

A SCIENTIST AND A POET. LIFE TRAJECTORIES OF PROFESSOR IGNACY S. FIUT

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ABSTRACT

The text presents the figure of an extraordinary scholar, Ignacy S. Fiut. It shows him not only as a great scientist, but also a sensitive and good man, whose multifaceted personality is reflected in scientific works as well as poetry.

Keywords: Ignacy S. Fiut, cultural identity of poets, silhouette of a scholar, extraordinary scholar

Portrayal of a man is a task as much risky, as almost impossible. For it is difficult for the multidimensionality, complexity and originality of the character, to be closed in words. The uncommon individual, who perceives the world in an unconventional way, who has an open mind and does not accept intellectual laziness, makes this situation even more complicated. Any attempt to categorize unbearably simplifies, trivializes, deprives the depths and makes that flat becomes what has many shadows, half shades and ambiguity. One such man appears to me Professor Ignacy Stanisław Fiut.

Professor was born on November 12, 1949 in Nowy Sącz. The study of his biography reveals an extremely ambitious, consistent, persistent man striving

for a goal, successively attaining the next stages of an academic path. Ignacy Stanisław Fiut was born into a peasant family of Maria (family name Rams) and Władysław Fiut. In the title poem from the poetry book “Próba zapytywania” he is writing “mother survived occupancy; grandfather fought in two wars; I am the fourth living son of my father”. He spent his childhood near Stary Sącz in the village of Mostki, where his parents ran a farm. That is where little Ignacy meets the hardships of a farm labor. Thank to this, he becomes superficially tough, but internally sensitive to another person and the beauty of nature. This love for nature will be justified in his later biological studies at the Jagiellonian University.

Young Ignacy graduated in 1967 in M. Curie-Skłodowska’s High School in Stary Sącz, and in the same year he started his academic adventure with biology at the Jagiellonian University.

It soon becomes clear, that although these studies were his true passion, he feels intellectual deficiency. So begins another study, this time on his beloved philosophy.

Flirting with philosophy turns out to be a very serious relationship, resulting in the 1984 defense of doctoral thesis “Hegel’s and Heidegger’s conception of nonentity and negation” under the scientific supervision of professor Władysław Stróżewski. Eleven years later, on the basis of thesis “Evolutionary philosophy of Konrad Zacharias Lorenz. Problem and historical study” Ignacy S. Fiut holds a Ph.D. in Habilitation from the Faculty of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University. He receives the title of professor of humanities in 2015.

His biography is set by the three key trajectories – scientific and didactic work, father role and extremely important – poetry. It is in the last one, where he finds esteem for his sensitivity about world and people. It is there, where he stands before himself, revealing the deepest nooks of his soul, where he exposes the insides, notwithstanding the reactions of the observers. He looks carefully, catching nuances and cracks in the seemingly perfect reality. Poetry becomes a valve for him, a way for academic, but also life escapism. This sphere of Professor’s activity seems to be specific kind of escape from academic convention and artificiality. He wants to be true, true to limits, which are difficult to accept. And that is his genuineness, which sickens some people, but seems to be a particularly important and valuable personality trait of Professor Ignacy S. Fiut. As he writes in his monograph devoted to cultural identity of the poets: “Regardless of age, poets always ask themselves questions about their identity. This is because they do not agree with how they being perceived, but also with who they themselves are as creative personalities, and so sensitive to the otherness and diversity inherent in the world. They never fully accept the social context in which they are intellectually and emotionally submerged” (Fiut 2014, p. 101).

He published nine volumes of poetry and with passion reviewed the poetic works of the others. It is enough to mention that the Professor is the author of more than 408 (sic!) literary and critical literary texts and also 4 books in this area: “Światy poetów” (1996), “Kulturowa tożsamość poetów” (2008),

“Stanisław Franczak” (2010), “Tożsamości światów poetów” (2008), 23 articles and 340 literary reviews. While still a student, he sympathized with poetic groups of students of Polish Philology – UJ Tylicz and Wprost. In one-poem competition organised by Klub Nowy Żaczek in Cracow in 1970 he received the third prize. He published his poems in *Magazyn Kulturalny*, *Miesięcznik Literacki*, *Pismo Literacko-Artystyczne* and also in local press such as *Gazeta Nowosądecka*, *Kurier Starosądecki*, *Znad Popradu*, *Almanach Sądecki* or *Almanach Limanowski*. Since 1990 he was an active member of Cracow Artistic and Literary Club (later called Artistic and Literary Creative Association), where inter alia he was the editor of many poetry volumes. For many years he regularly participated in many literary ventures, such as “Poet’s Farewell to the Summer”, “Cracow Night of the Poets”, “Poetic November”, “International Galician Literary Autumn”. In 1991 he joined the Polish Writers’ Union (ZLP), where he tackled creative and organisational challenges, being the president of the Court of Companionship and the president of Revision Committee at the Executive Board of the Union. In the years 1993–1998 as the member of Management of Cracow Branch of ZLP he took care of Circle of the Young.

He was the originator and editor of the literary magazine *Magdalena Literacka* (1994–1998) published by Downtown Cultural Center in Cracow. He was publishing there under the pseudonym Igor Mostowicz. Under the same pseudonym he was hiding in *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* (1995–2015), *Metafora* (1996, 2000–2001), *Koniec Wieku* (1996–2003), or in *Okolice Poetów* (2012). In 2008 he became member of *Gazeta Kulturalna* editorial office and one year later he became member of quarterly *Hybrydy. Pismo Artystyczno-Literackie Stowarzyszenia Twórczego POLART*. In the same time he was publishing in *Literat Krakowski*. The fact, that except of his scientific work, poetry is so important in his life, can be proved by three monographs: “Światy poetów” (1996), “Kulturowa tożsamość poetów. Prezentacje i analizy” (2008) i “Tożsamości światów poetów” (2014) which Ignacy S. Fiut dedicated to poetry.

His career path began in 1975 with the work of an assistant in the Department of Marxist Philosophy in the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Science and Technology (later Department of Philosophy of the Institute of Social Sciences UST) in Cracow. In 1978 he joined the Polish Philosophical Society. After the defense of his doctorate (1984) he assumed the position of chief of the Department of Philosophy at Institute of Social Sciences UST. At that time he was working in another field, in 1989 he co-created the Malopolska Ornithological Society, actively participating in his work – and this activity brought him many awards.

In 1989 he was working in Laboratory of Press Contents Analysis of the Jagiellonian University Press Research Centre, which he directed in the years 1990–1998. The Centre at that time was very good, not only because of the research and analysis it performed, but also because of the unique atmosphere in it, the extremely friendly, creative atmosphere, which consisted of the extraordinary

personality of its employees. During the work in Press Research Centre Ignacy S. Fiut begun member of editorial office of *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* and philosophical journal *Nowa Krytyka*. In 1994 he went to Austria for a three-month scholarship of the Government of the Republic of Austria at the Konrad Lorenz Institute in Altenberg.

Zbigniew Bajka writes about on the beginnings of Ignacy S. Fiut in Press Research Centre, that he was employed at the Centre by Bogusław S. Kunda, who:

hired in the laboratory another poet (Ignacy S. Fiut, philosopher and ornithologist!), with whom – in time free from research tasks, he discussed poetry and critically evaluated the poetry of young poets (especially female poets). For a short time, the team consisted of three bearded men (except Kunda and Fiut, Jerzy Bralczyk also worked there) and whiskered Maciek Pawłowski – great originals [...]. Philosopher and biologist (ornithologist) also poet originating from Sądecka (Mostki), came to PRC in the 80s brought by his friend – poet Bogusław S. Kunda. After his death he the Laboratory of Contents Analysis till year 1998. One of the hardest working men I know, furthermore a member and also a founder of many organisations and societies, also foreign. Although he has been a professor of philosophy at the UST, he did not break with press studies (he is passionate about, among others, new media). He is a constant contributor to *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, participates in our meetings and conferences. He is an author of many Centre's analyses, publications and reviews in *Zeszyty* (Bajka 2013, pp. 115 and 118).

After the defense of the habilitation in 1997 he obtained the post of Associate Professor at UST. In 1999 he was again the head of the Department of Philosophy (after 2009 – Chair of Culture and Philosophy) at the newly established Faculty of Applied Social Sciences at UST (formerly Institute of Social Sciences UST). He also managed the Laboratory of Philosophy and Communicology. In 2000 he became member of editorial office of quarterly *Forum Myśli Wolnej. Krakowski Magazyn Racjonalistów* and since 2005 he was chief editor of this journal. In 2007 he acceded to The Polish Communication Association (PCA).

The Chair, headed by the Professor Ignacy S. Fiut, strongly evolves – from the Department with the strictly philosophical profile, to a relatively large Chair, in which there is a place for cultural studies and media studies. Although at the beginning of its activity, the Department of Philosophy mainly implemented general-humanistic classes at the technical faculties of UST, the staff of the Chair of Cultural Studies and Philosophy at the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences (now Faculty of Humanities) is now key one for cultural studies, and research conducted by its staff is recognized in the nationwide scientific community. The Professor headed the Chair incessantly since year 2016, being a very active organizer of the scientific life of it's staff.

Professor's strictness and distance of Ignacy Stanisław Fiut is a kind of academic mask that he puts on for the need of an academic role. Those who know him well, know that this well-dressed costume hides a sensitive man, warm and willing to help others. He is never satisfied with the current *status quo*, still expect for more and better. Sometimes misunderstood by his co-workers, a man with

a unique and colorful personality, demanding a lot from others, but above all from himself. He does not accept academic sluggishness and idleness, constantly encouraging to work and develop.

Apprehensive and afraid of the exams, students soon began to write a master's thesis under His supervision, they appreciated Professor's passion and engagement but also true, real help. His seminars were one of the most wanted in Faculty of Humanities, although the students knew perfectly well that the Professor required them to be passionate, committed, but above all diligent.

Professor Ignacy S. Fiut devoted much effort and creative energy to the "Idee i Myśliciele" series of publications, which he founded in year 2000. It was a continuation of the irregular publishing of the Institute of Social Sciences at UST, which functioned under the name "Prace Zakładu Filozofii INS AGH". It contained 17 volumes, both in the form of collective and monographic works, of which 13 volumes were edited by Professor Ignacy Stanisław Fiut. The professionalism of Ignacy S. Fiut seems to outweigh the individual's ability, and its almost titanic dimension can be confirmed by quantitative indicators – more than 750 published texts (of which 300 with scientific character)¹, although they do not determine the value of the Professor's achievements. On average, the Professor published 18 papers per year, although they were years when he published them 30 (2009/2011) and even 40 (sic!) (1998/1999).

The significance of Professor's work is reflected in essential cognitive value of works He published, as well as in numerous references to His achievements. His works are devoid of empty mental pathways, offering the reader a solid dose of knowledge, but also interesting thought paths, encouraging the reader to think together over Professor's reflections. The Professor possessed the unusual ability to synthesize multiple perspectives and theoretical frameworks. His discourse is characterized as extraordinary, by the freshness of his perspective, also in the research areas usually attributed to the younger generation of scholars. The Professor presents an excellent orientation in the field of new media reflection, as confirmed by monographs: "Media @ Internet" (2006) and "Współczesne transformacje medialne" (2015). Next to them, monographs entitled "Filozofia – media – ekologia" (1998) and "Człowiek w świecie mediów" (2012) are worth mentioning in the Professor's achievement in the area of media studies. Thorough knowledge of philosophy and biology has become a source of widespread research interests of the Professor, impressing on his characteristic scientific narrative, considered by many to be difficult, requiring extensive knowledge from the reader but also attentiveness during reading.

The media studies ideas easily interweave in his texts with philosophical and biological references, not at all as rhetorical decorations, but as form a dense slurry of thought, exposing a man of great erudition. In fact, almost all of his reflections

¹ A detailed discussion of Prof. Ignacy S. Fiut's work can be found in the text by W.M. Kolasa and E. Gałuszka, *Media – filozofia – literatura*.

are characterized by the combination of two perspectives – taken from philosophy and taken from media studies, which makes his discourse abound in numerous references and metaphors, rarely seen by other scholars. What is breaking out of his texts is criticism of the observed changes, but also the constructiveness. Ignacy S. Fiut understands the latter distinction as a potential for anticipation in the ongoing transformations, which facilitates the understanding and effective communication.

He is interested in the truth of the individual's "new world" knowledge of which he comes to measure. Not at all breaks through his discourse, often occurring in experienced researchers, nostalgic longing for the old, lost times or often encountered luddite technophobia. It is rather a moderate technophile. It seems that he realistically and soberly looks into the future, perceiving both positive and negative aspects of common digitization. His work exudes fascination with theories of an excellent media theorist Marshall McLuhan, whose futuristic visions and media ideas Professor Ignacy S. Fiut considers extremely relevant in the era of new media dominance. On the basis of classic concepts, he makes it's creative adaptations, as exemplified by the *concept of spiral barking and clamor* described by him. In these works, the professor reaches out to a wide range of theoretical concepts and models, of which much attention is devoted to new media convergence, Marshall McLuhan's theses of media epistemology, internet users' media activity and their axiological preferences, Neil Postman and Paul Levinson's technological determinism, literary work of the network or aesthetics of interactive experience. The extent of the research interests of the Professor is so wide that the discussion is beyond the scope of this article.

Let me keep the reader's attention on the theoretical concepts which are the distinguishing feature of his discourse. Especially reading of the Professor's three monographs: "Człowiek w świecie mediów", "Media @ Internet" and "Współczesne transformacje medialne" reveals mechanisms of Professor Ignacy S. Fiut's creative work and cognitive paths particularly interesting to him. He returns to the same theses and findings, subjecting them to redefinition, trying to show, that what we observe on the field of transformations taking place in the area of new media, is basically *in statu nascendi*, so it is difficult in this discourse for categorical judgements and unambiguous truths. The professor with insight of a young researcher is well aware of the trends, not so much keeping up with them, but often forecasting changes. In "Współczesne transformacje medialne" he again bends over the threads discussed in "Media @ Internet" showing the rate and dynamics of changes taking place in the area of new media.

Particular attention in Professor's achievements deserves, in my opinion, the *effect of barking and clamor* described by him. This effect consists of two stages. In the first one, referred to as barking, the text is published online, triggers extreme discussions between Internet users, who share the supporters and opponents of the presented message. The discussion does not refer to honest arguments, but rather to emotions. When it is transferred outside of the internet, the stage of clamor begins. At this stage, the interlocutors often have no contact

with a subject, but they are willing to comment, treating their opinion as important. At this stage original message is almost completely distorted, the discussion resembles nonsense clamor, in which impetuous interlocutors do not really remember what constitutes the true cause of their dispute (Fiut 2006, pp. 160–174). The attributes of internet make a significant contribution not only to the process of propagation of various kinds of content, democratization of the discourse, or pluralization, but also generate many distortions of communication, which Ignacy S. Fiut pointed out in his *concept of spiral barking and clamor*.

What I consider to be the special value of Professor's work is creative adaptation of well-known theories and concepts, what is exemplified by aforementioned *effect of barking and clamor* or discussed by him in the context of convergence – mimiric and mimetic convergence. Fiut draws attention to the important process overlooked by many researchers in their work on convergence issues, namely that convergence is a two-way process. Therefore, not only the traditional media adapt their formats to the logic of digital universe, but also digital media in many cases imitate old-media habits and patterns, to adapt to the perception schema of older users, who are not used to digital interfaces.²

The mimetic convergence in Ignacy S. Fiut approach means adapting the new media to the format of the Web and the possibilities of its hypertext nature. On the other hand, mimiric convergence is imitation of convention typical for the old media, with its communication patterns. In other words, the professor draws attention to a very important process – although the new media seems to us to be the dominant, displacing traditional media, they can not absolutely and in every situation impose their convention on the traditional media. This is because without taking into account the preferences, habits, and capabilities of the cognitive apparatus of an old-media audience, in many situations new media are condemning themselves to assume the role pf media without audiences.

Interesting reflections are also made by the Professor in the area of media activity of internet users and their axiological preferences. He is interested in not only the preferences of the values of the Internet community, but also the emotional load it brings, so commonly used today the term internet. He reaches here to well-known Walery Pisarek's idea of banner words (Pisarek 2002), trying to point if this term is closer rather to *mirandum* or *kondemnandum*. It's a creative and inspirational reflection that lets us understand what emotive values are present in commonly used term "internet".

A lot of space in Professor's work is devoted to the memetic theory, which he treats as a model for understanding and explaining new communicology phenomena. The predilection of this problem reveals the already mentioned biological provenance of the interest of Ignacy S. Fiut. The mechanisms of replication observed in living organisms are creatively transferred to the media sphere, showing how the media content can be replicated.

² This is discussed in more detail in: Szpunar 2012.

It is impossible not to mention the so interesting to him idea of *cyberception*. By this term the author understands the perception of works of art on the Internet, taking place via the interface. He draws attention to the evolution of the role of sender and receiver, where both of them are becoming *interactors*, co-creating artifacts of an aesthetic nature. At the same time Professor treats the interface as a kind of code that became a filter that mediates the presence of cultural messages in the media. In an analogous way, he sees the code of new media, which affects, in a very deterministic way, on how the user perceives himself and his role in this environment. He is also interested in the very nature of interactivity. In his works he exposes, announced by interactivity, unlimited user capabilities, pointing that in many cases this term should be considered a trendy key-word, whose communication value is much smaller than it is supposed to be, even has an ostensible nature.

The shape of the Professor presented by me seems to be unbearably simplistic, revealing only some features of his colorful and unconventional personality. His texts and beloved poems shall be the key to getting know Ignacy S. Fiut, for they reveal not only unusual scientist, but also man who is sensitive to nuances and crashes of human reality. His rich scientific output exposes a man of extraordinary diligence, but also the extent of his horizons and research interests. The Professor denies stereotypical, erroneous thesis, that new media studies can only be led by young scholars, because the freshness and modernity of the Professor's perspective is more like the fascination of digital natives than the technophobic fears of digital immigrants.

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- A detailed discussion of Prof. Ignacy S. Fiut's work can be found in the text by W.M. Kolasa and E. Gałuszka, *Media – filozofia – literatura*, p. 660.

STRESZCZENIE

Naukowiec i poeta. Życiowe trajektorie Ignacego S. Fiuta

W artykule przedstawiono postać niezwykle uczonego, Ignacego S. Fiuta. Pokazano go nie tylko jako świetnego naukowca, ale również wrażliwego i dobrego człowieka. Odzwierciedleniem jego niezwyklej osobowości jest zarówno jego praca naukowa, jak i twórczość artystyczna.

Słowa kluczowe: Ignacy S. Fiut, kulturalna tożsamość poetów, sylwetka uczonego, niezwykle uczonego