

Introduction

Talking and writing about history is a manifestation of creating a continuity of tradition which expresses itself in presenting particular schools of thought and courses of action in various epochs. It may be argued that “Every epoch has its special goals in store” quoting words from Adam Asnyk’s poem “To the Young”. Recalling them (goals and ideas) is an expression of creating the above-mentioned continuity of historical ideas, as well as, educational ones.

The source of every action is a thought. Searching for the genesis of human thought, also the educational one, is an attempt to answer the question: who do we inherit certain ideas, rules and values from, who is their creator and continuator? Thereby, based on such understanding of historical research, the credibility of R.W. Emerson’s message is confirmed. This American poet and essayist, whom Adam Mickiewicz named “the American Socrates”, argued that “only those who build on ideas, build for eternity”¹. The same author, when considering the issue of validity of social institutions, claimed that “No institution can be better than its creator”².

Created by researchers, tales of people of science, culture, education convince the reader that the heroes of these works served certain ideas, which they formed and realized themselves. And the value of these biographies in the history of culture may be described with the sentence by Peter Altenberg (in fact, Richard Engländer) Australian writer, one of the main authors of the literary group “Jung-Wien”. Namely, Peter Altenberg argued that “Becoming the victim of your own ideas means as much as becoming capable

¹ R.W. Emerson, *Thoughts*, Lublin 1997, p. 112.

² *Ibidem*, p. 94.



of living”³. Many prominent people, sometimes forgotten, creators of educational thought gave an exemplary testimony of their lives, proving to be capable of valuable actions and of living a life beneficial to others. Not only did they create ideas, but also institutions in accordance with particular ideas, which have been preserved until the present day and which are historical memory vehicles.

However, we need to be aware of the fact that indicating whether a particular event, person or an institution is regarded as significant in history is always the result of authors’ choices. Such choices are affected by their ideological, worldview beliefs as well as their workshop and research experience. Since as Marcin Kula accurately emphasises, when we analyse historical sources “memory vehicles do not carry the same memory for each and every person”⁴. It is also essential to point out that in the general reflexion on history, there is a lot of truth in Henryk Elzenberg’s argument, who in “The Trouble with Existence”, wrote “The thing that determines the so-called character of an epoch is not what is happening at that time, but what the consciousness of contemporary people absorbs”⁵. While creating through their works a continuity of tradition, researchers should bear that thought in mind.

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³ *Wisdom speaks in a hushed voice. Austrian aphorisms selection and foreword*, S.H. Kaszyński, Poznań 2000, p. 43.

⁴ M. Kula, *Vehicles of historical memory*, Warsaw 2002, p. 275–284.

⁵ H. Elzenberg, *The Trouble with Existence, Aphorisms in Time*, Krakow 1963, p. 250.