

Wandering Ideas: The Transfers of Concepts within the British, French and Polish Early Socialism (1825-1848)

In the last decade of the 19th century the Polish sociologist Ludwik Krzywicki, mulling over the presence of socialist movements and ideas in non-industrialized European regions, coined the notion of 'wandering ideas'. Using the notion, he referred to ideas that had originated in best developed, industrialized countries and over time reached also the audience in outer parts of Europe. As Krzywicki claimed, 'wandering ideas' may both correspond with certain regional necessities and desires, as well as possibly enhance certain social or economic tendencies that had already existed in absorbing regions, while being unable to trigger completely new phenomena therein.

My project partly addresses similar inquiries inasmuch as its main aim is to tackle the wanderings of early socialist concepts across Europe, with particular attention to British, French, and Polish national contexts. Therefore, realizing the project, I intend to focus on the transfers of early socialist concepts across Europe. Indeed, early socialism in Europe appears to be an ideology that to high extent developed in a result of transfers. Main representatives of this current shared a common conviction that the continent in the first half of the 19th century, in particular after the Napoleonic wars and the Congress of Vienna, found itself in turmoil. However, the turmoil was defined by them in different manners: whereas in France and in Great Britain they rang the alarm bell analyzing the social position of workers, then in East Central Europe, where the modern industry barely existed, they focused much more on discussing new international order. Anyway, what was at stake for all of them, was demanding a new order, or all-encompassing Harmony, in which all fallacies typical for existing world were to fade away.

I intend to investigate primarily printed works (books, memoires, minor pamphlets) of main representatives of the early socialism. Therefore, examining the French context, I am going to focus on such authors as, for example, Pierre Leroux, Charles Fourier and his followers (such as Victor Considerant), followers of Saint-Simon (Prosper Enfantin, Saint-Amand Bazard), and Félicité Lamennais. Focusing on British context, I intend to investigate works of, amongst others, Robert Owen and his followers. And, last but not least, as to the Polish representatives of the political current, I am going to focus on such persons as Ludwik Królikowski, Jan Czyński, or Stanisław Worcell. I will collect the mentioned sources during the visits in Cracow, Paris, Amsterdam, and London.

In my research I will use the toolkits situated at the crossroads of the history of concepts, transfer history, translation studies, and morphological analyses of ideologies. As a results of the project, I intend to provide not only case studies of the most common and narrative examples of transferred concepts, but also to construct a wider model (or conceptual topography of networks and conceptual flows) of the wanderings of early socialist concepts.

The results of the project will be published as research articles in highly-recognized journals, as well as presented at international conferences both in the EU countries and in the USA.