, then some form of leisure, preferably a noble kind, *cum dignitate*. But does not the ability to spend meaningful leisure time originate in work itself? After stultifying work does a person not choose equally stupefying entertainment? Sociologists have long pointed out that the class structure is reflected and reproduced in consumption – which requires means but also educated tastes. Nevertheless, the social structure is shaped by work and not by what we do afterwards. Is this relationship still so obvious today, though? And how might it be if labour becomes a scarce good?

2(27)/2024 /// State of Emergency: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Historically, major epidemics have been facts of a total nature, introducing upheaval into all social subsystems. However, the COVID-19 pandemic was the first time we had an event of this magnitude in a modern society with its unprecedented functional complexity. In the first phase of the cri-

sis, the solutions for minimising the number of victims were mainly those known since the dawn of time, for instance, isolating the sick and maintaining physical distance to prevent further infections. Controlling the development of a biological phenomenon had far-reaching consequences in many areas of social life.

The widespread policy of lockdowns caused layered global disturbances. It quickly came to the awareness of policymakers and the public that a pandemic is not just a narrow medical and logistical problem but a colossal challenge due to shortages of knowledge, procedures, and material and personnel resources; a pandemic is difficult to manage, though with clear borders – a wicked social problem, a mega-crisis with general health (including mental health) dimensions and economic, legal, social, etc., aspects. An effective COVID-19 policy required the mobilisation of enormous resources, including cognitive, material, organisational, symbolic, emotional, and communication resources. In modern knowledge societies, policies require not only legal legitimacy but also scientific justification. In a situation where every action or inaction resulted in far-reaching consequences, the responsibility of those in power grew, and management of the situation required testing previously unknown solutions, adapting to still new circumstances, and constantly developing and synthesising the available information.

In this issue of State of Affairs, we would like to present the lessons in emergency management that should be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. Though keeping in mind the saying Winston Churchill immortalised, that “the War Office is always preparing to fight the last war,” we are confident that the accumulated knowledge will allow us to increase our preparedness and resilience for major crises in the future, not just health ones. In other words, we invite authors to reflect on preparing for crises, based on the experience of the pandemic.

1(28)/2025 /// Weberian Problems in the Social and Historical Sciences

Weber’s work encompasses a wide range of problems in the social and historical sciences. At the same time, his works are classics, and a classic work is one in which we can find answers to our own questions. We are looking for texts that are devoted to Weberian topics and problems and that are written from the viewpoint of the authors’ own research and theoretical interests. These should be texts that confront Weber’s analyses with the

current state of research while also examining Weber's inspirations (how Weber transformed them and used them in his research and theoretical analyses) and considering the extent to which Weber's specific theoretical and methodological proposals may (or may not) provide answers to our own theoretical and research problems.

We invite authors to explore thematic areas such as: methodology of the social sciences; conflicts of values and the ultimate foundations of life in the analysis of today's politics, economics, religion; the scholar's current vocation at the university and in the public space; the sociology of governance in the analysis of political phenomena; Weber's theory of the state and modern bureaucracy as a helpful tool in responding to the problems of modern states; degrees and trends of rejecting the world; theses about the disenchantment of the world due to the emergence of new forms of spirituality, including non-religious ones.

2(29)/2025 /// The Spirit of Capitalism

Max Weber's famous thesis on the relationship between the Protestant ethic and the "spirit of capitalism" was one of his most important theoretical proposals, and it has since been much discussed and critiqued. In an upcoming issue of *State of Affairs* we would like to take a closer look at the question of this "spirit" in the light of what classic thinkers of the social sciences, such as Weber's contemporaries, Georg Simmel and Werner Sombart, and earlier Karl Marx, wrote about capitalism. First of all, we want to ask questions about the spirit of today's capitalism from different perspectives, as we have been inspired to do by Richard Sennet's work on "new capitalism," which was recently published in Polish, or by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello's book, which deals directly with the "new spirit of capitalism." Does contemporary capitalism in its various forms (financial capitalism, etc.) actually have a spirit? And if so, what is it?

The title question may also lead to the one of whether capitalism has (or had?) a nationality. At least two possible aspects come to mind here. First, under what socio-cultural, economic, and historical conditions was capitalism born: in northern Italy in the sixteenth century, in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, or in Great Britain in the eighteenth century? Or is it the case, as Fernand Braudel has argued, that capitalism has always existed but only became dominant in the modern era, subordinating other social organisations to itself? Second, in a more contemporary dimension, the question could be reduced to the differ-

ent institutional systems that regulate the capitalist order (the market economy?) at the level of the nation-state. In this context, research on non-Western “capitalisms” seems particularly interesting.

We are thus looking for texts in the following areas for the proposed issue of State of Affairs: perspectives of classical sociology, psychology, and philosophy on capitalism; the spirit, logic and metaphysics of contemporary capitalism; discussion on existence of one or multiple capitalisms and finally, the role of culture in today’s capitalism.



A new sociology of leadership – is it even possible? Although sociology’s classic thinkers, such as Max Weber, Florian Znaniecki, and Robert Merton, analysed the question of leadership, the topic later fell into disgrace and was overtaken by psychology, organisational development, and expansive leadership studies, which eventually constituted the field itself. Neglect of the theme of leadership, and its export solely to business or politics, left universities helpless in the face of the managerial revolution and political polarisation which entered academia and eliminated models of leadership tailored to its needs. Just as the Central Eastern European management field was overridden by Western crusaders of leadership, so now the university has been colonised and bureaucratised with criteria and practices foreign to its spirit and mission. This process is apparent worldwide as well as in Poland, where the former ethos of the intelligentsia is being replaced with a new managerial, capitalist spirit.

The purpose of this issue of *State of Affairs* is to offer an integral theory of academic leadership that can inform real-world practices. The foundation of this integral model is the question of where [context or scene], who [leader], and why [goal] leadership is needed. By addressing all three facets, this theory aims to provide a foundation for a more hopeful academia. In this journey, we are guided by eminent academic leaders of the present, who imagine for us and with us the university of the future.

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