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# SEVERAL PROPOSALS FOR LONG-TERM INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

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If we agree that the concept (actually information) of the scientific discipline known as the economy of culture embraces both the economy of enterprises and centres taking part in the production and diffusion of cultural goods (i. e. the economy of cultural services) as well as the application of knowledge from the field of political economy in planning and directing processes in culture (i. e. the economy of cultural policy), then we can rightly say that questions pertaining to this second group of problems pose particular difficulties. Hence, an exchange of experiences and cooperation on the international plane appears to us to be particularly interesting and useful. Consequently, my proposals relate to this second group of problems.

In those milieux in Poland where the problems of culture are being studied, agreement has not yet been reached as to the transposition of economic and esthetic categories (or, in a large sense, civilizational categories). Discussions, which are sometimes extremely lively, raise dilemmas which seem to be insoluble. In answer to the question of whether the costs of founding some institution in the field of culture are of value in terms of a much higher working output, a question usually posed by those who are tied to economics and lean towards economic categories, which they consider to be universal and accept without any reservations, ot-

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hers reply that this question can be raised in the reverse sense and that we can ask „what has the economy done, what does it intend to do to contribute to the development of culture and which undertakings are of real value in terms of culture”, etc. They respond to the proposal of creating a „cultural economy” with a postulate on the „culture of economy”. In answer to the postulate on economy in the field of culture as well, closely tied in with economic thought, they say that economics chiefly pertain to quantitative phenomena, while culture is basically a question of quality. Culture, they say, shapes man's personality and stand in the desired way and it is pointless to calculate the costs as long as efforts do not produce the expected results, it is pointless to increase spending as long as efforts produce results. Advocates of an economic approach to culture respond to this by saying that a certain goal can be attained in a way which is to a greater or lesser degree expensive.

The dispute between these two tendencies assumes the form of a dilemma which Polish economist Oskar Lange based on political economy, claiming that in social life we can choose between two modes of action: we can attain goals with a minimum of means or we can view the means at our disposal as a starting point and work to achieve the highest possible effect. Which of these two roads is the best in terms of culture? Or, if it proves useful to embark on both, what is the dialectical link between them and action which would be based on applying both methods?

In my opinion, these questions deserve thought if we desire to dovetail our stands in a creative and unmechanical way, and thus create a discipline which will be defined as the economy of culture.

I am not sure, however, that the organization of a meeting of experts which would discuss these questions offers the best way towards building up a joint stand. Perhaps it would be better to formulate the problem in greater detail, with two or three centres working on it, and only then organize a meeting of experts.

What would be the task of these experts? I start out from the principle that the root of the debate lies in the fact that economic categories are founded on material objectives and values, while cultural categories are based on intellectual objectives and values. Both are essential for the development of society and for the development of individual groups and units. Should not a more indepth analysis of the eco-

nomy of culture be preceded by thoughts which would lead us to a dovetailing or at least rapprochement of our concepts on modern man's basic material and cultural needs (i. e. psychological, spiritual, esthetic, intellectual, etc.)? Would not this bring us closer to the formulation of a common denominator of economic and cultural values without a priori and unsubstantiated claims that the economic and esthetic categories in question are already known to us or have been created on certain bases (it is known that the creation of any scientific discipline inevitably passed through such a phase).

All this, however, does not mean that even the greatest sceptics, in discussing the economics of culture, see no possibility of applying economic laws and concepts to culture. In addition to the accounting offices in enterprises dealing with cultural services (I leave this question aside), this type of problem can also include answers to such questions as the following:

— how many books can be read by contemporary people with different levels of education and different social and cultural needs and how should the publishing and diffusion of books be organized;

— what is the number of theatres, cinemas and concert halls needed to ensure, under defined conditions of space and transport, that these centres will be accessible to the population and that they will at the same time pay off;

— what are the most effective ways of forming personnel in culture while being the least expensive;

— which part of their budget do they allocate for satisfying the cultural needs of families from different social milieux, and what is taste observed in this fields based on, etc.

With respect to the influence of culture on the formation of world outlooks and the possibility of applying economic calculations in this field, sceptics fear that economic concepts (which contain elements for assessing phenomena in culture) will be mechanically transplanted into the field of culture. It is, known, for example, that all mass production is cheaper for the producer than short series. Were this principle mechanically to be transplanted into the field of culture, we would be contributing to culture's impoverishment, and within time this would even lead to the suppression of its instrumental functions in terms of production. What would be cheap for each indivi-

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dual producer with time might become costly for society as a whole.

In the field of economics, as in the field of culture, this problem is frequently discussed as entailing the following dilemma: should one create or produce equally for all or should creativity or production be aimed at the élite? It is sufficient to change the platform of comparison, however, to see that instead of opposing these two possibilities, we come up against the problem of the functions executed by eminent creators in a mass culture (like industrial enterprises with ultra-modern equipment in the entire economy of a country). Reasonable interconnection between these elements can show, for example, that from the viewpoint of society, it is both recommendable and economical to open up bank loans to great creators (a man who is truly a creator creates more than he spends), and this could also be applied in conclusions on the ways of financing culture. If we leave this platform aside, the problem of financing great creators often leads to heated discussions which do not end in constructive conclusions.

I have had occasion to take part in discussions with people who work professionally in culture and schooling, and who debated the following: is it better for society to develop three great creators within a given field or three hundred educated people? Some stressed the influence of three strong figures (which is possible in the age of mass communications), while others stressed the creative role of mass culture and the far greater outlooks for prominent individuals to emerge in a milieu with a higher cultural level. In the end, we all agreed that society is both in need of eminent creators and cultured citizens and that a reasonable cultural policy must include necessary insight into the most successful forms of organizing and financing cultural activity.

Preliminary empirical research has been carried out on this question, not among professional creators in the field of culture, but in various places; this research revealed certain unexpected facts. Thus, for instance, certain active cultural groups turned to the administrative authorities or socio-economic organizations for assistance to construct buildings and open several well-equipped cultural institutions. The authorities agreed, under the condition that at least half the necessary means be collected in the given place. A modern house of culture was built, but cultural activities, and even the cultural needs of society in that place declined. What happened? What economic and social laws were in question here?

An attempt was made to explain such a case by analysing a rural group of some two thousand people from the environs of Cracow which for years has been developing lively socio-economic and cultural activity. In the course of thirty years, the people of this village executed major works, using minimum bank loans (which of course they return). For instance:

- they introduced electricity in all farms;
- they founded a cooperative enterprise which produces ceramics for art,
- they founded a secondary vocational school for preparing cadres for this enterprise,
- they introduced gas into all housing apartments,
- they reconstructed and modernized almost all the buildings,
  - they built an asphalt road,
  - they are introducing running water,
- they are organizing in the village performances by theatres from Cracow at least four times a year,
- they have their own song and dance folklore group,
- they adapted an old brick plant into a meeting hall where they organize discussions, dances, etc., so that it serves as a house of culture in which many cultural needs can be fulfilled.

Only one person works full-time here and that is the leader of the folklore group; three people work part-time (the cinema operator and two women, one of whom works in the cafeteria and the other is a cleaning woman). Two people who take turns in selling newspapers and books come in from another town and hardly take any part in cultural life, where non-manual workers (including two artists) from the ceramics factory, elementary and secondary school teachers and schooled agriculturalists predominate.

A special role in socio-economic and cultural life is played by the cooperative factory of art ceramics, which was organized by the population itself and which today employs 200 village inhabitants. Thanks to this industrial enterprise many initiatives have been taken in the field of the economy and culture. Let us just mention the founding of a vocational school for preparing cadres for the factory and the intro-

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duction of gas (part of the costs for the latter were covered by the factory). The factory halls have been placed at the disposal of the folklore group, composed mainly of workers and members of their families, and the factory pays the salary of their leader. There is also a day-care centre, open to all children. It was opened here before other villages because it is of greater benefit to parents employed in the factory than to agriculturalists. All these initiatives of general or cultural importance were taken for economic reasons, whether we like it or not, and are considered as accompanying features. This is supported by the dates. Requests for certain cultural undertakings were made ever earlier, and, as in the case of the house of culture, the means had already been collected; the realization of undertakings in the cultural, educational and social fields, however, was usually slower here than in undertakings in the field of the economy, and the former were usually executed parallel with the latter.

This does not mean that local leaders underrated social and cultural-educational initiatives. They took second place, but they accompanied all initiatives in the economy and they often held first place in the minds of local leaders and organizers. When we wanted to learn how this village, which enjoyed the same conditions as surrounding villages, managed to record better results in economic and cultural development, we discovered that a large role was played in this by the exceptionally successful combination of initiatives in the fields of the economy and culture. Had there not been undertakings in the field of the economy, the people would not have had the means for developing social and cultural activities. Cultural events with entrance fees served to collect the means for economic objectives. But, had there not been cultural activities, the people of this village would not have had the mental stamina, enthusiasm, ingeniousness and dedication for fulfilling these economic tasks.

I mentioned this example to illustrate the need for preliminary discussions, and even preliminary research on how the economy and culture interact, which is often considered in terms of the dependence between the cultural level of the worker and his professional capacity, without thought as to where, when and how the worker raises his cultural level or when and in the course of which work his ability and acquired habits will be used.

In conclusion, we can note that in financing mass culture, in organizing and maintaining expensive cultural centres with modern facili-

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ties, it is equally recommendable, and even more just, to allocate a certain per centage of financial means for carrying out the initiatives of various social milieux or even stimulating certain cultural activities (for instance, activating a local coffee club), so as to obtain the means for carrying out economic plans accepted by all. This would animate the activity of cultural centres, it would raise their prestige, and even check their stigma of being institutions which devour time intended for the earning of material goods.

Research with such an orientation might find it necessary to use experimental methods, which, I hope, will be applied by interested countries and milieux.

As a sociologist, and not an economic or financial expert, I am deliberately omitting the technical and purely economic problems of a new discipline in formation, which we have called the economy of culture. I do so because I respect the views of those economic experts for culture who believe that in the present stage of the development of the economy of culture, the strength of this discipline lies in the techniques of economic analyses, while its weakpoint lies in the value of its socio-cultural analyses. They call for work to be carried out parallelly in the field of economics and the sociology of culture, and for the better organization of statistics on culture.

A parallel economic and sociological analysis of information on the sources and forms of financing culture in various social milieux, a corresponding analysis of documentation on a broadly based concept of artistic and cultural life (art culture, sports, recreation), and a parallel economic and sociological analysis of information on the state of a country's cultural infrastructure, its institutions and cadres, could be of use in the preparation of international work on the economics of culture. In order for long-term international research to bear fruit, however, general theoretical principles must be adopted, for without them future detailed research would be unconnected and imprecise. It appears to me that this research should even be preceded by defining the specific traits of various countries and social groups.

For instance: the scope and character of market relations in the entire socio-economic life of society are a factor which profoundly alters the influence of economic mechanisms on the processes occurring in the field of culture (e. g. the emergence and creation of cultural goods, their circulation and diffusion, their durability, and

finally, the social function they fulfill). In essence, if one leaves aside the difference in character and the range of market relations in the countries which would take part in research on the economics of culture, one obtains results which can be compared in terms of economic techniques (which refer to the economics of cultural services), but which are incorrect and which cannot even be compared in terms of the economic and social functions of different ways of directing the development of culture in a given society. Hence, it seems to me that at the beginning of long-term research on the financing of culture as envisaged by UNESCO, it would be useful to elaborate certain synthetic and important indices which would help us to assess the nature and range of market relations in these societies. This would also help to analyse all obtained results and to compare them, while taking into consideration the peculiarities of each individual country and each individual society.

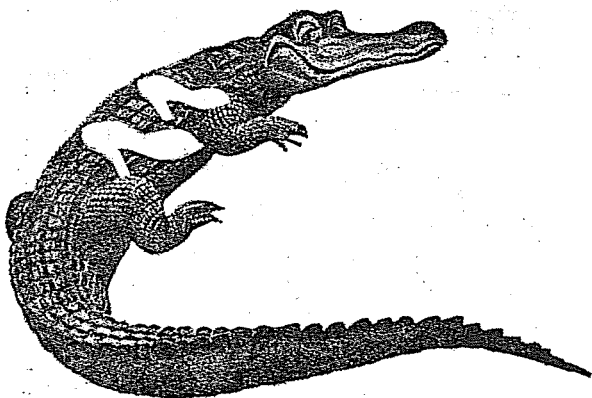
Thus, in order to avoid certain misunderstandings, let me immediately point out that I am not thinking so much of general differences between the capitalist and socialist countries in this field as of differences pertaining to individual fields of social life, such as health, education and culture, in which each society is striving more or less to limit the laws of demand and supply. Let us mention the propagation of medical ethics which oblige doctors to extend assistance to any victim of an accident, nomatter how much money he may or may not have, or teaching ethics which oblige the teacher to devote himself to each pupil in the class, or art galleries in which valuable paintings are exhibited to all free-of-charge or at a very modest price, without imposing the obligation of purchasing the picture and without increasing demands to the brink of the impossible. Determination of the starting points of these limits could be considered as a fact on the basis of which one could determine the objective but also relative values in analysing the results of more detailed research.

Another factor of general importance, without which it is difficult to assess value and compare international research in the fields of the economics and financing of culture in different societies, lies in the degree of institutionalism, in other words in the degree to which organizations are present in the whole of the nation's social and cultural life, and even in the proportions of the influence of social organizations of general importance on the whole of these countries' socio-economic life.



In this field too, the elaboration of synthetic indices which enable the determination of the institutional character of life, especially the cultural life of the countries participating in international research, should be considered as a precondition to the success of all ensuing research.

The economics of culture in Poland is a discipline which is only at the point of its inception. There are countries in which ideas in this respect are developed, and there are those in which works devoted to the economics of culture stand still. I have endeavoured to offer proposals which are the results of our views on work which if continued on an international scale, would contribute to explaining and dovetailing views, to directing research in the aim of increasing the results expressed in the cultural and social development of our countries.



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