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THE POLISH PEASANT IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

I
Introduction

There is a growing interest in the question of the construction of national identity among peasants. Surprisingly, the Polish peasant has proved once again to be rewarding a subject of research, as he was a hundred years earlier for William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki.[1] This time, however, he does not have to cross the Atlantic in order to arouse the interest of researchers. On the contrary, it is researchers who of their own accord search for him or at least for the documents of his life.

My analysis is based on major works concerning the Polish peasant and the nation, written in the past fifteen years.[2] I shall concentrate above all on two books. The first is Jan Molenda's pioneering work *Chłopi, naród, niepodległość* [Peasants, Nation, Independence],[3] which

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[1] William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *Polish Peasant in Europe and America: Monograph on an Immigrant Group* (Chicago, 1918). The most prominent continuator of this tradition before WW II was obviously Józef Chałasiński, see *idem*, *Młode pokolenie chłopów: procesy i zagadnienia kształtowania się warstwy chłopskiej w Polsce* (with Florian Znaniecki's introduction) (Warsaw, 1938); see also Michał Łuczewski, 'Józef Chałasiński jako badacz (i działacz) ruchów społecznych', *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, lii, 6 (2008), 47–64.

[2] The earlier period has been exhaustively described in Maria Krisan', 'Świadomość narodowa polskich chłopów w XIX wieku widziana przez historiografię polską po drugiej wojnie światowej', *Historyka. Studia metodologiczne*, 34 (2004 [2005]), 123–41.

[3] Jan Molenda, *Chłopi, naród, niepodległość. Kształtowanie się postaw narodowych i obywatelskich chłopów w Galicji i Królestwie Polskim w przededniu odrodzenia Polski* (Warsaw, 1999). It should be mentioned that over a decade before Molenda's work we were given a monograph by John-Paul Himka, *Galician Villagers and the Ukraine*

for a good reason is regarded as the first mature monograph on the subject.[4] The author concentrates on nation-building processes from the late nineteenth century to the year 1918. This was the period when the peasantry eventually adopted a national identity. The author also draws our attention to various ceremonies commemorating past events, which in Patrice Dabrowski's book[5] were raised to the status of the main factor in the formation of the modern Polish nation. The author's main sources are peasant letters and journalistic contributions dating from that period. Molenda takes account of the processes of national awakening among the peasants in the Polish Kingdom, but he pays more attention to Galicia.[6] The second book I analyse is *Bauern und Nation in Galizien* by Kai Struve,[7] a synthesis which we may well call the best work so far on this subject. Following thorough archive research and reference to very varied sources, the author attempted a systematic study of Eastern and Western Galicia.[8] While

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National Movement in the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1988), which, however, concentrated on Eastern Galicia and was based on far fewer sources (*Batkivshchina*).

[4] Cf. Kai Struve, *Bauern und Nation in Galizien. Über Zugehörigkeit und soziale Emanzipation im 19. Jahrhundert* (Schriften des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts, 4, Göttingen, 2005), 23 f.

[5] Patrice M. Dabrowski, *Commemorations and the Shaping of Modern Poland* (Bloomington, 2004).

[6] The Polish Kingdom is the subject of a monograph based on a unique collection of peasant letters, a work written by Maria A. Krisan', *Tsivilizatsionnye izmeneniya rubezha XIX–XX v. v vospriyatii krest'yan Tsarstva Pol'skogo* (Moscow, 2004) (I used the Polish edition: Maria Kirsań, *Chłopi wobec zmian cywilizacyjnych w Królestwie Polskim w drugiej połowie XIX – początek XX wieku* [Warsaw, 2008]).

[7] See fn. 4.

[8] It cannot be treated as a serious objection that in his exceptionally erudite book the author neglects to mention the otherwise very important works on national development: Józef Chlebowczyk, *O prawie do bytu małych i młodych narodów. Kwestia narodowa i procesy narodowotwórcze we wschodniej Europie środkowej w dobie kapitalizmu (od schyłku XVIII do początków XX w.)* (Warsaw and Cracow, 1983); *idem, Procesy narodowotwórcze we wschodniej Europie środkowej w dobie kapitalizmu (od schyłku XVIII do początków XX w.)* (Warsaw, 1975); Marceli Handelsman, *Rozwój narodowości nowoczesnej*, ed. Tadeusz Łepkowski (Warsaw, 1973); Józef Obrębski, *Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia i inne eseje*, ed. Anna Engelking (Warsaw, 2005); and last but not least Józef Chałasiński's monograph, *Drogi awansu społecznego robotnika: studium oparte na autobiografiach robotników* (Warsaw, 1979). It is not to be regarded as a mistake either that the author does not refer to the only important monograph of the national movement in Galicia, namely, Waldemar Potkański, *Ruch narodowo-niepodległościowy w Galicji przed 1914 rokiem* (Warsaw, 2002).

Molenda neglected the possibilities that a comparison of Galicia and the Polish Kingdom provided, Struve concentrates on a comparative analysis. He also offers more extensive analyses than Molenda does. I shall supplement my review with references to important contributions by Stefan Kieniewicz[9] and Nikodem Bończa-Tomaszewski.[10] Kieniewicz provides a synthesis of his own earlier research,[11] and his work is not based on primary sources, whereas Bończa-Tomaszewski applies his own theory to the case of peasants' national identity. He formulated this theory in relation to the outstanding painter, Artur Grottger (1837–67) and the prominent historian and editor of sources, Wojciech Kętrzyński (1838–1918), both of whom had grown up in other than Polish culture – the former in Austrian and the latter in German – and both, by their own choice, were attached to Polish culture. What is more, they became teachers of 'Polishness' for the next generations of patriots. I shall also refer to Keely Stauter-Halsted,[12] Włodzimierz Mędrzecki[13] and Daniel Olszewski.[14] Mędrzecki dedicated his monograph to nation-building processes in consecutive peasant generations, those born in the second half of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries, which he researched on the basis of biographical material. Olszewski for his part concentrated on the turn of the twentieth century and the emerging phenomenon of the merger of religion and nationalism, and for this purpose he studied Church archives and parish newsletters. Both works were pioneering: for the first time in Polish historiography Mędrzecki

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[9] Stefan Kieniewicz, *Historyk a świadomość narodowa* (Warsaw, 1982).

[10] Nikodem Bończa-Tomaszewski, *Źródła narodowości. Powstanie i rozwój polskiej świadomości w II połowie XIX i na początku XX w.* (Monografie FNP, Wrocław, 2006); *idem*, 'Polskojęzyczni chłopi? Podstawowe problemy nowoczesnej historii chłopów polskich', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, cxii, 2 (2005), 91–111; see also *idem*, 'Kultura niepiśmienna i jej wrogowie – problemy "oralności" wsi polskiej w XIX wieku', *Lud*, lxxxix, 1 (2005), 71–90; *idem*, 'Z chłopów Polacy – konstrukcja podmiotowości jako strategia nacjonalizacji wsi polskiej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku', *Sprawy Narodowościowe*, s.n., 28 (2006), 75–88.

[11] Stefan Kieniewicz, *The Emancipation of the Polish Peasantry* (Chicago, 1969).

[12] Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848–1914* (Ithaca, 2001).

[13] Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Młodzież wiejska na ziemiach Polski centralnej 1864–1939. Procesy socjalizacji* (Warsaw, 2002).

[14] Daniel Olszewski, *Polska kultura religijna na przełomie XIX i XX wieku* (Studia "Przeglądu Tomistycznego", 3, Warsaw, 1996).

dedicated a whole monograph to the development of national awareness among children and young people, while Daniel Olszewski provided an exhaustive description of Polish religious culture at the turn of the twentieth century.

Let me eventually add that I have sidestepped the question of nation-building in the diaspora, as this issue calls for a separate treatment.

Due both to the work of generations of researchers and politicisation of this issue in communist Poland,[15] the peasant and the nation became a popular subject of research. Admittedly, this subject was important also in Western historiography, as represented, e.g., by the fundamental works of Charles Tilly[16] and Eugen J. Weber.[17] Historians quickly found support in the works of anthropologists, the most important of whom – especially from the point of view of the East European peasantry – was Katharine Verdery with her *Transylvanian Villagers*,[18] to this day the touchstone in research on this subject.[19]

Thanks to these achievements contemporary researchers can simply study the question, rather than trying to convince us that it deserves attention. This does not mean, however, that they encounter no obstacles. On the contrary, it is only now that we are becoming more and more conscious of the difficulties posed by an analysis of nation-building processes in peasant communities.

II
Theory and Practice

Among the serious challenges that researchers encounter is that posed by the relation between theory and practice.[20] In the last decade or

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[15] Helena Brodowska, *Chłopi o sobie i Polsce. Rozwój świadomości społeczno--narodowej* (Warsaw, 1984); Józef Burszta, *Chłopskie źródła kultury* (Warsaw, 1985); Kieniewicz, *Historyk a świadomość*.

[16] Charles Tilly, *The Vendee* (Cambridge, MA, 1964).

[17] Eugen J. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, 1976).

[18] Katherine Verdery, *Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Ethnic Change* (Berkeley, 1983).

[19] See Rogers Brubaker *et al.*, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton, 2006), 95.

[20] See Michał Łuczewski, 'What Remains for Nationalism Studies?', in Thomas Nesbit and Justin Steinberg (eds.), *Freedom, Justice, and Identity* (Vienna, 2005),

so we have noticed an ever growing tendency toward empirical analysis at the cost of theoretical considerations. This imbalance may have something to do with the negative experience of communist Poland, when Marxism was a hegemonic ideology. As Maria Krisan'[21] has shown, ideologisation had a negative effect on research into the development of national identity among the peasants. When ideological pressures lessened in the 1960s and research on peasant national identity started to rapidly develop, researchers repeated rather thoughtlessly Marxist concepts or replaced them with the kind of class analysis that one may call Romantic. The latter approach meant excessive stress on peasant national identity and analysed peasants' activity in the context of their 'attempts at gaining independence'. The year 1989 spelt the downfall of Marxism, also as a fertile theoretical inspiration. However, no new theory has come in its place. Modernisation theories, which replaced Marxism in economic history, have failed to produce a new research paradigm.[22] In peasant studies, in spite of certain symptoms of change, the present situation is not much better than it was towards the end of the 1980s.[23] Today's authors tend to write idiographic works and seem to treat theory as a rhetorical ornament. In practice this means quoting in the opening paragraphs the names of the founders of Polish humanistic sociology (Znaniecki, Ossowski, Chałasiński or Szczepański)[24] or else the 'holy trinity' of nationalism studies: Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm (GAH for short),[25] and completely forgetting about them later on. The best example of that is Struve's work, where GAH, as well as Rogers Brubaker, Anthony Giddens and Jürgen Habermas, are mentioned on the first pages, and not even once on the remaining four hundred pages. It is a great pity that the most outstanding achievement in the field remains an idiographic work and, verbal declarations aside, it does not constitute a contribution to the theory of nation. The reader is heavily tested if they want to find more general theses

accessible also online (<http://www.iwm.at/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=257&Itemid=284>[Accessed 10 Dec. 2011]).

[21] Krisań, 'Świadomość narodowa', 123–41.

[22] Anna Sosnowska, *Zrozumieć zacofanie. Spory historyków o Europę Wschodnią (1947–1994)* (Warsaw, 2004), 14–20.

[23] Krisań, 'Świadomość narodowa', 141.

[24] Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*, 9–40; Mędrzecki, *Młodzież wiejska*, 5–26.

[25] Struve, *Bauern und Nation*, 17, 18.

until eventually their patience is rewarded when in the final chapter
– about Poles and Ruthenians' relations with the Jews[26] – the author
refutes John-Paul Himka's statement[27] about more intense anti-
Semitic feelings in the Polish part of Galicia.

In general, in the works under discussion theory is not an object of
methodological reflection. For example, Jan Molenda, in introductory
paragraphs, refers to Stanisław Ossowski's classic concept of mother-
land, but does not apply it in his empirical analysis.[28] Similarly, Keely
Stauter-Halsted begins with a reference to Habermas's idea of 'public
sphere' and does not go back to it again.[29] Nevertheless, we can find
some examples in support of the idea that theory and practice can be
reconciled. We can point out three basic strategies here: application
of a theory, modification of a theory, and discovery of a theory.[30]

1. In research on the idea of nation the first strategy was applied by
   Tomasz Kizwalter when he tested Ernest Gellner's theory taking
   Poland as the case in point.[31] According to this author the mod-
   ernist theory very aptly describes the national process in Polish
   territories. A similar strategy was employed by Włodzimierz
   Mędrzecki who applied the theory of socialisation to genera-
   tions of young villagers.[32] Unlike Kizwalter, however, he has
   not used one but a whole class of theories, which means that
   he neither verified nor refuted, but applied them in order to
   draw attention to the fundamental process of the socialisation
   of young villagers, which until then had been neglected in the
   literature.

2. We can talk of modification of a theory in the case of Daniel
   Olszewski who has shown that the merger of nationalism and
   religion which took place in Poland at the turn of the twentieth
   century, effectively hampered the process of secularisation.[33]
   Although the author does not state it straightforwardly, his

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[26] *Ibidem*, 431–3.

[27] Himka, *Galician Villagers*, 220.

[28] Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*, 37.

[29] Starter-Halsted, *The Nation*; also see Struve, *Bauern und Nation*, 13.

[30] David A. Snow, Calvin Morrill and L. Anderson, 'Elaborating Analytic
Ethnography: Linking Fieldwork and Theory', *Ethnography*, iv, 2 (2003), 181–200.

[31] Tomasz Kizwalter, *O nowoczesności narodu. Przypadek polski* (Warsaw, 1999).

[32] Mędrzecki, *Młodzież wiejska*.

[33] Olszewski, *Polska kultura*.

research indicates unequivocally the limitations of the secularisation theory, which did not tackle the question of religious nationalism.

3. In the case of Nikodem Bończa-Tomaszewski we find a strategy which is different from the above two. This time it is not the question of the application of some existing theory, but rather of formulation of one's own theory. On the basis of his research into the intelligentsia of the Romantic epoch[34] and the peasantry,[35] the author offers his own original theory of the nation-forming process which grants subjectivity to individuals uprooted by modernisation.

III
Definitions

Another methodological problem lies in defining concepts.[36] Just as lack of link between theory and empirical research renders accumulation of knowledge impossible, so too does its lack of good definitions.[37] In the context of nationalism studies, the works under discussion stand out due to the fact that they concentrate on the nation as such, that is, the masses, and not, as is often the case, on national minorities, frontier areas and extreme phenomena, such as 'hot nationalism' (Michael Billig), ethnic cleansing, terror, ethnic unrest, etc. However, the definitions contained in these books are still far from being lucid.

Even though Jan Molenda pays special attention to conceptual precision,[38] he fails to stand to this challenge. His book contains many notions which he has not defined, such as 'national consciousness',

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[34] Bończa-Tomaszewski, *Źródła narodowości*.

[35] *Idem*, 'Polskojęzyczni chłopi?'; *idem*, 'Kultura niepiśmienna'; *idem*, 'Z chłopów'.

[36] Obrębski, *Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia*, 205.

[37] John Gerring and Paul A. Barresi, 'Putting Ordinary Language to Work: A Min-Max Strategy of Concept Formation in the Social Sciences', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, xv, 2 (2003), 201–32. Lucid definitions of nation are provided by Jerzy J. Wiatr, *Naród i państwo. Socjologiczne problemy kwestii narodowej* (Warsaw, 1973), 189–207, who divides them into genetic and structural definitions, and Andrzej Wierzbicki, *Naród – państwo w polskiej myśli historycznej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* (Wrocław, 1978).

[38] Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*, 34–40.

'political awareness', 'civic attitude', 'patriotism', *etc.*[39] Also, Włodzi-
mierz Mędrzecki is rather casual in his usage of such concepts as
'national consciousness' 'social consciousness', 'patriotic feelings',
'awareness of ethnic separateness', 'Polishness', 'national self-defini-
tion', 'patriotism', 'modern national consciousness'.[40] Although each
of these notions has a potentially different connotation and denotation,
in his exposition they are used interchangeably. A similar problem is to
be found in the works of Bończa-Tomaszewski, who having subjected
the notion of 'national consciousness' to penetrating criticism, eventu-
ally associates the national consciousness with the ideas of nation and
national reality.[41] This leads on the one hand to the conceptual over-
loading of the very notion (since the author believes that national phe-
nomena have both subjective and objective sides, why does he address
both realities by one concept?), and on the other hand to poetising,
which brings to mind the flowery language of modernist philosophy.
All in all, with regard to defining concepts the most satisfying seems
to be Kai Struve's solution. Most importantly, he does not attempt
to cover all national phenomena by one term, as he introduces the
distinction between 'national identification', understood as changeable
(depending on the context) subjective perception of an individual
as a member of a nation, and 'national identity', understood as the
objective side of national identification, objectified in culture (hence,
we could also call it 'cultural national identity').[42] Yet introducing
additional terms and considerations without linking them to his basic
conceptual framework renders his analysis blurred. On the one hand,
he muses that nation is 'a complicated phenomenon which takes on
various forms'[43] as well as 'social practice which on the one hand is
shaped by the projects of national identity and national organisational
structures and at the same time it changes, consolidates and only
forms the identity projects and institutionalised forms of a nation'.[44]
On the other hand, he does not try to relate to one another such
additional notions that appear in his text as: 'imagined community',[45]

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[39] *Ibidem*, 5, 35.
[40] Mędrzecki, *Młodzież wiejska*, 202, 203.
[41] See Bończa-Tomaszewski, *Źródła narodowości*, 14–19.
[42] Struve, *Bauern und Nation*, 21.
[43] *Ibidem*, 14.
[44] *Ibidem*, 18.
[45] *Ibidem*, 23.

'national ideology' and 'national discourse'.[46] Thus in spite of an apparently ordered use of various notions, Struve's analysis becomes step by step more and more chaotic.

The reason behind this is that Struve starts off with the dyad (identification vs. identity), while any analysis of reality calls for more precise distinctions. One of the ways which could solve this problem is the definition of a nation by conceptualising national ideology. Like other social phenomena, national ideology implies objectification, internalisation and externalisation.[47] Now, we can define three dimensions of nation: national identity (internalised national ideology), objective national ideology (nationalism, ideas), and national discourse (externalised national ideology). We have to deal with national ideology *sensu stricto* when it has the status of a social fact. In the process of socialisation, ideology can be adopted by an individual, transformed from an objective into a subjective fact, that is, recognised as one's own. We call it national identity, i.e., internalised national ideology. Ideology can also be articulated and pass from the subjective to the objective sphere in the form of national discourse. These three moments are strictly interdependent. Once national ideology is not internalised, it cannot be subject to externalisation, so it cannot become an objective reality. And *vice versa*: if ideology is not an objective reality, then it cannot be internalised and consequently externalised.[48]

Starting with this conceptualisation of nation, we can see that Struve's analysis lacks a clear emphasis on the fact that, next to nation as national identification and nation as objective national identity, an intermediate moment needs to be analysed: national discourse. This does not mean, however, that the author completely neglects to mention this dimension. This does not mean either that other

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[46] *Ibidem*, 17, 18.

[47] Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, N.Y., 1967); *idem* and Thomas Luckmann, The *Social Construction of Reality*: *A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1967). In Polish nationalism studies similar insights were expressed by Józef Obrębski and above all Marceli Handelsman, when he wrote about the ideological moments of the national movement, real and material, and about materialisation (concretisation, externalisation), which means evolving from a nation as an idea to a nation as a reality Obrębski, *Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia*, 201–5 and Handelsman, *Rozwój narodowości*, 38–40.

[48] Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*; *idem* and Luckmann, *The Social Construction*.

researchers fail to do so – Florencia Mallon, e.g., sees national dis-
course as the most fundamental category.[49] This only means that
Struve does not regard this notion as an integral part of the concep-
tualisation of nation. Although at first the author assures us that he is
going to analyse negotiations of national ideology (meaning national
discourse), he presents only conflicts around national holidays and
not negotiations of national ideologies. So we are left ignorant of how
these ideologies change in the relations between social subjects.[50]

Furthermore, Struve's work lacks a systematic analysis of links
between national ideology and nation, which would demonstrate that
a nation is an objectified idea as well. In the author's account idea
and reality exist, as it were, in separate worlds and do not consti-
tute moments of the same process. Although eventually the author
analyses the nation in each of its dimensions, he does so not because
but in spite of his initial conceptualisation.

IV

Description

Not only definitions, but also explanations are formulated *ad hoc*.
Again, lack of methodological perspective has an adverse effect on
the cumulative development of knowledge.[51] Following in the foot-
steps of Kazimierz Dobrowolski and Jerzy Topolski,[52] I claim that
the correct explanation should be integral – that is, it should recon-
struct cause-effect genetic sequences (past-present), structural links

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[49] Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and
Peru* (Berkeley, 1995), 313.

[50] Struve, *Bauern und Nation*, 323–61.

[51] Jerzy Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię. Tajemnice narracji historycznej*
(Warsaw, 1996).

[52] According to Dobrowolski, an integral view on reality calls for (a) drawing
on all possible sources and (b) employing a triangulation of methods, (c) search-
ing for conditions (particularly non-social) of human actions, (d) relating our
research problem to other fields, (e) taking into consideration intended and
unintended effects, and (f) placing the problem in a historic perspective; Kazimierz
Dobrowolski, *Studia nad życiem społecznym i kulturą* (Wrocław, 1966), 60–5.
However, even more consideration to methodology was given by Topolski in his
'directive for integral explanation'; see *idem, Rozumienie historii* (Warsaw, 1978),
188–226; see also *idem, Jak się pisze*, 159–81. Therefore my codification of prin-
ciples will be based on the ideas of the latter author.

(micro-macro, interaction between subjects) and individual consciousness (identity).[53]

This kind of explanatory procedure is close to the ideal of the full explanation which Raymond Boudon defined as an explanation in which we do not feel like asking 'why?'. And we will not feel like asking 'why?', when we clear out the reasoning of enthymematic links (black boxes, blind spots, black holes). Full explanation cannot be restricted to the stating of correlations or regularities, but it has to relate effects to causes in such a way that all imponderables are eliminated from our model. It is only then that we know what is the real causal relation and do not ask 'why?'.[54]

The first approximation used by Polish researchers in explaining the peasants' recognition of national identity is the construction of a typological description of successive stages of the nationalising process. In this context researchers usually mention such dichotomies as: private motherland → ideological motherland (Ossowski), popular societies → national societies (Znaniecki), passive national awareness → active national awareness (Stanisław Zakrzewski[55]), medieval nation → modern nation (Handelsman).[56] In such typologies the idea is always to distinguish two periods: when national identity was nonexistent (or concealed) and when national identity was developed (or awakened).

However, turning to such simplistic divisions causes serious problems.[57] It seems, for instance, that Molenda fails to steer clear of them, as he heedlessly adopts Ossowski's two stages in the formation of national identity among the peasantry: the stage of concealed patriotism (attachment to their patrimony) and the stage of open patriotism (attachment to their country).[58] In support of his solution the author quotes Ossowski's text from 1917:

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[53] *Idem, Jak się pisze*, 326; *idem, Rozumienie*, 207.

[54] Raymond Boudon, 'Social Mechanisms without Black Boxes', in Peter Hedström and Richard Swedberg (eds.), *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory* (Cambridge and New York, 1998), 172, 173.

[55] Stanisław Zakrzewski (1873–1936) was a Polish medievalist and senator, before World War II a supporter of Piłsudski and opponent of National Democracy.

[56] Such dichotomous divisions of national development are characteristic of the whole of Polish prewar national reflection; see Wierzbicki, *Naród – państwo*, 69; Obrębski, *Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia*, 110.

[57] Bończa-Tomaszewski, 'Polskojęzyczni chłopi?', 94.

[58] Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*.

> A patriot is not necessarily someone who is aware of his belonging to
> a nation. A patriot, although of a different kind, the kind corresponding
> to his intellectual level, might be even a simple peasant who does not call
> himself a Pole, but a *Kurp*, a *Mazur* or simply a Catholic, who has no idea
> of what is Poland, for whom any thought of independence inspires fear of
> serfdom, but who is unshakeable in his attitude to his land, his language
> and his traditions, who subconsciously feels a link with his compatriots
> and even persecution is not going to make him relinquish a nationality of
> which he remains unaware.[59]

As a result, looking for traces of 'unconscious nationality' Molenda
verges on primordialism. Luckily, he does not refer to this concept
later on in his – much more dynamic – analyses.

In nationalism studies there are also more complex typologies.
One of them is developed by Józef Chlebowczyk, who divides the
nation-forming process into three stages: the linguistic-cultural stage
(nationality formation on the basis of one common language), the
political stage I (stage A, formation of nationality which demands
internal sovereignty) and the political stage II (stage B, a nationality
demands external sovereignty and defines its territorial boundaries).[60]
Similar division has been proposed by Miroslav Hroch: stage
A – academic interest in the nation; stage B – patriotic agitation; and
stage C – formation of a social movement.[61]

Interestingly enough, those who research the peasant question
are unwilling to employ more sophisticated typologies, with some
exceptions though. Stefan Kieniewicz, e.g., distinguishes three stages
of formation of peasant nationhood: 1. the traditional peasant (sta-
bilisation of the feudal system, class conflicts of a limited extent and
intensity; peasant participation in the national movements of 1806,

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[59] Stanisław Ossowski, *Dzieła*, iv (Warsaw, 1970), 20. This was a fairly popular
concept in interwar Poland. In this context Zakrzewski wrote of passive national
awareness and Wojciechowski about national instinct, which obviously – as
Wierzbicki proves – involved both authors in insoluble problems. Very often
wartime conditions had an adverse effect on objectivity in describing the nation,
giving such descriptions an emotional note and rendering them journalistic;
Wierzbicki, *Naród – państwo*, 67–9, 159.

[60] Chlebowczyk, *O prawie*, 38–56.

[61] Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative
Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European
Nations* (Cambridge and New York, 1985), 22–30.

1809 and 1830); 2. the imperial peasant (crisis of the feudal system, class conflict, collapse of authority of the nobles, failure of national uprisings and crisis of the independence movement; alliance with the imperial bureaucracy); 3. the peasant citizen (right to vote, aversion to the partitioner's domination, education, literacy, social mobilisation).[62]

Though being a considerable step forward, Kieniewicz's typology does not solve all the problems. First of all, it ascribes to the 'traditional peasant' more national feelings than he really had, and thus suggests that the peasant and the landlord parted ways only due to social conflicts and the crisis of feudalism. What is more, it fails to go beyond what is in fact a static picture and gives an impression that each stage was smoothly overcome and followed by the next one until finally the progress of history ended with the festive *Aufhebung* in the peasant citizen.

Similar shortcomings can be found in the typology of Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, who distinguishes three generations of peasants: 'the 1864 generation', 'the 1890 generation' and 'the 1910 generation'. It seems, however, that the author of this excellent, dynamic work[63] puts too much stress on the peasants' national awareness in 'the 1910 generation'. Specifically, he claims that this generation, unlike the earlier ones, 'grew in the period when national problems reached every peasant cottage in the [Congress] Kingdom' and that it became 'an integral part of the modern Polish nation'.[64] This conclusion, however, is not supported by the sources on which the author based his work because, as he writes, 'in the majority of the cases of people born in the years 1908–11 these problems [the question of nationhood] are completely absent'.[65]

Their indubitable merits notwithstanding, such descriptions cannot replace an explanation. Thanks to the above listed typologies, we know much about the stages of the nation-building process, but we still have no idea about the mechanisms of passing from one stage to the next, and therefore we do not know how to explain the whole process. The passage from description to explanation implies some new challenges, as the model of integral explanation shows.

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[62] Kieniewicz, *Historyk a świadomość*, 63, 64.
[63] Described after Bończa-Tomaszewski, 'Polskojęzyczni chłopi?', 94.
[64] Mędrzecki, *Młodzież wiejska*, 203.
[65] *Ibidem*, 157.

V
Objectivity vs. subjectivity

Despite analysing both the objective and the subjective dimensions of national phenomena, scholars pay noticeably more attention to the former, that is, to the nation-state with its policies, infrastructure, modernisation, bureaucracy, reform, educational and party system.[66] Similarly, national identity and national discourse have been pushed aside by analyses of objective national ideology. Admittedly, each of these phenomena is related to the peasants' national identity, but the relation between national identity and the nation-state/national ideology is still not fleshed out. One of the best instances of this practice is Molenda's work, a large part of which is devoted to 'the necessary conditions of change of peasants' awareness: 'the peasants' participation in national uprisings …, membership of parties and independence organisations … and political as well as national representations'.[67] Struve follows the same path when he dedicates the bulk of his work (chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8) to descriptions of the objective conditions of the development of national identity: national ideology, change in relations among the peasants, the landlords and the Jews, emancipation, democratisation and the development of the press (formation of national public spheres), development of educational and self-aid societies, political mobilisation (parties, fire brigades, paramilitary and sport unions), education and emigration. These subjects take up almost 300 pages, and only a mere hundred is left to the analysis of national identity and national discourse. Though Struve's work is much more extensive than Molenda's, in this respect the two authors do not differ. The German scholar reaches identical conclusions on objective factors of the nation-building process and enriches them with descriptions of such phenomena as the role of fire brigades.[68] In this area a much more novel approach is to be found in the analyses of Stauter-Halsted,[69] who writes about the Church anti-drinking campaign in 1846, and

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[66] Bończa-Tomaszewski, *Źródła narodowości*, 75; Kieniewicz, *Historyk a świado-mość*, 39; Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*, 38, 40; Obrębski, *Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia*, 187–9.

[67] Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*, 5, 38-40.

[68] Struve, *Bauern und Nation*, 383–5; see Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*, 38–40.

[69] Starter-Halsted, *The Nation*.

of Bończa-Tomaszewski, who treats literacy and self-education as fundamental factors.[70]

The charge of research interest imbalance with respect to objectivity-subjectivity applies in equal measure both to Eugen J. Weber,[71] who concentrates on modernisation, as well as his followers.[72] While Florencia Mallon announces in her introduction that she will be dealing with the nation and the peasantry, in fact she does not mention the problem of nation and nationalism. She starts with heralding a novel approach to nationalism and popular political culture,[73] but returns to the subject only three times and writes about politics on the state level.[74]

In comparison to these authors, Nikodem Bończa-Tomaszewski is free of excessive emphasis on objective factors. However, he goes to the other extreme, almost completely neglecting the social context and concentrating solely on individual biographies.[75] In this, he did not heed Józef Obrębski's apt counsel: If we divorce nation-building from the social context, we run a risk of impressionism.[76]

VI
Macro vs. micro

The authors of books on peasants and nation carry out a number of synchronic analyses, combining the macro and micro dimensions. Thanks to this, they overcome the limitations of research based on surveys, which concentrate on elites, and on macro-historic studies.

Nevertheless, there are two problems associated with such an operation. On the one hand, while declaring that their main field of study is the objective sphere, the authors give most attention to analysing macro-phenomena, sometimes neglecting micro-phenomena.

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[70] Bończa-Tomaszewski, 'Polskojęzyczni chłopi?'; see also Obrębski, *Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia*, 204, 205.

[71] Weber, *Peasants*.

[72] See Craig Calhoun, 'Nationalism and ethnicity', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19 (1993), 216–21; Mallon, *Peasant*.

[73] Mallon, *Peasant*, 11.

[74] *Ibidem*, 75, 178, 316.

[75] Bończa-Tomaszewski, *Źródła narodowości*.

[76] Obrębski, *Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia*, 191, 192, 201–5.

On the other hand, when they come to this last level, they very quickly return to macro-analysis, passing lightly over the transitory stages. Although they have to rely out of necessity on documents from the micro-level (a biography, a political programme, a monograph of a local community), they are tempted to go far beyond this document, programme or community, and eventually address the nation-forming process as such. Because of that each time they are in danger of slipping into excessive generalisation.

These problems concern above all synthetic works. For example, Eugen J. Weber applies the binary division into 'peasant culture' (anti-national) and 'culture of the city' (national).[77] By the same token, Kai Struve, who attaches great weight to comparisons between Russo-speaking and Polish-speaking peasants, does not concentrate on within-group differences. His aim is to describe and compare the peasants from the two parts of the Austrian partition zone, and not an in-depth analysis of each of these groups. As a result, he tends to use the totalising language of 'peasant' and to see linguistic peasant groups as homogeneous. Additionally, Struve's analysis of the peasant-Jew relations employs the notion of anti-Semitism, which shifts the readers' attention from social relations to permanent features.[78]

Paradoxically, Weber's dichotomous language acquires an even stronger form in Bończa-Tomaszewski, a researcher who otherwise is a violent critic of the fallacies of Polish traditional historiography. He namely underlines the difference between Poles and peasants so strongly that this difference becomes almost absolute. Eventually, he refers to such homogenising categories as 'peasant culture' or 'village mentality'. One can also find here the unfounded conviction that all peasants are the same and since they are the same – have the same culture and mentality – then evidence of one or some is enough to know them all.[79]

Molenda argues against the homogeneity of peasant groups, when he writes about self-governing bodies (village elites vs. masses).[80] Similarly, Mallon analyses the difference between the masses and the

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[77] Weber, *Peasants*.
[78] Struve, *Bauern und Nation*, 392.
[79] Bończa-Tomaszewski, 'Polskojęzyczni chłopi?'; *idem*, 'Kultura niepiśmienna'; *idem*, 'Z chłopów'.
[80] Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*, 78–94.

elites, and shows the masses as conscious social actors who neither form a uniform community, nor are simple tools in the hands of the elites.[81] Molenda also describes important gender divisions (in particular, women's role in the national process) and the difference between the younger and the older generations[82] – the same subject was later taken up by Mędrzecki. Another important differentiation is pointed out by Keely Stauter-Halsted, who shows that the peasants in fact adhere to different versions of national ideology: progressive (tending to change the social structure from feudal to democratic) and retrospective (relating to myths). I find this conclusion to be this author's most valuable contribution.[83]

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VII

Past vs. present

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The works under discussion are for obvious reasons diachronic in character, that is, they analyse reality in a *long-durée* perspective. In this sense they break away from ahistoricism which is still characteristic of nationalism studies.[84]

In all narratives we can point out two limitations. Since they concentrate basically on the nineteenth century, or more precisely on the second half of that century, when the nation-formation was the most dynamic, they omit events after 1900 (or after 1918), on the one hand, and those prior to 1846, on the other.[85] This is not obviously an absolute rule, because the authors sometimes go back to the early nineteenth and even as far back as the eighteenth century, but usually do it in a schematic way without going beyond the catchphrases of 'feudalism' or 'estate society'.[86] This earlier period provides merely a background and is not an object of an in-depth analysis. As a result,

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[81] Mallon, *Peasant*, 10–12.

[82] Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*, 78–94.

[83] Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation*. In Polish literature this fact was noticed by Handelsman (*Rozwój narodowości*, 25–44), who wrote that every national movement is both reactionary and revolutionary.

[84] See the apt observations of Obrębski (*Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia*, 204, 205), made before World War II.

[85] Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*; Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation*; Struve, *Bauern und Nation*.

[86] Struve, *Bauern und Nation*, 31–77.

the authors do not discuss such key issues for the development of national identity as the formation of peasant monarchism, that is, attachment to the emperor and enmity towards national ideas, something that Józef Chałasiński drew our attention to.[87]

While reading works about the peasantry and the nation one still obtains the overwhelming impression that the national development goes back to the mid-nineteenth century and came to an end during World War I, while later on nothing of interest has happened. Only Mędrzecki goes beyond the nineteenth century and ends his narrative with 1939.

This gap cannot be filled by historic syntheses, which describe the nation-forming process from the earliest past to the present,[88] since as a rule they do not discuss the peasant question. The only contribution I know of that tackles the question of the peasants' national identity after World War II, was written by Dariusz Jarosz, but unfortunately it concentrates exclusively on the times of communist Poland and does not go back to the period before 1945 or forward to the present day.[89] The result is that each time we have to deal with fragmentary diachronic narratives.

VIII
Social mechanisms

The most important problem is the reconstruction of causal mechanisms, that is, demonstration of how nation-forming factors (objective factors on the macro-level) lead to the internalisation of national ideology. A researcher is capable of correctly identifying a sequence of events (e.g. peasant emancipation/modernisation → internalised national ideology), but as a rule s/he does not explain cause-effect sequences, and in this sense their reasoning contains enthymematic

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[87] Chałasiński, *Drogi awansu*. See also David M. Luebke, *His Majesty's Rebels: Communities, Factions, and Rural Revolt in the Black Forest, 1725–1745* (Ithaca and London, 1997).

[88] Cf. Tadeusz Łepkowski, *Polska. Narodziny nowoczesnego narodu 1764–1870* (Poznań, 2003); Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, 2003).

[89] Dariusz Jarosz, 'Tożsamość narodowa chłopów w Polsce w latach 1945– 1989', in *Przełomy w historii. XVI Powszechny Zjazd Historyków Polskich, Wrocław 15–18 września 1999 roku. Pamiętnik*, ii, pt. 2 (Toruń, 2000), 457–70.

links which should be eliminated. In order to do it, researchers usually refer to the so-called social mechanisms. In the theories of nation much was made of them by Józef Chlebowczyk when he wrote about the mechanisms of the nation-forming process, which are responsible for the passage from one stage of national development to the next.[90] Here I would like to pin down this notion and refer to the conceptualisation of Charles Tilly[91] who propounds the explanation of the macro → micro passage in order to eliminate 'black boxes' with the help of a number of causal mechanisms:

– environmental mechanisms (relations between I/group and the external environment: culture, economy, politics – e.g., loss of resources, the beginnings of the market economy – described usually with such categories as 'enrichment', 'expansion', 'disintegration');

– relational mechanisms (relations between I/group and another I/group – e.g., economic competition, change of hierarchies – usually described in terms of 'subjection', 'unification', 'attacking');

– cognitive mechanisms (relations within I – e.g., change of one's own views or identity – usually described in terms of 'interpreting', 'understanding', 'recognition').

Pointing to the explanatory factors shaping the environment in which social subjects operate, Molenda reconstructs their canon,[92] which is then repeated and supplemented by the other researchers.[93] However, even in such an extensive reconstruction of causes there are significant gaps – the main stress is on political factors (the role of the state, political system) and culture (objective national ideology) at the expense of economic factors which undoubtedly played a very important role.[94] What is more, the authors sometimes restrict this canon to one factor, for example modernisation or literacy,[95] and thus suggest monocausal explanations. Another strategy consists in pointing to not so much individual causative factors, as to a main

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[90] Chlebowczyk, *Procesy narodowotwórcze*, 113–72.

[91] Charles Tilly, *Identities, Boundaries, and Social Ties* (Boulder and London, 2005), 26, 27.

[92] Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*, 38–40.

[93] See also Obrębski, *Dzisiejsi ludzie Polesia*, 187–9.

[94] Chlebowczyk, *O prawie*; *idem, Procesy narodowotwórcze*.

[95] Bończa-Tomaszewski, 'Polskojęzyczni chłopi?'; *idem*, 'Kultura niepiśmienna'; *idem*, 'Z chłopów'.

process, e.g., the overcoming of village isolation[96] or the peasants entering the public sphere,[97] which is tantamount to their recognition of national identity. However, both strategies are wrong because they reduce the complex reality to one cause (the first case), or else instead of explaining the nation-formation, they call it by a different name (the second case).

What is more important, the authors do not link these factors to the actions of social actors and they do not explain how those actions influence the relations between individuals and groups. In this sense, they describe only the environment, and not environmental mechanisms. Without describing environmental mechanisms the original reconstruction of causal factors may be wrong, because there is always a danger that we give too much prominence to phenomena which have no bearing on social changes. It is Struve who seems to have fallen prey to this tendency in his otherwise splendid disquisition. This is particularly obvious in the first chapter[98] in which the author analyses changes in national ideology (cultural context) without going into the question of their impact on the national awareness of the Galician peasantry. As a result, in his reconstruction he is guided not so much by his own historic analysis, as by the stereotypical vision of communist historiography. Accordingly, he reconstructs the successive transformations of national ideology in the following way: the Reformation → the 3rd May Constitution → Kościuszko → Romanticism → radical democrats → positivism → conservatism. In this way he first sidesteps the issue of multiplicity of national ideologies, and secondly, with the exception of the chapter dedicated to the conservatives, concentrates on progressive movements. Meanwhile, the Reformation, being confined to the nobles, was of no importance as far as the Galician peasantry was concerned.[99] Similarly, ideological changes associated with the reforms of the 3rd May Constitution and Kościuszko's Insurrection could not influence the situation in Galicia which since 1770–2 had been under Austrian rule. Finally, for Galician peasants Romanticism and Kościuszko constituted more

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[96] Struve, *Bauern und Nation*.
[97] Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation*.
[98] Struve, *Bauern und Nation*, 31–70.
[99] Tomasz Wiślicz, *Zarobić na duszne zbawienie. Religijność chłopów małopolskich od połowy XVI do końca XVIII wieku* (Warsaw, 2001).

a threat to their monarchism than an attractive appeal. It is true that popular movements mentioned Romantic poets, Kościuszko and the 3rd May Constitution, but this was merely an invented tradition, created *ex post*, and we must not take it for a causal factor. Had Struve combined the cultural context with social relations in the Galician countryside, he would have noticed the role of the national ideology of Pole-Catholic, which was first formulated by the Polish ultramontanes (who reverted to the experience of Sarmatism) and then in an unchanged form was transplanted to Galicia by the Catholic priest Stanisław Stojałowski.[100] True, Struve mentions that sometimes Stojałowski has been associated with ultramontanism, but this observation has in no way influenced his reconstruction of ideological changes in the first part of his book.[101]

When we look at Struve's example, we can see clearly that combining the social context (environmental mechanisms) with relations among social subjects is just as much a problem as the combining of relational mechanisms with cognitive mechanisms, i.e., the translation of the activity of social actors into the types of national ideology they are capable of adopting. Struve devotes a lot of space to the democratisation of social relations in Galicia in the second half of the nineteenth century; however, we do not find there many analyses which would translate this process into the internalisation of national ideology by the peasantry. Let me give some examples. First, the author notes that in diaspora peasants' relations with representatives of other nations (relational mechanisms) are prone to be interpreted in national categories (cognitive mechanisms). Why so? On the one hand, the situation is defined in this way by nationalist organisations active among the emigrants, and on the other, a common language and religion made peasants seek contact with such organisations.[102] His reasoning is similar in the case of an interpretation of religious experience in terms of nation. The author maintains that pilgrimages, patriotic masses, visits to sanctuaries (relational mechanisms) were often interpreted by the peasants as national events (cognitive

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[100] See Michał Łuczewski, 'Ultramontańskie źródła ruchu ludowego. Studium realizmu politycznego', in Jacek Kloczkowski and Michał Szułdrzyński (eds.), *Patriotyzm i zdrada. Granice realizmu i idealizmu w polityce i myśli polskiej* (Cracow, 2008).

[101] Struve, *Bauern und Nation*, 130, 332.

[102] *Ibidem*, 321, 322.

mechanisms).[103] Similarly, the author points to the association of relational mechanisms with cognitive mechanisms when he writes about the school as an institution which turned children into nation-ally-conscious individuals provided that their teachers represented a proper level and that peasant children had time to attend school.[104] Such explanations, however, form only a minute part of the text and the reader has to extract and sometimes articulate them.

Had the author been aware of the difference between relational and cognitive mechanisms, he could have been capable of more exhaustive explanations. However, this does not change the high opinion of his work, especially since this is a tendency to which other researchers also succumb.[105] In this respect commendable exceptions are the often quoted works of Bończa-Tomaszewski (who concentrates, by the way, on cognitive mechanisms and neglects the question of social relations) and of Mędrzecki, who puts the main emphasis on cognitive mechanisms (socialisation) and provides an analysis of relations.

IX
Summary

My evaluation of the field may seem rather critical. This is first of all due to the method I have chosen – that is, placing to the fore not the merits of the works in question, but the challenges their authors encounter. I have indicated the fundamental problems associated with the definition and explanation of national phenomena, and also with relating the theory of nation to empirical research. While we can find positive examples in the last case (Mędrzecki, Olszewski, Bończa-Tomaszewski), the question of conceptualisation presents a much more complicated problem. Although from among the authors mentioned Struve provides us with the most sophisticated conceptual instruments, his perspective is still too limited to do justice to the reality he studies. Still, his exposition lacks the dimension of national discourse as a reality governed by its own rules, and consequently it fails to combine an analysis of objective national ideology with the process of its internalisation. Even more serious is the problem of

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[103] *Ibidem*, 326, 332, 381, 382.
[104] *Ibidem*, 301, 302.
[105] Molenda, *Chłopi, naród*; Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation*.

the explanation of national processes. It is true that researchers have formulated a number of interesting descriptive typologies (Kieniewicz, Mędrzecki), yet there are still difficulties which await solution, such as combining objective and subjective factors, micro- and macro-analyses, the diachronic and synchronic dimension, as well as the construction of a full mechanistic explanation[106] which would also take into consideration the social context (culture, economy, politics; environmental mechanisms), relations among social subjects (relational mechanisms) and cognitive processes (internalisation of national ideology). Each of the authors under discussion suggests his or her own solution to these problems, but none of them satisfactorily solves all the problems. This conclusion is by no means an expression of scepticism on my part. On the contrary, I merely want to stress that in spite of the many excellent works on the subject, there is still a lot to be done.

trans. Bogna Piotrowska

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[106] Hedström and Swedberg, in their classical work, defined a mechanismic explanation as the combination of mechanisms which describe causal relations of three kinds: (a) macro-micro, (b) micro-micro, (c) micro-macro, see *iidem* (eds.), *Social Mechanisms*, 24; James Mahoney, 'Beyond Correlational Analysis: Recent Innovations in Theory and Method', *Sociological Forum*, xvi, 3 (2001), 575–93. And criticism of this approach: Zenonas Norkus, 'Mechanisms as Miracle Makers? The Rise and Inconsistencies of the "Mechanismic Approach in Social Science and History"', *History and Theory. Studies in the Philosophy of History*, xliv, 3 (2005), 348–72.