

Summary

The role of general penology in the penal sciences and in penal policy

General penology is intended to present a certain systematic way of looking at the issue of criminal punishment understood as a legal and social institution of a procedural nature. The intention of this approach is to conduct analyses in an interdisciplinary manner, allowing the integration of various types of knowledge in the field of social sciences that can be used for the purposes of widely understood penal practices. Many years ago I described the cognitive perspective of general penology as a culturally integrated perspective.

In my opinion, in recent decades there has been a very intensive development of the individual disciplines of social and legal sciences. The problem, however, is the rational integration of knowledge obtained with their help. As Jadwiga Królikowska and I wrote on the subject of culturally integrated research,

The specialisation of research and education is not a value in itself, it is rather treated as a practical necessity. In the modern era, it is determined by the breadth of knowledge in the field of social and legal sciences (and not only). It is therefore the result of an objective necessity rather than an advantage of research or a lecture. In other words, from the point of view of the development of knowledge and the principles of general methodology, if in a given case it were possible to conduct equally profound and in-depth research of a less specialised nature, it should be done, just as, if possible, in the process of scientific cognition, in relation to the general principles of methodology, the findings of individual specialist studies should be incorporated into the broader group of knowledge. The propositions formulated in connection with these studies should be integrated with a set of propositions building a specific and systematic picture of the phenomena

related to the fragment of social reality under research, and thus included in a broader scientific theory. That is why, from the perspective of culturally integrated research, the division into classical scientific disciplines should not be “ontologised”. This means that one should remember, above all, the functional nature of the differentiation of social and legal disciplines, and the humanities, and thus avoid the hypostasis of the existence of completely different social and linguistic worlds under research in individual sciences. From the point of view of cognitive needs, the extremely important and necessary division of work, including research, should be used instrumentally to increase our general knowledge about a specific fragment of social and normative reality, and not only about its aspects. The relationship between general and detailed knowledge on a given topic should be arranged in such a way that, as part of his/her specialisation, a researcher, specialist in the field of specific legal or social issues, can always refer to the broader socio-legal context of the phenomenon he/she investigates, or the research or professional activities he/she performs. It can be indicated that today science recognises the need to develop interdisciplinary research conducted at the intersection of the competences of various scientific disciplines. Important scientific works are being prepared in the area of such studies. It can be argued that, in fact, many institutionally distinguished scientific disciplines (research and teaching) are interdisciplinary studies [...]. The development of culturally integrated research is a response to the real need to develop some general guidelines for the integration of knowledge in the field of legal and social sciences. Such integration is needed and is currently underway.⁵

The research conducted in this way makes possible the fulfilment of the general methodological postulate of the comprehensiveness and impartiality of analyses as well as extent of knowledge about the subject of the research. As Jadwiga Królikowska and I wrote about the development of contemporary social research,

while scientific research is developing dynamically, the ability of science to present a relatively coherent view of man and society is unlikely to increase. This can be associated with the revival of religious thought, which performs integrating functions necessary to maintain social balance, but in the world of Western culture this phenomenon is probably also associated with the crisis

⁵ Jarosław Utrat-Milecki, Jadwiga Królikowska, *Badania integralnokulturowe, in: Europejski Ośrodek Studiów Penologicznych. Uniwersytet Warszawski. Wydział Stosowanych Nauk Społecznych i Resocjalizacji. Instytut Profilaktyki Społecznej i Resocjalizacji. Zakład Prawnych i Społecznych Badań Integralnokulturowych*, eds Jarosław Utrat-Milecki, Jadwiga Królikowska, IPSiR UW, Warszawa 2010, pp. 34–35.

of the modernist world-view, a crisis that is defined as a separate concept of post-modernism, late modernity, post-industrialism, or it can be described by paraphrasing Giovanni Sartori's post-thought. Taking into account this state of affairs, the development of culturally integrated research can be associated with the scientific trend that, with all objective difficulties, tries to make a rational and objectively verifiable scientific integration of human experience. It is worth noting that such integration of human experience is a vital need of individuals and societies. As science withdraws from this task, it is taken over by other institutions, sometimes of a religious, but also a political, or business nature. It seems that both cognitive and social considerations support people in undertaking a synthesis of legal and social experiences in various fields. [...] Culturally integrated research can be treated as one of the proposals containing some guidelines for conducting such integrative and unifying research on legal and social issues.⁶

The research assumptions indicated in general penology have been developed on the basis of my experience in research and teaching since 1989 at the Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialisation at the University of Warsaw. They were first announced at a meeting of the Polish Scientific Society of Criminal Law chaired by Professor Genowefa Rejman in 2002. General penology applies these general guidelines to its subject of research. As part of this research, it is possible to present such a theoretical approach to the problem of criminal punishment, which makes possible an integrated image of criminal punishment as a legal and social institution understood procedurally. This is to facilitate the view of detailed issues relating to the criminal justice system from the perspective of individual disciplines for which criminal punishment may be important in penal science. Accordingly, one can also make more extensive use of the thus acquired and integrated knowledge about penal practices in other social sciences and in the humanities. This may also help penal sciences to be reopened to a greater extent to the achievements of other disciplines of social sciences and the humanities. It also becomes the theoretical basis for involving representatives of other disciplines in a broader discussion of criminal punishment and criminal policy.

⁶ Ibidem, pp. 39–40.