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JAN CZEKANOWSKI (1882–1965)

Jan Czekanowski was born into a landowning family, on 6 October 1882 in Głuchów, near Grójec in the Masovia region. His father Wincenty (1836–1926) was the owner of the estates of Głuchów and nearby Kośmin. His mother, Amelia von Guthke, was German. Jan had four elder brothers and sisters: Natalia, Aleksander, Stanisław and Maria. He was initially educated at home, but in autumn 1894 he became a third-year pupil at the well-known “real school” run by Wojciech Górski in Warsaw. In autumn 1898 he moved to the real school in Libava (Liepāja) in Latvia, where he passed his *matura* school-leaving exam in June 1901. On 1 September 1901 he joined the army as a volunteer. Through an oversight, in contravention of an instruction of 1888, he was accepted – in spite of his Catholicism – into the defensive artillery of the then military port of Tsar Alexander III in Libava. Unable as a private to be moved to another unit without a Supreme Order, and unable as a Catholic to remain in the defensive artillery of the Vilnius district to which Libava belonged, on 6 December 1901 he was discharged from the army as unfit due to overstraining of the heart. He went abroad, leaving the Russian Empire without the appropriate documents, and with his heart in his mouth. He crossed the border in a saloon car occupied by a high-ranking imperial officer and his wife, which enabled him to avoid any border checks. After journeying to Italy, in spring 1902 he was accepted into the mathematics and natural science section of the Philosophy Faculty at the Cantonal University of Zurich. There he studied anthropology under the superb anthropologist Rudolf Martin, anatomy under Georg Ruge, and mathematics under Heinrich Burghardt. It was to these subjects that he would devote his long, hard-working life. He understood anthropology in a broad sense, from a humanist standpoint – as encompassing knowledge about man and his functions. Anatomy was a part of that knowledge, along with ethnography, anthropogenesis and typology, genetics, linguistics and statistics. Czekanowski saw the human being as a creature characterized by a large number of connected and correlated features. He understood that to study only a few of these features must necessarily lead to a limited, fragmentary, one-sided picture which would obscure or even falsify the real human being as an object of study.

At the beginning of the 20th century, when Czekanowski was studying in Zurich, a multifaceted analysis of the human being was not yet feasible. The English statistical school (Pearson, Yule, Fisher, Student) was just beginning its activity. Czekanowski quickly appreciated the role that statistics could play for anthropology and the empirical sciences, and became a student and pioneer of the new discipline.

Jan Czekanowski's first academic work was a short monograph on statistics, written in the second semester of his university studies. It demonstrates the use of Pearson's correlation coefficient to evaluate various methods of measuring skull height. It should be noted that his was 1902, and Karl Pearson had introduced the correlation coefficient in 1901. With this initial work, Czekanowski travelled in 1903 to a congress of German anthropologists in Worms, accompanying his professor Rudolf Martin. He applied too late to be included on the list of speakers, but he made such an impression with his thorough knowledge of the latest methods of English mathematical statistics, which were not yet known among German anthropologists, that Felix von Luschan, director of the African and Oceanic departments of the Royal Anthropological Museum in Berlin, offered him a research assistant's position with prospects of being sent to Africa or Oceania. Czekanowski agreed to take up the position, but only after completing his studies in Zurich. The monograph, which had proved so significant for Czekanowski's future destiny, eventually appeared in print in *Archiv für Anthropologie* in 1904.

In 1903 Czekanowski wrote a paper on the application of the correlation coefficient to the study of muscular anomalies, for which he collected material while working as deputy assistant in the anatomy laboratory. This attempt to apply modern statistical methods in anatomy was published in 1906 in a memorial volume to the American anthropologist Franz Boas.

Czekanowski's work to popularize biometrics is well known. While still a student in Zurich he wrote a paper on the subject, which appeared in 1904 as an introduction to Rudolf Martin's anthropology textbook *Lehrbuch der Anthropologie*, which is still widely known among anthropologists today, and in 1907 was published in Czekanowski's doctoral dissertation. In it he gives a short description of the statistical methods which had been introduced to anthropology by English biometricians. He completed his studies in July 1906, obtaining the degree of doctor of philosophy (his certificate is dated 1907).

In the following winter semester Czekanowski furthered his education by studying mathematics at Berlin University. As a fresh graduate from Zurich, starting from 1 November 1906 he took up the position of assistant at the Royal Anthropological Museum in Berlin. That post provided the possibility of travelling to Africa under a scholarship from the Prussian government. Thus his youthful dreams of an exotic trip to Africa were to be realized. The young Czekanowski was invited by Prince Adolf Frederick of Mecklenburg to join a scientific expedition to the Nile-Congo region in Central Africa. He spent more than two years (from 1 May 1907 to 7 July 1909) in Sudan, the Congo, Uganda

and German East Africa, returning to Berlin via Egypt, Syria and the Balkans. His duties included producing an ethnographic map. The enterprise was a huge one. A total of 2230 porters were employed, and seven stations were prepared along the route equipped with food, drink, medicines, tools, clothing, tents, camp beds, firearms, and even folding bathtubs made of a crumpling impermeable material – in short, everything that the explorers would need. Where possible, expedition members stayed with missionaries, at colonial borderland fortresses or at the courts of African rulers. Czekanowski crossed north-western Tanzania, Rwanda and two extensive borderlands: between Uganda and Zaire, and between Zaire and Sudan. The undertaking took place in quite exceptional conditions; the territory explored, with an area almost twice that of Switzerland, covered a region that had been inaccessible to European colonialists and to Arab, Indian and even African merchants. Both the times and the places visited remained politically unstable and of uncertain future. Spending more than two years on the expedition, Czekanowski collected vast amounts of sometimes unique materials from parts of Africa which at that time were entirely unknown. The materials were relevant to both anthropological and ethnological or ethnographic questions, and even to some extent to sociological topics. He published them over many years, some of them even after World War II, in 1951. The first five volumes were published in Leipzig from 1911 to 1927 in the form of a vast monograph titled *Forschungen im Nil-Kongo Zwischengebiet*.

For the results achieved on the African expedition he was decorated with the orders of the Belgian Crown and the Mecklenburg Griffon, and with a Mecklenburg Memorial Medal.

Czekanowski achieved his most important results in studies of racial classification and population structure. The revolution brought about by Jan Czekanowski in human classification was chiefly based on the introduction of a new taxonomic method for racial analysis. This was introduced in 1909 as Czekanowski's diagraphic method. It was published in Czekanowski's fundamental methodological paper *Zur differentialdiagnose der Neandertalgruppe*, which remained a standard work for his pupils for many years afterwards.

On 2 March 1910 Jan Czekanowski married Elizavjeta (Elizabeth) Sergiyevska, daughter of an Orthodox parish priest in Tula. The couple had met in Zurich, where Elizabeth was studying medicine. They would have two daughters: Zofia Teresa (born 25 September 1927) and Anna Katarzyna (born 25 June 1929).

On 1 October 1910 Jan Czekanowski was appointed curator of the Ethnographic Museum of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. He moved there at the start of 1911, and remained in the post until the end of September 1913. While he was at St. Petersburg the well-known zoologist Józef Nussbaum-Hilarowicz made a proposal to Czekanowski that he should complete his "habilitation" degree in anthropology and take a university chair at Lvov (Lwów, Lemberg). After a fairly long period of hesitation and delay, he decided to move to Lvov. By a letter of the Imperial Ministry of Denominations and

Enlightenment in Vienna, dated 11 August and with effect from 1 October 1913, he was appointed assistant professor of anthropology and ethnology in the Philosophy Faculty of Lvov University. He was appointed on his merits, without having gained his habilitation. He began lecturing at the start of the 1913/1914 academic year, and would spend the longest period of his life in Lvov, until 1944. Apart from his lectures he also organized the anthropology and ethnology department and engaged in research on national anthropology.

However that work was suspended as a result of the outbreak of the First World War. As a Russian subject being in the state service of Austria, he was compelled to make a hasty escape from the Russian army. In late August 1914 he travelled to Krynica, and later to Busko. On 30 September 1914 he settled in Luhačovice in Moravia, where he continued writing up the materials collected during his African expedition. With the issuing of a decree recognizing citizens of the Polish Kingdom, he obtained a passport, and on 10 October 1916 he returned to Lvov. At the start of the 1916/1917 academic years he renewed his lectures at the university as a full professor. His work at the university was again interrupted on 1 November 1918, after Lvov had been captured by Ukrainian forces. On 10 December Czekanowski travelled to Paris via Warsaw and Prague. There he worked for the Polish Delegation at the Versailles peace conference, acting as an expert and later as a member of the Delegation Council. From 1 March to 1 May 1919 he served as political secretary on the Polish National Committee, from 1 May to 15 June he worked for the Polish Delegation, and from 15 June to 1 October 1919 he headed the offices of the Delegation, in September replacing the Delegation's secretary general Stanisław Koziakry. Recalled to Paris, he acted as scientific expert to the Polish Delegation until 15 March 1920.

By a decision of the Chief of State dated 9 April 1920, Jan Czekanowski was appointed full professor of ethnology and anthropology at Jan Kazimierz University in Lvov, with effect from 1 January 1920. He returned to Lvov, and on 15 April 1920 he again began lecturing at the university.

In 1913 the Warsaw Scientific Society had published a book by Jan Czekanowski titled *Zarys metod statystycznych w zastosowaniu do antropologii* ("Outline of statistical methods in application to anthropology"). This was the first statistical textbook written in Polish to describe modern methods of handling empirical data and proper interpretation of results. It was published just two years after the appearance of the world's first textbook of modern mathematical statistics, *An Introduction to the Theory of Statistics* by George Yule, and it played a great role in making biometrics better known among Polish scholars before World War I and in the interwar period. Besides descriptive statistics, this thoroughly modern and precise textbook covers the topics of reasoning based on the correlation coefficient, multiple regression with worked examples, as well as the diagraphic taxonomical method of Czekanowski. I would encourage any authors undertaking work on a modern textbook of statistics to study Czekanowski's example from almost a hundred years ago.

It is incontestable that Czekanowski made a huge contribution to statistics. This superb scholar also made a greater contribution than anyone else to the flourishing of Polish anthropology, and caused it to gain worldwide renown. Professor Czekanowski was the founder of the Lvov School of anthropology, which set the tone for all research carried out in Poland over many years. It is therefore also referred to as the Polish School of anthropology, distinguished by a totally original approach to individual intrapopulation taxonomy of humans.

Professor Jan Czekanowski was a member of the Lvov Scientific Society. Active local members of the third section, devoted to mathematics and natural science, also included Stefan Banach and Hugo Steinhaus, while members active elsewhere included Marie Curie (Paris), Wacław Sierpiński (Warsaw) and Stanisław Zaremba (Cracow).

In the years 1934–1936 Czekanowski held the post of rector of Jana Kazimierz University in Lvov.

After the arrival of German forces in Lvov, on 30 June 1941 Jan Czekanowski was deprived of the ability to continue work at his beloved Anthropology Department. Thanks to a Ukrainian doctoral student his name was removed from the list of Lvov professors who were shot by the Germans on 4 July 1941. Because he kept his most important materials and books at home, he was able to carry on intensive scientific work even during the occupation. He obtained formal protection from the *Arbeitsamt* by taking up the administration of the estates of Kośmin near Grójec, based on a notarized power of attorney. This also enabled him to place his family in the village of Gluchów and to travel there and also to Warsaw, where he took part in underground educational activities. The Kośmin estates were owned at that time by his elder brother Stanisław, who had formally received them from his father Wincenty in 1895.

On 8 May 1944, Jan Czekanowski and his family left Lvov and, until 14 September of that year, stayed as guests with Professor Jerzy Fuhrich at Broniszów near Ropczyce. Later, taking advantage of a change in situation caused by the movement of Soviet forces to the Wisłoka line, he moved to the village of Cmolas near Kolbuszowa, and taught at the secondary school in Kolbuszowa until the end of April 1945. (The primary school in Cmolas now bears the name of Jan Czekanowski as its patron.) Thanks to the intervention of the Education Ministry, and having received a truck from the Provincial Offices in Rzeszów, he moved to Lublin, where he lectured in anthropology at the Catholic University of Lublin – he had received an appointment from that institution in November 1944, but was not able to travel there earlier because of lack of means of transport.

By letter of the President of the National Council, Bolesław Bierut, dated 28 February 1946, Czekanowski was appointed full professor of anthropology in the Faculty of Medicine at Poznań University. He took up the duties of professor and the chair of anthropology on 1 March 1946. After that faculty was transformed into the independent College of Medicine, he joined the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science, and later, when that faculty was divided, the Faculty of Biology and Earth Sciences.

While holding his chair at Poznań he continued to lecture at the Catholic University of Lublin until 1949, when the Ministry refused to allow him to continue working at two universities.

Described below are a few episodes of interest from the career of Jan Czekanowski:

1. During World War I he produced statistics on nationality and religious denomination in the Polish lands for the use of the future Polish Delegation at the Versailles peace conference, which he attended as an expert and as head of its offices. He presented to President Wilson a concept for the positioning of the eastern border which would have placed the same number of Orthodox Christians on the Polish side of the border as Catholics on the Russian side.

2. In the German Nazi period, Czekanowski challenged as Utopian the idea that in prehistory there existed pure racial types such as Germanic, Slav and Ugro-Finnish. He demonstrated this by making measurements on Polish army conscripts. He showed that the highest contribution of the Nordic element, and thus the greatest closeness to the Nazis' Aryan ideal, was found in young Jews who came from Warsaw.

3. The Karaim national minority was spared the fate of the Jews and Gypsies only because, when questioned by the Germans in 1942, Jan Czekanowski gave authoritative confirmation of their Turkish origins.

In 1960, on grounds of age, Jan Czekanowski went into retirement. However he continued to give a seminar in anthropology for master's degree students specializing in that field.

Professor Jan Czekanowski's scientific work was exceptionally wide-ranging. He had a multifaceted mind, interested in many different issues relating to human life and to human beings themselves. However he was able to achieve his greatest successes in theoretical anthropology, by applying statistical methods to anthropometric materials, in ethnography and ethnology, and in Slavic studies, where he provided strong justification for the theory that the original Slavic homeland was situated between the Vistula and Oder rivers. This view was opposed most strongly by German and to some extent by Czech scholars, and even by some from Poland, who were not convinced by the reasoning and documentation put forward by Czekanowski.

Poland recognized his achievements. He was a full member of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Two universities – Wrocław in 1959 and Poznań in 1962 – awarded him the highest available title, that of doctor *honoris causa*. The Polish government awarded him the honours of Commander's Cross of the Order of Polish Rebirth and the Order of the Standard of Labour, First Class.

He was an honorary member of the Polish Anthropological Society, and also honorary member of the anthropological societies of Brno and Zurich, and corresponding member of the Paris Anthropological Society and the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1923–1924 he chaired the Copernicus Polish Society of Natural Scientists. He was a member of the Polish Statistical Society, serving as its vice-chairman in 1937–1939. He was

member, vice-chairman and chairman of the Polish Folk Studies Society and a member of the Polish Orientalist Society. He was a founding member and chairman of the Scientific Council of the Polish Biometric Society, from the Society's founding in 1961 until his death.

Jan Czekanowski died on 20 July 1965 in Szczecin. He is buried on the Avenue of Distinguished Citizens in Warsaw's Powązki cemetery. As a result of efforts by the anthropology community, the name of Jan Czekanowski has also been given to one of Poznań's streets.

The following description of Czekanowski comes from an extensive article devoted to the history of anthropology in Poland (T. Bielicki, T. Krupiński, J. Strzałko, *Historia antropologii w Polsce*. Przegląd Antropologiczny 1987, 53(1–2), pp.3–28):

Czekanowski was a scholar in the old, great, professorial style: a man of wisdom adored by some, admired by many and reviled by a few. This tall, grandly built man, with the penetrative gaze of his pale blue eyes, with an inseparable cigarette stuck to the corner of his mouth, could be seductively courteous and gentle-mannered, but also had a sharp tongue and could be caustic in polemics and discussions. He was a polyglot, who besides his native Polish had perfect mastery of German, French and Russian, and could also converse freely in English, Italian and Czech. Coming from the landowning classes, he was a “man of the world”, close to a dozen European princes and princesses, and according to legend even to one crowned head. He was charming in company, and in his old age he liked to delight his listeners with spicy anecdotes, such as those about the parties held in private swimming baths in Zurich at the beginning of the century, or those about the revelries of the Russian cavalry stationed in Kalisz when it was a border town of the Russian Empire. He was an erudite person who was able in his time to speak authoritatively about matters of anthropology, Mendelian genetics, European archaeology, Slav linguistics, Slav and African ethnography, and mathematical statistics.

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