

Wicked Son - Poland 1939

Contributed by [Etan Mark](#)

Source: internet



The four figures epitomize the Jewish cultural and class struggles in interwar Poland. The wise figure is a delicate intelligent yeshiva "bochur" (unmarried student) dressed traditionally yet meticulously. His body language expresses the grace and modesty of the Torah student ideally understood as an intellectual and religious aristocrat. In contrast, the wicked figure is a middle-aged bourgeois Jew dressed to show off his aspirations to Western European modernity. While the wise student has no props, not even a book, the wicked figure sports a riding crop, a cigarette with cigarette holder, and a stylish monocle. He is dressed in a hunting outfit with a jaunty Tyrollian hat with a feather, an ascot around his neck, silk gloves and sharp spurs on his leather boots. His stance is self-confident, self-contained and arrogant in contrast to the simpleton who is fat and smiling, opening himself to the world trustingly with arms and legs spread out. While the simpleton is still traditionally dressed with a small tallis, the one who does not even know how to ask is a worker dressed poorly, wearing proletarian boots, without any visible link to Jewish tradition. His contemplative expression suggests that his direction in life is not yet determined.

