

WHEN A PEASANT CAN ONLY GRIEVE OR REJOICE:¹ THOMAS AND ZNANIECKI'S APPROACH TO EMOTIONS

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In 1998, during the International Sociological Association (ISA) congress held in Montreal, ISA members were asked to list five books published in the twentieth century that had most influenced their work as sociologists. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki received as many votes as, among other works, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* by Herbert Blumer, *Frame Analysis* by Erving Goffman, and *The Gift* by Marcel Mauss.²

The strength of classical works lies in the fact that over time they remain relevant. They can be read anew, and their themes or “ways of seeing,” which for various reasons might not have been adopted earlier, still have the ability to affect contemporary discussion. Undoubtedly, Thomas and Znaniecki’s approach to emotions is such an example.

It must be made clear that the book *The Polish Peasant* has not yet been read from the perspective of the sociology of emotions. Although Gisela Hinkle (1952) considers the theme of emotions outlined in the monograph, she does so while discussing the concept of four wishes, which in her in-

¹ This is a provocative reference to Thomas and Znaniecki’s comment on the subject of the peasantry’s attitude to service in the Tsarist army (see Thomas & Znaniecki 1976b: 123). Helplessness in the face of power was revealed in a passive acceptance of the recruit’s fate. On being drafted, a peasant could only grieve, and on leaving the army, then he would rejoice.

² <https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/about-isa/history-of-isa/books-of-the-xx-century>, accessed 1.02.2020.

terpretation is definitely psychological. Norman Denzin analyses the emotions contained in the empirical material (vol. 5); however, he completely disregards the analytical model developed by the authors (see Denzin 2009). Norbert Wiley (1986) sees an interesting possibility in the extension of Thomas and Znaniecki's theory to include affectivity, but at the same time he stresses that the authors' efforts went in a different direction.

This article aims to reconstruct Thomas and Znaniecki's approach through the lens of the sociology of emotions. First, I will clarify the specifics of the sociological approach to emotions and consider why this perspective might be implicitly present in the monograph. Then I will show how the theoretical framework proposed by Thomas and Znaniecki is suited for analysing emotions (defined as emotional habits, feelings, and sentiments). In the last part of the article, I will present how the authors took affectivity into account at the analytical level.

The subject of the analysis will be the first and second volume of *The Polish Peasant*, whose 100th anniversary provided an opportunity to re-read the work. The first volume contains the comprehensive "Methodological Note," in which Thomas and Znaniecki laid out the fundamentals of their research method and the foundations of their proposed theoretical approach. The attitude-value scheme they introduced is an attempt to bring together the micro and macro levels, a combination in which the authors saw the specificity of a new science, that is, sociology. The next part is an ethnography of peasant life and culture, presented against the background of the Polish class system. The last part of the first volume and the whole second volume consist of collections of letters ordered chronologically as parts of family series. A short introduction precedes each series, and the letters are accompanied by commentary of an explanatory or analytical nature.

/// The Sociological Perspective on Emotions

The sociology of emotions, which dates back to the 1970s, was created not only as a response to the growing interest in emotions in social life (the affective turn) but also as a result of disappointment with the dualistic concept of the social world. It emerged that the divisions into individual and society, micro versus macro, reason and emotion do not explain the complex, dynamic, and emergent nature of reality. The sociology of emotions provides the missing link between structure and agency. The contemporary understanding of emotions transcends the old dichotomies.

Metaphors of “the managed heart” (Hochschild), “the emotional brain” (Damasio) or “embodied thoughts” (Rosaldo) capture the complementary relation between the body and the mind. Whereas from the psychological point of view emotions appeared as quantities that exist inside an individual, sociology treats them also as elements of culture.

An emotional culture (Gordon 1989) encompasses affective socialisation, vocabularies for expressing emotions, beliefs about emotions, emotion scenarios and norms, and management techniques (e.g., emotional labour). All these elements are expressed in actions which are adapted to rules of feeling and of display (showing emotions). The rules change depending on the interactive and structural context (e.g., in accord with social role, status, class, or sex) (see Hochschild 2009).

With its proliferation of perspectives, the sociology of emotions does not offer one definition of emotion (see Bericat 2016; Stets & Turner 2006; Bendelow & Williams 1988). Furthermore, theorising in the sociology of emotions is an ongoing process, and in addition, some authors distinguish emotions, feelings, affects, and sentiments, while others use these terms as semantic equivalents. Sociologists assume that emotions encompass at least two elements: physiological arousal and cognitive labelling. Emotions are seen at the same time as embodied experiences and as Durkheimian social facts.

In short, the sociological approach broadens the previous understanding of emotions and involves taking into consideration the patterning of subjective experience by social structures. It emphasises the class, cultural, situational, and historical influences on how individual or group emotions are experienced and expressed.

It seems that traces of such an understanding can be found in the synergy of Thomas’s and Znaniecki’s ideas. Their life histories give reason to suppose their work would bring a new perspective to the affective dimension of social life. Given their different educational backgrounds, their book has at times been called a marriage of psychology with sociology (Blumer 1939), or of psychology with philosophy (Kaczmarczyk 2018). Thus it might be hoped that Thomas and Znaniecki would take the subject of emotion, which was so characteristic of psychology, into account. Further, it might be expected that their approach would be qualitatively different from the understandings of emotion that developed separately within the framework of those disciplines.

At this point, it is worth remembering that Thomas and Znaniecki, especially at the beginning, differed in their views on the nature of emotions

and emotion's role in social life. As far as Thomas is concerned, emotions were important, but for Znaniecki they were of little significance. Thomas formulated his interests in a Darwinian and Freudian context (see Hinkle 1952). He assumed that emotion is a physiological stimulus to satisfy a sub-conscious need for the survival of the species. In his article "On a Difference in the Metabolism of the Sexes" (1897), emotion is compared to energy that determines adjustive behaviour. It differs depending on sex: for instance, femaleness is anabolic (storing energy) and maleness is catabolic (destroying energy). Thus, females were seen by Thomas as lethargic and passive and males as creative and dynamic.

The problem of emotions is further developed in the four wishes concept. Thomas calls them "forces that impel to action." In *The Unadjusted Girl* (1923) he concludes that although human desires (wishes) have a great variety of forms, essentially there are four desires which people strive to fulfil: the desire for new experience (based on anger), the desire for security (based on fear), the desire for response (based on love) and the desire for recognition which stems from libido (see Thomas 1923: 1–4)

Undoubtedly, Thomas and Znaniecki shared an interest in the causes of human behaviour. However, there was a fundamental difference between Thomas's opinions and the views of the Polish sociologist. Znaniecki concentrated on the sociality of action. According to Mariano Longo (2020), although Znaniecki admitted that social action is influenced by inner impulses to act, he explained such impulses by excluding the topic of instincts and inborn tendencies. Instead, he concentrated on social tendencies and socialised emotions (perceived as real and taken into account as real in the course of interaction) which he refers to as sentiments (see Longo 2020: 33–35; Halas 2001).

It is important to remember that as far as the sociology emerging at that time is concerned, the references to emotions were implicit. In searching for its identity, the new discipline was to free itself from the influence of biologism and thus, by definition, its interest in the emotional sphere was limited. Yet, it is not difficult to notice that both Thomas and Znaniecki consider affectivity to be an important aspect of life. They write in the "Methodological Note" that one of their aims was to outline the problem of social happiness (Thomas & Znaniecki 1976a: 95). In addition, they express surprise that the social sciences do not regard the issue with more seriousness. Their monograph was intended (among other things) to address the situation. The sociological approach they proposed was meant to

help in the study of happiness because, as they argue, happiness is closely related to social conditions (*ibid.*: 95).

Moreover, the very choice of research method makes emotions as such, and not solely those connected with social happiness, an essential part of the empirical data. Thomas and Znaniecki's monograph is based, among other things, on personal documents (letters and biographies). By their very nature, the accounts in the correspondence concerning changing life fortunes reveal the emotions experienced by emigrants and point to the emotions of other family members or community groups. The question is how Thomas and Znaniecki's idea to depict a chosen social class "in the totality of [its] objective complexity" (*ibid.*: 89) takes into account the issue of emotions.

/// The Place of Emotions in Thomas and Znaniecki's Theoretical System

Reconstructing Thomas and Znaniecki's theoretical ideas entails some difficulties from the outset. Among other things, one serious objection to the theoretical scheme proposed in *The Polish Peasant* is its lack of clarity about the meaning of the notions of "value" and "attitude" (see Blumer 1939). In fact, readers may have the impression that some concepts only become more precise as they read successive pages. This becomes even clearer when the reader tries to interpret theoretical ideas that are not explicitly clarified, for instance, the issue of emotions. On the other hand, what some people consider to be a flaw may determine the originality of the work, provided that the content of the "Methodological Note" is treated as a confrontation of two not always concordant minds. It is enough to see in possible inaccuracies a dialogical attempt by scholars from different ontological positions to resolve the dilemma of the individual versus society. This dilemma is equally important for the sociology of emotions, which seeks to determine the relation between the level of individual feelings and social reality *sui generis*. The question remains of whether and how emotions have been included in the scheme proposed by the authors.

The initial answers are provided by the authors' attempt to define and illustrate what an attitude is and how the attitude–value relation should be understood. "By attitude we understand a process of individual consciousness which distinguishes real or possible activity of an individual in the so-

cial world” (ibid.: 54 (22)).³ Among other examples of attitude, the authors mention a poet’s feelings expressed in a poem, a reader’s admiration and liking for an author, the fear and piety manifested in the worship of a deity, and preference in creating, and thus we are led to think that emotions somehow fall within the category of attitude. An attitude always refers, through action, to a value, which has a social nature: “By a social value we understand any datum having an empirical content accessible to some members of a social group and a meaning by which it is or may be an object of activity” (ibid.: 54 (20)). Here, in contrast, the meaning of social value is revealed in individual actions.

Herbert Blumer gives a succinct description of this dependence: “The scheme proposed by the authors resolves social happening into an interaction of attitudes and values, which stand, respectively, for subjective dispositions and objective influences” (Blumer 1939: 42). In this sense, an attempt can be made to compare the attitude–value pair to a Meadow pair: a subjective self–objective self – (I–me). But, as Wiley (1986) points out, George Herbert Mead’s concept reduces the role of emotions to insignificant gestures, enclosing the question of their meaning in the communication process.

The situation is different for the proposals of the authors of *The Polish Peasant*. For Thomas and Znaniecki, the affective character of the phenomenon is no reason why it should remain outside the scope of scholarly inquiry. What is important is that the behaviour observed is universal, not individual, and that it manifests itself in conscious action (Thomas & Znaniecki 1976a: 58–60). According to the authors, in principle it does not matter if the inquiry concerns such attitudes as “sexual love or a sense of group-solidarity, bashfulness or a desire to impress, mystical emotion or the amateur aesthetic attitude, etc.” (ibid.: 63 (34)), in so far as they can be understood in relation to social values on the order of, for example, family solidarity, the legal system, or the process of individualisation. The authors write frankly about jealousy, pity, love, wounded self-esteem, hatred, revulsion (ibid.: 85–86), and many other attitudes. In other words, any attitude can be subject to research as soon as it turns out that “social culture” affects it (ibid.: 60).

Placing emotions in an attitude–value scheme gives them a specific character and sets the framework for possible reflection. In a sense, it is a way to avoid the trap of biology, which is inscribed in the very word

³ The numbers in brackets refer to page numbers from the English version of the text (Thomas & Znaniecki 1927).

“emotion.” Perhaps this is why, in principle, the authors do not use the word but prefer terms such as “emotional habit,” “feeling,” “emotional attitude,” or “sentiment.” This linguistic device refers to the equivalent of “emotion” (belonging to the world of nature) in the cultural world of meanings. Peter A. Bertocci (1940), with whose works Znaniecki was familiar (see Znaniecki 1971: 238), defines the relationship between emotion and sentiment thus:

When, however, fleeting emotions are conditioned to aspects of the individual and the environment, they gain the permanence and consistency and direction desired. It must be further carefully noted that though a sentiment is in itself as complex as the number of emotions involved (in one’s reaction to his mother, for example), its uniqueness, its core, is not in its emotional drive, but in the object, the idea, the mother. Hence the variability and the individuality of the sentiment depends on the person’s evaluation of the object, as may be illustrated (Bertocci 1940: 249).

Thomas and Znaniecki are not interested in fleeting emotions, especially unconscious ones, based on drives and limited to physiological reactions. The possibility of conducting an analysis is determined by the question of whether the perceived affective states fit into reflection patterns or form part of a complex system of meanings (such as family pride, romantic love, attachment to land, longing for the home country). According to Wiley: “The shared term or link between the two concepts (attitude and value) is ‘meaning,’ attitudes being intra-subjective meanings and values, inter- and extra-subjective” (Wiley 1986: 30). Paradoxically, such an interpretation seems to be confirmed by Znaniecki’s commentary on Blumer’s remarks: “My attitude of hate toward an enemy is not a part of his meaning: the latter consists in his having hurt or being presumably able and willing to hurt, some positive values of mine. If I am a true Christian, my attitude toward him will not be hate but love, though his meaning may be still that of enemy” (Znaniecki 1939: 93).

Although Znaniecki’s intention was to convince his adversary that values (an enemy) and attitudes towards values (hatred or love) can be analytically separated (one is thus not contained in the other), his example reveals more: that the essence of the difference lies in different orders of meaning. In relation to value it is an inter-subjective or supra-individual meaning (such as the dictionary definition) – an enemy is someone who has injured

me or threatens me, and in relation to attitude it is a subjective meaning connected with the situational definition of an enemy as an opponent or an enemy as a neighbour (definition of a situation). Thus, it can be said that social sentiments can be understood as meanings that are revealed in action. In any case, Thomas and Znaniecki state outright that meaning can manifest itself “in the sentimental and intellectual reactions which it arouses” (1927: 21), as occurs in the case of reading a poem, or can manifest itself in the feeling of pleasure (spending money) (see Thomas & Znaniecki 1976a: 54).

Such a trend of thinking about feelings allows the authors to formulate conclusions such as: “In a community where everyone wants more or less to be an object of general attention anybody who succeeds in this aim becomes in so far the object of envy. We may add that envy of notoriety is probably much stronger than envy of economic well-being, and success in any line is appreciated as much for the public admiration it brings as for the success itself” (ibid.: 139 (151)). This statement may be considered an unwarranted generalisation, but to read it in the context of the attitude–value scheme makes it worth quoting. Placing jealousy/envy in the cultural system of meanings causes the authors to move away from biology and psychology, thus opening the way to sociological understanding. On the other hand, they do not fully make use of the potential of the micro–macro connection that lies within the scheme they propose. Jealousy read through the prism of the attitude–value scheme loses its interactive specificity, dynamics, and colour. It seems, after reading the examples given in the text, that the dilemma of the individual or society is resolved in favour of the latter.

Even viewed in the context of a processual reality, sentiments seem to be reified and objective. Reflecting on the lack of progress in individualisation, the authors refer, for example, to the attitude of family pride characterising the peasantified gentry. They write: “In this case, familial pride, co-operating with the desire to advance, will create a mixed system of economic organization, with quantification of ownership, but without individualism” (ibid.: 78 (56)). Emotions understood in this way become an element of causal laws and are presented as an objective factor influencing the processes of social change.

/// Emotions in the Empirical Material

Can a similar approach to emotions be found in analyses and comments referring directly to individual cases? Can the empirical material collected

by Thomas and Znaniecki be considered “emotionally saturated”? Feelings are written about and expressed not only in the “sentimental letters” but in the majority of the correspondence presented in the first and second volume of the monograph. However, as can be expected, not all manifestations of emotions are analysed. With the exception of a few cases (see Thomas & Znaniecki 1976b: 261), the researchers were rather interested in those emotions in which they could see a manifestation of a “socially sanctioned attitude” (ibid.: 346 (361)). And so, for example, romantic love, not being very characteristic of the social class in question, is not given a separate analysis despite the repeated romantic themes in the letters. “As we know from the peasant letters, love, as idealization and individualization of sexual attraction, does not exist in peasant life in the form of a socially recognised and sanctioned attitude – though this does not mean that it does not exist as an individual fact. The fundamentally sanctioned attitude prior to marriage is ‘liking’ (friendship); after marriage ‘respect’” (ibid.: 346 (1032)). In their first volume, when writing about the institution of marriage, Thomas and Znaniecki simply noted that romantic love is an emotional habit characteristic of a later stage of civilisation (Thomas & Znaniecki 1976a: 124).

Despite various categorical statements (such as the one above) in the theoretical parts of the monograph, generalisations based on induction often contain formulations of a lesser degree of certainty. The conditional character of these words manifests itself in the use of words such as “essentially,” “seems,” “presumably,” “favours,” and so forth. In addressing the question of the “sentimental friendship” between Zygmunt and Walenty (in the Fryzowicz series), the researchers note that “this form of emotionality is probably the result of the influence of religious life in towns – bigotry, ceremoniousness, the existence of confraternities with their superficial humanitarianism, complicated devotion, and lack of practical interests” (ibid.: 318 (988)).

The empirical grounding gives the analysis of emotions a more nuanced character. It can happen that emotions are presented as components of a role and as dependent upon situational context. The role of the widow may serve as an example. While discussing the effectiveness of widow Kozłowska’s actions, the authors attribute her successes to her knowledge of the expectations connected with her role, and consequently her accurate perception of other people’s expectations concerning the emotions she exhibits. Interestingly, their observations correspond with the later findings

of the sociology of emotions concerning emotion cultures (see Gordon 1989; Hochschild 2009). Kozłowska's role is set out in advance:

Kozłowska tries to arouse only such feelings as are habitual in regard to a person of this character [...] Further, she is a mother and a grandmother, and supposed to have feelings of love for them, longing for her absent children, grief for a child's death, anxiety for her grandchildren when they become orphans, etc. (Thomas & Znaniecki 1976b: 8 (530)).

In turn, social roles with built-in expectations about the emotions they express can be components of social types. For example, Walenty (in the Fryzowicz series), as a buffoon type, plays the role of a lover pretending to be in pain after the wedding of a girl with whom he used to flirt (*ibid.*: 345).

The expression of emotions is reflected not only in roles or social types, but also at the class level. Znaniecki and Thomas indicate in many places a class-linked distribution of rules for showing emotion. For example, they note that in the lower social strata it is permissible for men to express their feelings freely in relation to other men, including even the expression of affections of an amorous nature (*ibid.*: 148–149). They also point out that control over affections is more characteristic of the higher classes. In their commentary on the effusive letters (the Kozłowski series) they write that “in a more cultivated environment, more accustomed to restrain the feelings, her behavior would seem highly unnatural, distasteful, and hysterical” (*ibid.*: 9 (530)).

The presumption is thus, as the authors believe, that feelings are subject to regulation of sorts. Moreover, culture clearly defines what type of feeling, of what intensity and what duration, reflects the proper attitude. The authors write distinctly that a proper discernment of the expected emotion also includes a sense of how to gradate the strength of its expression (*ibid.*: 9). As far as the period of expressing a feeling is concerned, a good example is the length of mourning. Thomas and Znaniecki point out that not only a rather unusual intensity of grief demands a special explanation but its over-long duration does as well. Such a justification might be provided by the exceptional qualities of the deceased person, as when the authors explain a fragment of a letter stating that “Grandpa despairs continually after Hanka's death and he cannot forget her cleverness” (*ibid.*: 218 (838)). This observation is consistent with the remarks made by the authors in the “Methodological Note.” They write there that attitudes are

subject to social control, whose aim is to prevent attitudes (undesirable feelings in this case) from manifesting themselves in action (see Thomas & Znaniecki 1976a: 61).

Interestingly, the regulation also concerns what Arlie Hochschild (2009) would consider to be “deep acting.” It is not only about monitoring emotions at the level of expression, but also about control at the level of feeling. As scholars have noted, an example of such emotion work can be found in a letter from Zygmunt (the Fryzowicz series) in which he suggests that Walenty quashed his feelings of love towards his friend. There may also be emotion work *à rebours*, which consists in “absolution” from breaking the rules of feeling. Such an example is the idealisation of a dead daughter (the Łazowski series), which, according to the authors, is “an unconscious attempt to justify individual grief when it goes beyond the limit assigned by the social regulation of the attitude toward death” (Thomas & Znaniecki 1976b: 218 (837)).

Moreover, the presentation of letters in family series makes it possible to capture the processual nature of social life. In this way, the authors emphasise the role of micro processes in understanding great transformations. This approach was fully articulated in a later work by Znaniecki, in which he argues for the benefits of sociological research at the level of primary groups. In his opinion, sociologists should focus on observing many lesser social processes, rather than speculating about one all-encompassing process, leaving this ambitious task to philosophers (Znaniecki 1932: 37–43).

Indeed, the form of ordering empirical material proposed by the authors makes it possible to attempt the induction of cause-and-effect laws concerning feelings. The result of analysing the Raczkowski series of letters is, among other things, the statement that an increase in homesickness is connected with normalisation of the situation abroad. As long as the situation is new and unstable, there is no room for remembrance, which is a necessary condition for the creation of this sentiment (see Thomas & Znaniecki 1976b: 145). Moreover, on the basis of the same collection of letters, the authors note the differences between the impact of family disintegration on the feelings of the men and women. They write that “The personal feelings of women are never so completely subordinated to a form of social solidarity as are those of the men, and on the disintegration of the family the individual feeling of the women is less likely to disappear than the group-solidarity of the men” (ibid.: 142 (732)).

Moreover, the letters are a form of interaction between the sender and the addressee. Even if some letters – the responses – are missing in the

series, Thomas and Znaniecki draw conclusions about their potential content. In this manner they can, in a residual form, recreate the emotion work in an interactive dimension. An example is their observation of the expected emotional responses of widow Kozłowska's interaction partners. As mentioned above, the effectiveness of Kozłowska's actions is based on her ability to assume the role of another and to predict the feelings her behaviour will arouse. Kozłowska rightly recognises that helplessness will evoke compassion, while maternal feelings will meet with sympathy (see *ibid.*: 9). Moreover, the authors perceive the interactive dimension of emotions; they write that "There are also [emotional] reactions which can only be aroused by a person in a determined position. For example, envy is most easily awakened in peasants by a peasant. A clergy or noble will hardly succeed in arousing pity, etc." (*ibid.*: 8 (529)).

It can be said that the understanding of emotions proposed in the theoretical introduction to the monograph and the approach that can be perceived in the authors' analysis of specific empirical cases differ slightly from one another. Interestingly, when analysing empirical material, the authors very rarely refer to the attitude–value scheme. It can be said, however, that in a natural way they use the logic of this pattern, which is intended to combine the micro and macro levels. In relation to feelings, they depart from an objective understanding of emotions (as appears more clearly in the examples in the theoretical part) in favour of taking the subjective side into account. They notice that feelings can be felt, expressed, and evaluated in different ways, that is, that they have to be understood as "someone else's." In other words, it is an approach closer to the humanistic coefficient principle, which assumes that the data never belongs to anyone, in the sense that it always belongs to and is the same as the active experience of the subjects (see Znaniecki 1934: 37). Incidentally, this methodological postulate is a challenge for the researchers themselves, who do not always manage to avoid evaluations from their own perspective. A good example is the passage in which Thomas and Znaniecki comment on Stasia Krupa's admiration for the land between Kraków and Warsaw by adding that it is aesthetically the ugliest part of Poland (Thomas & Znaniecki 1976b: 332).

/// Conclusion

The aim of this article was to answer the question of whether Thomas and Znaniecki proposed a theoretical scheme and presented a method of analysis that facilitate consideration of the role of emotions in social life.

The reply does not take into account the entirety of their work; it only concerns the first two volumes, whose centenary has provided an occasion for studying a rather unexplored motif. It is to be expected that reading the following volumes would bring new findings and ideas to the sociologist of emotions. Proof can be found in the use that Norman Denzin (2009: 172–173) makes of court documents included in the fifth volume, which describe a case of domestic violence leading to the murder of a man named Snopczynski. In Denzin’s opinion, this type of empirical material makes it possible to show aggression as the result of interactions in a triad. Consequently, further reading could bring new findings.

However, a preliminary interpretation confirms that the authors have proposed a model of analysis that allows us to treat affectivity as an aspect of culture. The useful value of such an approach lies, among other things, in the fact that it can be an interesting counterpoint to the proposal promoted today within the framework of “therapeutic culture” (see Illouz 2010). The currently popular podcasts by motivational speakers and the reading of handbooks and professional therapeutic narrations seem to uphold the “overpsychologised” concept of the human being. The promise of control over life that the Enlightenment project entails is transferred to the emotional sphere. Now more than ever, feeling emotion seems to be a matter of individual effort. People are taught to recognise, express, or repress emotions in an appropriate manner. Such regulation is mainly dependent on individual skills acquired through widely available services or is a matter of innate emotional intelligence. In addition to the many benefits, such reasoning carries with it the danger of overlooking the social nature of emotional life. Apart from their individual and subjective side, emotions also have their objective aspect, which is social and cultural, as is confirmed by a reading of Thomas and Znaniecki’s monograph.

On the other hand, the idea of using biographical materials is also connected with having to take the subjective side of emotions into consideration. Embedded in a specific social and situational context, feelings must be analysed as being “someone’s.” When reading the first two volumes of *The Polish Peasant*, it is difficult to overcome the impression of a constant search for a “balance” between the individual and the social. In this sense, the approach presented there seems worthy of application not so much as a restrictive model of analysis, but rather as “a way of seeing” that allows a better understanding of the place of emotions in social life.

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/// Abstract

The present article represents a new attempt to read the first two volumes of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* from the perspective of the sociology of emotions. Reconstructing Thomas and Znaniecki's approach to emotions entails defining the place of emotions (as emotional habits, feelings, and sentiments) in a theoretical framework of values and attitudes, and presenting how Thomas and Znaniecki took affectivity into account at the analytical level. The authors' approach seems to correspond to the contemporary understanding of emotions, which avoids a separation between the individual and the social, the emotive and the cognitive.

Keywords:

The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, W.I. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, sociology of emotions

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