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ON CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ITS INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

Abstract:

The article presents the discussion about the term ‘cultural heritage’, especially through the prism of Ossowski’s works. According to the author, the concept of cultural heritage is a key term in the considerations of regionalism and regional education, and is often invoked in the context of reflections on the factors constituting cultural and regional identity. Furthermore, cultural heritage can become the basis of an important area of reflection concerning university education. Experience of ‘inheritance’ is important for the students because they are on the verge of parenthood, which functions as a natural carrier of cultural heritage. The issues of regional education concern are therefore in strong connection with those of contemporary education.

Keywords: cultural heritage, regional education, Stanisław Ossowski

O DZIEDZICTWIE KULTUROWYM I JEGO MIĘDZYPOKOLENIOWEJ TRANSMISJI

Streszczenie:

Artykuł prezentuje dyskusję na temat terminu „dziedzictwo kulturowe”, szczególnie przez pryzmat dzieł Ossowskiego. Zdaniem autora tekstu pojęcie to jest kluczowym pojęciem w rozważaniach o regionalizmie i edukacji regio-

nalnej i jest często przywoływanie w kontekście refleksji nad czynnikami tworzącymi tożsamość kulturową i regionalną. Ponadto dziedzictwo kulturowe może stać się podstawą ważnego obszaru refleksji w kształceniu uniwersyteckim. Doświadczenie „dziedziczenia” jest ważne dla studentów, ponieważ znajdują się oni u progu rodzicielstwa, które funkcjonuje jako naturalny nosnik dziedzictwa kulturowego. Kwestie regionalnie zorientowanej edukacji są silnie związane ze współczesnym szkolnictwem.

Słowa klucze: dziedzictwo kulturowe, edukacja regionalna, Stanisław Osowski

There are several reasons why the issues characterised in the title have their legitimate place in the context of modern higher education. To a large extent, they emerge as a result of currently existing processes, including European integration, the expressive tendencies of a regional character in various areas of social life or, finally, changing expectations towards university graduates, not only pedagogical ones. These reasons account for the fact that the university is a ‘place’ in which at least two generations meet, while the process of cultural heritage transmission is specifically inscribed within the essence of the school. Another reason is that, as I write below the period of university education coincides with the threshold between adolescence and adulthood and is, for most students, a period of considerable consequence for the crystallisation of cultural identity and the ‘internalisation’ of heritage.

Finally, this experience of ‘inheritance’ is important for students because they are on the verge of parenthood, which functions as a natural carrier of cultural heritage. Moreover, it is also a period where one determines one’s relationship to the legacy of one’s elders: parents, grandparents and other important ancestors. This is also often a place in which ‘familiarity’ and ‘foreignness’ confront each other in a new environment and new relationships, etc. For these reasons, I find my reflections in this volume to be justified.

All the more so because the concept of cultural heritage is a key term in the considerations of regionalism and regional education. It is

often invoked in the context of reflections on the factors constituting cultural and regional identity. Hence, it is one of the components that determine a region¹.

Authors most often refer to the concept of cultural heritage developed by Stanisław Ossowski. In my opinion, this concept is usually invoked selectively, omitting a number of important issues. Cultural heritage is, on the one hand, a term that is readily and frequently called upon in the context of education in general. At the same time – and this is crucial – it is an extremely important factor in the functioning of social groups and mutual interpersonal relations. This is emphasised by many researchers, Ruth Benedict points out that “we must accept all the consequences of our human heritage, the most important of which is the narrow range of biologically transferred behaviours and the immense role of the cultural process of conveying tradition. ... What really binds people with each other is their type of culture If a nation, instead of choosing such a symbol as a common blood heritage ... directed its attention to the culture that unites its members ..., it would replace with realistic thinking that kind of symbolism that is dangerous because it is wrong”².

These observations give me sufficient reason to focus on the essence of cultural heritage, according to the terms of this author, making it the basis of an important area of reflection concerning education³.

The first issue that needs addressing is, as Ossowski notes (although not explicitly), the claim that heritage is something that we inherit and that is subject to inheritance. In the Polish language, inheritance is a noun form of the verb ‘to inherit’ which, in one sense, refers to the taking over of physical and mental characteristics from one’s parents or ancestors. In another sense, the word can mean two addi-

¹ See: P. Petrykowski, *Edukacja regionalna. Problemy podstawowe i otwarte*, Toruń, 2003.

² R. Benedict, *Wzory kultury*, Warsaw, 1999, pp. 82–83.

³ The main source of the following discussion is S. Ossowski’s *Więź społeczna i dziedzictwo krwi*, Warsaw, 1948, pp. 70–99, especially his chapter “O zagadnieniach dziedzictwa społecznego.”

tional things: the act of receiving a bequest, or one's right to receive it⁴. Although referring to dictionary definitions is not always accurate, the move is justified in this case by the fact that my interlocutors⁵, using the term "cultural heritage" for even this systematic approach, did not perceive these important distinctions and differences in meaning. In addition, the relationship of cultural heritage to the term 'inheritance' can be taken in two ways here: (1) as chattel or fixed assets received through a bequest, heirloom, legacy or succession; or (2) as the right to enter into possession or transfer something through a bequest⁶.

The essence of the present discussion thus goes much deeper than mere linguistic analysis. The vast majority of my interlocutors, in defining the essence of cultural heritage, characterised it primarily as the output of past generations⁷. This resembles Jerzy Smolicz's observations, according to which "heritage is that part of culture which is passed down to us from the past"⁸. What is important, however, is that these same interlocutors clearly state that part of cultural heritage is inheritance, our ancestors' legacy. Appearing in such statements is a close relationship between blood heritage on the one hand, the dangerous symbolism of which was mentioned by Benedict in the quote above and cultural heritage on the other. This raises a number of questions about these components of understood cultural heritage that, within historical processes, entered into the "cultural bloodstream" through cultural diffusion.

⁴ *Słownik Języka Polskiego*, ed. M. Szymczak, Warsaw, 1988, vol. I, pp. 498–499.

⁵ Research results and their methodological description are discussed at length in my abovementioned *Edukacja regionalna* (see n. 1).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

⁷ Such a formulation was characteristic of all my interlocutors. A significant intergenerational difference concerns the temporal caesura. The adults surveyed included their parents' output within the concept of heritage. Young respondents, in contrast, were doubtful and clearly hesitated to do the same. One explanation for this is that within the context of the family, the parents were pointing to the young, and not to themselves as the inheritors of their grandparents' and great-grandparents' heritage.

⁸ J.J. Smolicz, *Kultura i nauczanie w społeczeństwie wieloetnicznym*, Warsaw, 1990, p. 53.

More important, however, is the question of the presence in this cultural heritage of elements that result from cultural, and especially political and economic, domination. Indeed, they do not possess such properties as to justify their presence in cultural heritage understood by the respondents as an essential component of blood heritage. Moreover, owing to their magical symbolism, they are especially foreign, and even hostile to such cultural heritage. One could give many examples here, of which it is enough to mention the Old Towns of Wrocław, Szczecin, Toruń, or Gdańsk; the Malbork castle; or the Nicolaus Copernicus monument in Toruń (created by a German sculptor when the town was under Prussian partition), to say nothing of the controversial ones: Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw, or Nowa Huta in Krakow⁹.

The irrational relationship between blood and biological or cultural heritage evident in the responses of my interlocutors is obviously unjustified. Ossowski and many other researchers emphasise that cultural heritage is not transmitted biologically¹⁰, nor does it constitute a simple link between the present and past generations¹¹. On the other hand, it can be explained by an important historical determinant:

⁹ As reported in the mass media at the end of July, 2002, the restorer of landmarks in Krakow applied for the recognition of the oldest part of Nowa Huta as a historic complex of landmarks. This initiative did not raise any controversy either among the “indigenous” inhabitants of the subdivision, or other residents of Krakow. It is significant, however, that neither the journalists, nor the scientists involved in the inquiry – sociologists, psychologists, art historian – referred to the importance of Nowa Huta in shaping the consciousness and identity of Poles and residents of Nowa Huta, but instead focused on the political and economic context: whether Nowa Huta is a symbol of the communist oppressors, in which case what to do with Lenin’s statue, and what economic consequences would materialise for the inhabitants if it were recognized as a landmark – that is, who would finance its repairs and maintenance. However, the issue of Nowa Huta is much deeper, as was rightly pointed out by one of the TV commentators: the list of such historic complexes should soon also be supplemented with large-scale housing developments – the so-called apartment blocks.

¹⁰ See for example R. Benedict, op.cit. p. 82.

¹¹ See also J. Smolicz, op.cit. p. 54; also F. Znaniecki *Nauki o kulturze. Narodziny i rozwój*, Warsaw, 1971, p. 228.

the lack of a tradition of creating and qualitatively assimilating new cultural products that “force the concentration of our culture on traditional values that support the existence of a nation. Not development, but the preservation of national identity that constituted [and continues to constitute – auth.] the most significant problem, becoming a criterion of positive citizen involvement”¹². Hence, I consider these observations to be important.

Today’s generation of Polish children and teens – and, I hope, many future ones – does not carry the baggage of having to fight for national survival, national identity and independence, to the extent that their parents and grandparents do. The criteria for including different products as components of cultural heritage undergo, and must continue to undergo, constant change, also subsuming these elements that older generations consider foreign or unacceptable. In contrast, younger generations see these products as remnants, bequests from their ancestors, while within them forms a personal feeling of the borders of private homelands. Situations in which adults assign to some of these products labels expression approval or disapproval¹³ enforce an understanding of cultural heritage in terms of either acceptance or rejection. Thus, places that constitute a territorial basis for a private homeland are deprived of a positive emotional foundation for the cultural identity of young Poles.

This process has at least two dimensions. On the one hand, it gives rise to a generation shaped by a lack of a private homeland. The places of important childhood experiences (sandbox, school, the place of first juvenile feelings, etc.) are met with the disapproval of the adult generation; they become places that cannot be described as offering a sense of

¹² K. Obuchowski, *Człowiek intencjonalny*, Warsaw, 1993, p. 29.

¹³ For example, post-war housing developments, including the aforementioned Nowa Huta – or even more so Ursynow, Rubinkowo, Kapusciska, or any number of examples in every city in Poland – are to a lesser or greater extent the effect of the labor of older generations of Poles who are not at all representative of communist ideology. However, they are labeled as communist products, and are therefore bad. Consequently, they cannot be included as part of cultural heritage.

security¹⁴. Such places can only be those that adults situate within their own conceptions of cultural heritage. However, these places can be emotionally foreign to young people and so a generation is coming up without private homelands, and one might even say without a broadly understood ‘home’. This marks the beginning of a human drama, of a human who, as Heidegger put it, “is as long as he dwells”¹⁵.

Processes of globalisation as the speed with which information flows and, at the same time, the possibility of travel, lead young people to realise that similar places are everywhere, and everywhere is starting to feel like home. After all, new, huge housing developments can be found almost everywhere: in Berlin, Paris, Copenhagen, Rome, Prague, Oslo, Helsinki, London. These are people of whom we can say “they have no home, they have hundreds of homes”¹⁶. Deprived of their own place – home, private homeland – they see no difference; as Zyszko Melosik remarks, not because they can accept the differences or be full of intercultural empathy, but because they are unable to see these differences¹⁷. The drama of young people is described by Henryka Kwiatkowska: “a human who has no memory of places to which he or she willingly returns, even in thought, is in a specific way deprived of ties with other people, is fundamentally lonely”¹⁸.

Although this is beyond the scope of the present article, we can see hidden in these reflections extremely important premises that provide us with the rationale to seek reasons beyond mass media or dysfunctional education for such phenomena as ‘blockers’ or ‘hooligans’ found in communities of young people living and having grown up in large apartment complexes. This generation also gives rise to what Melosik

¹⁴ See: Yi Fu Tuan, *Przestrzeń i miejsce*, Warsaw, 1987, p. 13.

¹⁵ M. Heidegger, *Budować, mieszkać, myśleć*, Warsaw, 1997, p. 318.

¹⁶ Z. Melosik used this sentence in a slightly different context in his article *Kultura instant – paradoksy pop – tożsamości*; In: *Pedagogika u progu trzeciego tysiąclecia*, ed. A. Nalaskowski, K. Rubacha, Toruń, 2001, p. 41.

¹⁷ Z. Melosik, op.cit., p. 43.

¹⁸ H. Kwiatkowska, *Czas, miejsce, przestrzeń – zaniedbane kategorie pedagogiczne*, In: *Pedagogika u progu trzeciego tysiąclecia*, ed. A. Nalaskowski, K. Rubacha, Toruń, 2001, p. 64.

defines as a type of ‘global teenager’ with a ‘transparent identity’¹⁹. Another research project of mine has indicated the existence of another type of young person who, as a consequence of the aforementioned view of cultural heritage on the part of the adults, lacks a private homeland – an individual in reference to whom what I would describe a “faded identity”. I discuss this phenomenon elsewhere²⁰.

Related to these are other issues serving as the consequences of differences in understanding the other part of this key term: cultural heritage. Once again we turn to the dictionary, where the word “cultural” is defined as referring to “culture, to the whole material and spiritual output of humanity”²¹. For this prosaic reason, besides those products to which adults explicitly attribute ‘cultural value’, we ought to include as

¹⁹ Z. Melosik, op.cit.

²⁰ What I have in mind are groups of illegal young Polish immigrants, not seasonal workers, but ones who have settled, despite the risk of deportation, primarily in the capitals of Western Europe. I have personally encountered them in Rome: youth coming from small-town apartment complexes in regions of Poland with a high unemployment rate, gathering every day in the plazas reminiscent of “slave fairs.” These plazas are only used as meeting places for those searching for short-term employment, as well as for hanging out. These Poles often camp out in mud huts, wooden shacks at a “safe” (from the police) distance from the plaza. They remain abroad not so much for economic reasons: whatever money they occasionally happen to make is spent on alcohol (I did not notice any drug addiction, which seems to be both understandable and interesting), less often sent to families, not intended for tourism, or to improve their living conditions, or to legalise their immigrant status. They refuse to return to their country because, as they claim, they have no place to go; their economic situation or job opportunities are not necessarily better, and are often worse, in these new places. What is more, even those deported attempt to return to these places at all cost. Using a poetic description, they are like moths heading toward the light regardless of consequences, even if they are heading toward a fire in which they will perish. I observed such behavior not only in these particular places, but also conducting analyses and coming into contact, sometimes accidentally, with these young people on the border between Poland and the countries of the European Union. I discuss this elsewhere in an article that I have just prepared, but I bring it up here as an example of the phenomenon of people without private homelands, people whose germs of cultural identity have faded.

²¹ *Słownik Języka Polskiego*, op.cit., p. 1084.

part of cultural heritage also controversial ones, ones that awaken so-called mixed feelings, including: industrial plants, highways, hideous ‘skyscrapers’, nightclubs, supermarkets, martial arts, the arms industry, gaming arcades. Then there are what Hall calls extensions, such as television (with embarrassingly low-quality productions and the numbing dysfunction of informational programmes), cars, computers (with the Internet and anti-educational programs) and mobile telephones. Extensions, with their social, moral, and customary consequences, have, as Hall emphasises, gotten out of control²². In the sense of the amalgamation of the words “cultural” and “heritage”, these creations are part and parcel of cultural heritage. Young generations have grown up surrounded by them because, for these generations, they constitute cultural heritage. In contrast, for the reasons outlined above, older generations refuse to consider them as worthy of culture. They also refuse to recognise that these elements constitute cultural heritage.

Despite declarations to the contrary, many researchers (and my respondents) dealing with the problems of regionalism consistently limit the scope of understanding of the concept of culture, which leads to a radical and selective narrowing of the understanding of cultural heritage, something especially accentuated by my interlocutors²³. Thus, a considerable part of the young generation is left with no alternative than to live in the shadows of a cultural vacuum. The image of cultural heritage as it is understood by older generations is becoming increasingly vague and faded, and the world created by adults is regarded as negative, unacceptable, or even bad. At the same time, evil is a product—indeed-of no one, it is anonymous. How accurate are Henryka Kwiatkowska’s poignant words: “If the world in which we live is to be a humanistic world, then evil cannot have an anonymous form, it must have an author. To allow the anonymity of blame is to simultaneously consent to the escalation of evil”²⁴.

²² E.T. Hall, *Ukryty wymiar*, Warsaw, 1978, p. 26.

²³ This was especially emphasised by the oldest group interlocutors over 50 years old, activists in regional cultural societies.

²⁴ H. Kwiatkowska *Czas, miejsce, przestrzeń – zaniedbane kategorie pedagogiczne*, op.cit., p. 61.

Such anonymity on the part of the author of evil also occurs in the statements of my interlocutors, even though each one of us has, after all, come in contact with such phrases as brutality and vulgarity in mass media, in film, on websites and in “świerszczyk” print magazines²⁵. One would like to ask whether, over the past few years, the world has been ruled by King Matt the Second; note that even King Matt the First did not invent war, but his ancestors did so by glorifying and justifying it in terms of the defence of territory, religion and human rights for the abolition of dictatorship²⁶.

Alongside the many other criteria used by adults for such measures, we also find temporal caesurae: the past, the present, and the future. The future and the present are fine as long as they derive from the past what adults consider to be good. Here we touch the very tip of the iceberg, which is time; or, as Kwiatkowska writes, one of the forgotten pedagogical categories (along with place and space). Defining the core of tradition as a memory of the past, Kwiatkowska²⁷ draws on Hannah Arendt to point out that the problem of modern education consisting in its natural resistance to authority and tradition, yet this same edu-

²⁵ The present generation over 50 knows this as a euphemism for illustrated pornographic and erotic magazines.

²⁶ A tempting subject of a separate study is Poland’s participation in the aggressive intervention in Iraq. But perhaps this is just an excuse; perhaps many equally tragic events of recent years have an even deeper foundation; perhaps pointing out Iraq and other Arab countries is just a veil to maintain the anonymity of the authors and creators of terror, operating on both sides of the Iron Curtain? Many shocking reflections are born when one reads reliable studies on culture (including the “culture of crime”) of the Middle- and Far-Eastern countries. The course of war, as well as everything that has happened and continues to happen after it is over confirm the legitimacy of questions about the real intension and reasons for the brutal and destructive cultural aggression and American occupation in Iraq. There is a lot of controversy here, when we juxtapose the events in Iraq with the anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. Are not the Iraqis whom we call terrorists fighting for the freedom of their country, their religion, and their culture? Is it not too easy for us Christians to forget that we also share in the devastation of the roots of Christianity, the land in which Abraham was born?

²⁷ H. Kwiatkowska, *Czas, miejsce, przestrzeń – zaniedbane kategorie pedagogiczne*, op.cit., p. 58.

cation takes place in a world “whose structures are no longer determined by authority or bound by tradition”²⁸. Accepting fidelity as the norm of memory, Kwiatkowska formulates a thesis that the memory of the postmodern human undergoes fundamental deviations, but also poses a question: “Does the present time create conditions for preserving the fidelity of memory, for reproducing a psychological truth and authenticity of the experience of past time?”²⁹ The short answer is *no*.

As Kwiatkowska remarks, more or perhaps unlike ever before, one can see in the processes of globalisation and under their influence on a changing world a strong pressure of diverse interests (political, religious, ethnic, cosmopolitan) on the memory of individuals and of social communities. In consequence, we are dealing with a degradation of human memory and we can clearly notice “the shaky proportions between real memory – faithful yet distorted – and memory that is unreal, fictitious, often false”³⁰. The phenomenon of memory destruction is so powerful that today we even speak of a typology of false memory: sentimental (whitewashing) memory, traumatic (obfuscating) memory, as well as deliberate oblivion, or forced amnesia³¹. There is also another side of this issue – intentional forgetting: “suppression as forgetting something that is uncomfortable … with the aim of erasing … uncomfortable events”³².

These mechanism are clearly exemplified in the statements of many regionalists, social activists and teachers whom I have studied. Sentimental memory has been manifested in references to traditions of folk culture and the culture of noblemen, while traumatic memory was expressly manifested in descriptions of culture after World War II. Characteristically, many of my interlocutors were likely to have traumatic memories of the 1970s and 80s, omitting (forgetfulness or forced amnesia?) the period of Stalinism and the times of Gomulka. Unwritten

²⁸ H. Arendt, *Miedzy czasem minionym a przyszłym*, Warsaw, 1994, p. 231.

²⁹ H. Kwiatkowska, op.cit., p. 59.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ H. Kwiatkowska’s typology is taken from J. Mizińską *Sztuka zapominania; In: Pamięć, miejsce, obecność*, ed. J.P. Hudzik, J. Mizińska, Lublin, 1997, p. 62.

³² H. Kwiatkowska, op.cit., p. 60.

and unrecorded conversations recreated after some time from memory (sometimes due to the nature of the place, sometimes upon the interlocutor's request and other times due to the spontaneity of the answer) hence indicate a hidden manifestation of sentimentality: the reconstruction of the country, one's own dwelling and social promotion.

Gomulka was also sentimentally connected with the fact of his nationalistic tendencies. Yet, it was Gierek who, apart from a foreign debt, drew to Poland foreign film productions, and created avenues for smuggling pornography and for drug addiction³³. It may be worth adding, partly as a curiosity, that although Gomulka is evidently blamed for the events of March 1968, his policy of forcing Polish Jews to emigrate is assessed with some approval, not as evil, but as an inept, somewhat ineffective, attempt at "cleansing the Polish nation from culturally alien elements".

The consequences stemming in part from these mechanisms of false memory evident in today's adult generation play an important role in shaping the identity – including cultural identity – of today's youth. These have been clearly described by Lech Witkowski, among others³⁴. A separate thread that extends beyond the Polish context is the case of the so-called Generation 68, and in our country, Genera-

³³ These observations come from my interviews. Other interesting examples were provided by my interlocutors especially while I conducted materials in the regions of Zamosc, Lublin, Jaslo, and Lower Silesia. The blame for the decline in religiosity among today's forty-somethings and their children is put on propaganda from the times of Gierek. Here is one representative answer: "[this propaganda] became specialized in showing the most interesting films on Sunday morning, on the Feast of Corpus Christi, or Easter." To my questions (these interlocutors belonged to the generations of the parents of these forty-somethings) why they were unable to convince their children to go to church, instead of sitting in front of the television, the respondents replied: "it's the communists' fault; they could have played [these films] in the afternoon or in the evening."

³⁴ L. Witkowski, *O dramacie kształcenia się tożsamości młodego Polaka*, In: *Kultura jako czynnik rozwoju cywilizacji humanistycznej*; Materials (after the manuscript) from the conference of Komitet Prognozowania Rozwoju Kraju „Polska 2000”; Jabłonna, 15–17 December, 1988.

tion 80³⁵. This leads to such phenomena as the aforementioned transparent or faded identity³⁶.

In my opinion, the above considerations clearly emphasise how important it is to specify the concept of cultural heritage if we want to invoke it within the framework of regional education. But they also underline a point that I have noted on numerous occasions; namely, that the issues of regional education concern far deeper and wider areas of contemporary education.

As noted by Ossowski, the term ‘inheritance’ is used in three situations: first, when it refers to the right of ownership of something (tangible and intangible assets); secondly, when it refers to the biological transmission of somatic or mental traits (mediated by reproductive cells); and thirdly, in reference to the transfer of cultural patterns through social contact. For obvious reasons, what interests us here is the last meaning of the term which, as part of social heritage and noted by Bronisław Malinowski, is at the same time a central concept in cultural anthropology³⁷. Analysing these three uses of the term ‘inheritance’, Ossowski ascertains that they are connected by the process of making someone similar to another; in our case, in terms of relatively permanent cultural characteristics.

³⁵ See, for example, my own *Regionalne towarzystwa kultury wobec nowych wyzwań*, Ciechanów, 2000.

³⁶ I should like to bring up two characteristic statements made by candidates for a Master’s degree in one of the humanistic majors at the university. The first concerned a question about the essence of Judaism; the candidate searched for the origin of the term in the name Judas and claimed that Judaism is a religion created by this apostle – the traitor. In an interview following the exam, the young man did not feel embarrassed and remained convinced about the correctness of his claim, even though he knew that the committee had evaluated his answer negatively. In turn, many other candidates began to wonder aloud about what Judaism really is. Another young man, when asked about the relations between Christianity and Judaism, answered that they were going well until the birth of Christ. Perhaps these are only two anecdotal examples, but do they not speak volumes? After all, Judaism and Christ’s life are linked to our cultural heritage.

³⁷ As mentioned earlier (see note 3 above), I am basically discussing the concept of heritage introduced by Ossowski in his *Więź społeczna i dziedzictwo krwi*, op.cit.

This process of inheritance is a one-way transfer from the communicator to the recipient. In each case, the direction of inheritance corresponds to chronological order; that is, the young inherit from the old. Cultural inheritance is inheritance through cultural contact, which determines the hereditary subject, although the legacy in this case is without a specified recipient. As Ossowski points out, it is precisely the transfer of psychological dispositions that happens through social contact that takes place in the most concretised manner. As he emphasises, transmission is a correlate of inheritance – one person transmits, the other inherits.

Through analogy with biological inheritance, Ossowski manifestly distinguishes cultural inheritance from social influence. Of special note here is the claim that “as regards social communication, the impact of previous generations on later ones consists in modeling one group of individuals on the other. This influence can be manifested in various ways. It may even lead to the creation of dispositions that are in direct opposition to the dispositions that characterized the earlier generation”³⁸. Consequently, we can speak of cultural inheritance only when referring to the formation of someone’s features according to certain patterns created by other entities with which the individual is in contact. Put differently, Ossowski argues that there must be a causal relationship between the possession of a trait by one individual and the possession of the same trait by another; that is, as the author puts it, we are dealing with some kind of process of convergence. However, such a causal relationship is not a sufficient condition for speaking about inheritance.

In the analysis of cultural inheritance, one can take into account the inheritance of psychological dispositions and somatic properties. In this approach, cultural heritage, as Ossowski writes, would consist of “certain patterns of muscular, emotional and mental reactions, according to which the group members’ dispositions are shaped, but no external objects would form a part of this heritage”³⁹. This approach is

³⁸ S. Ossowski, *Więź społeczna...*, op.cit., pp. 74–75.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 76.

also referred to in studies and analysis conducted by more contemporary authors dealing with cultural identity⁴⁰.

Ossowski draws attention to the fact that in the most common, colloquial sense of cultural heritage, not only individual patterns of reactions are included (the so-called personal culture of an individual) but, above all, a set of products, such as works of art, scholarly works, technical objects, housing developments or institutions. Ossowski describes these artifacts as things that are passed down from generation to generation, allowing for the maintenance of continuity of the culture of a given social group, especially in the case of societies with extensive structures. As he adds, “a concept that does not cover this sphere of objects... does not correspond to everyday intuitions.” My interviews and conversations largely confirm this observation; indeed, scientific literature is full of further examples⁴¹.

Ossowski describes the consequences of such an approach so emphatically and lucidly that I will allow myself to quote him here: “Embracing the scope of a concept in a manner equivalent to certain properties of the human individual and certain products included in the external world is highly inadvisable for methodological reasons. Although this is usually the case when defining culture, the result is a turbidity of this concept, which so terribly distorts the discussion surrounding the concept of culture”⁴².

As a starting point to find a solution, Ossowski proposes a distinction between creativity and cultural heritage, stressing that the latter can be taken into consideration “regardless of the issue of where the transmitted patterns arose, or how individual items, which in a given environment are assigned a special value, were created: whether in the core of the social group, or brought in from the outside”⁴³. Drawing on a distinction between questions that concern a given group’s creative output, on the one hand, and what is transmitted within this

⁴⁰ J. J. Smolicz, *Kultura i nauczanie...*, op.cit., p. 52.

⁴¹ Some aspects of this colloquial understanding of culture are mentioned in my *Edukacja regionalna...*, op.cit.

⁴² S. Ossowski, op.cit., p. 77.

⁴³ Ibid.

group, on the other – referring to them with terms “cultural output” and “cultural heritage”, respectively – Ossowski considers it easier to limit cultural heritage to patterns of muscular, emotional and mental reactions. As he claims, the transmission of creative output from one generation to another does not rely only on spatial (and, I would add, temporal) operations, but on specific practices “experienced thanks to the complicated dispositions which we inherited from other members of our group, and which we will likely pass down, with these or other changes, to our successors”⁴⁴.

A general component of the attitudes inherited by respective environments and groups is the sense of worth: “the individual value of an item justifies the careful preservation of a special attitude toward this very object”⁴⁵. At the same time, it should be noted that cultural heritage consists of dispositions with very different levels of concreteness entailing that the term can refer to a class of objects or events, or just one object; it may invoke a general “framework” of behavioural patterns (lifestyle, ethical norms), or specific reactions to specific facts or products. In addition, in the case of cultural heritage, there is a sense of group ownership, which differs from the sense of ownership in the economic sense in that it is the property of the social group to which the individual belongs. Moreover, it is not a transferable property, as is the case with the transfer of assets.

Ossowski describes yet another issue – the will of inheritance. By taking over cultural heritage we may, or may not, be aware of it. At the same time, this conscious heritage may be wanted or unwanted. An awareness of this inheritance in connection with the will of inheritance has a significant impact on the way in which cultural heritage is transferred and its role in the life of the individual. Of particular importance is everything that is related to the tradition of the social group of which we are members, and in which we wish to remain. These threads are known from analysis concerning, amongst others, reference groups. In stark contrast, however, and equally special is the cultural heritage of

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

a group seeking to absorb us against our will, and against whom we try to defend ourselves.

Alongside the mentality of ownership, a sense of duty also comes into play in the case of cultural heritage. As Ossowski remarks, cultural heritage – as the inheritance of a given community – consists of “the repertoire of patterns incumbent on each one of the group’s members, as well as the repertoire of patterns that do not have a normative character”⁴⁶. One example of an obligatory pattern is the native language, while optional patterns include, among others, national dances. In his analysis, Ossowski draws attention to what, in my opinion, is a vital aspect; namely, that “cultural patterns considered as collective heritage, both obligatory and optional ones, constitute only a part of this resource of various mental, emotional, and motoric dispositions that the individual receives from the social environment. Cultural heritage includes such elements that have no attributed value, or even those that are assessed negatively, and which are transmitted from generation to generation regardless of educational efforts, or even despite them”⁴⁷.

The importance of this statement lies primarily in the fact that it allows us to characterise the aforementioned examples as aspects of cultural heritage. These housing developments, or a number of other products created by adults, can rightfully be perceived by younger generations as a kind of heirloom, a legacy, and thus an inheritance from their ancestors, both near and distant⁴⁸. Referring to Erickson’s concept of identity or Ossowski’s private homeland, we can therefore note that these are all elements – creations – that, by being associated with childhood, create positive emotional connections, such as trust or a sense of security. At the same time, as I have written above, these same places and spaces are rejected or negatively evaluated by the adults and so excluded from cultural heritage.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 97.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

⁴⁸ I was able to clearly ascertain this not only in colloquial observations, but also in my students’ written statements, as well as in free interviews with the youth – see methodological remarks.

There is still another aspect to this issue. If we include as part of cultural heritage those patterns of reactions discussed by Ossowski, and if we take into account the loss of control by adults, emphasised by Edward T. Hall, then we should not be surprised by the young generation's aversion to many products of their native culture, as well as their fascination with other products and behaviours. In the former case, we can take as examples folk creativity and folk culture.

In my own research on rural culture and its importance in social associations⁴⁹, I have provided evidence of examples that anyone can corroborate on the basis of so-called colloquial observations where, prior to the initiation of systemic political transformations, the adult generation has displayed an attitude not so much of negation, but of derision toward traditional folk culture. In view of the fact that folk culture has become an important strategic part of cultural policy under the earlier socialist or communist political system, the patterns of reaction that displayed aversion or contempt for the entire sphere of folk or rural culture became inscribed as all the more acceptable behaviour.

In a particularly explicit degree, such patterns of behaviour were seen in the 1980s, those that were 'typical' for today's grandparents and parents. At the same time, these same generations have either sincerely, or with duplicity, attacked all attempts to give a new dimension to the elements of folk culture⁵⁰. If, therefore, we once again look at cultural heritage through the prism of Ossowski's concept, then

⁴⁹ See, for example, *Kultura wsi w regionie*, Toruń, 1997; *O kulturze wsi*, Toruń, 1997; or *Regionalne towarzystwa kultury wobec nowych wyzwań*, Ciechanów, 2000.

⁵⁰ Examples of this can be found, among others in discussions about folk culture and the trend of *disco polo*, which was a complex sociological and cultural phenomenon; I write about this, among others, in *Wprowadzenie do podstaw teorii wychowania*, Toruń, 1997. It is enough to recall the reaction of adults, in contrast to the fascination of young people, with folk inspirations, for example in the works of the late Grzegorz Ciechanowski. At the same time, this same generation of adults is fascinated with contemporary expressions of folk culture of other ethnic groups: the Romani, country music, the music and dance of Latin American cultures, etc.

we cannot be surprised by the duplicated-since inherited-negative attitude toward the output of Polish culture. We can present many more examples of this, especially if we expand the scope of the concept of culture and remind the adult generation how many products were deemed “bad, because Polish” (importantly, the word “Polish” here was used much more often than “communist”), and at the same time “good, because foreign”.

With this last example, it is quite easy to shift to another area of cultural heritage, to a fascination not so much with Western European culture, but with the culture (a concept understood at all times in its broadest sense) of America. After all, for at least two, maybe even three generations, the fascination with America has belonged to acceptable patterns of behaviour among the Poles, and, as such, has taken on many faces. The “Americanisation” of behaviour and behavioural patterns was regarded as appropriate regardless of ideological or political leanings. Among those Americanised were party comrades, parish priests, as well as average citizens.

At the same time, a pro-American attitude was seen as a manifestation of disobedience toward the system and the authority. This is just one example but, in my opinion, it clearly underlines that the fascination with (both ‘high’ and ‘low’) American culture has become part of the cultural heritage handed down to the modern generation of young Poles. In the face of accelerating processes of transformation, or the hidden systemic revolution with which we had to deal in the 80s and 90s – and with all the technological extensions that, as Hall writes, have gotten out of hand – adults have been unable to create filters for intergenerational transmission. It could be said somewhat trivially that, at this point, the adults have passed on a certain range of behavioural patterns to their heirs, only to tell them that these behaviours were wrong. Escaping into the museum of Polish cultural heritage, these adults have failed to ask themselves how the patterns of behaviour seen in members of the young generation developed. Evil, as I wrote earlier, is once again anonymous (blame television, the Internet, etc.).

There is one final, equally important issue raised by Ossowski, which is the will to inherit. To a certain extent, unlike biological heritage, cultural heritage depends on the will of those who receive it. The

choice of individuals from whom we wish to receive cultural heritage also depends on the will of the recipients. At the same time, the group designates those from whom the individual should receive a certain scope of cultural heritage; this appointment takes place according to the rules adopted by the given group. Undoubtedly, in every culture such selected group are the individual's ancestors; above all, they are the family.

The family and its role in the transmission of tradition and cultural heritage is a comprehensive issue, which, on the one hand, cannot be omitted, and, on the other hand, is impossible to analyse due to the assumptions of the present article. Numerous theoretical and empirical studies have been published in the field of social sciences on the various functions of the family, including educational and culture-forming ones, as well as their contemporary transformations. These also include regional education and the transmission of cultural heritage, etc.⁵¹ Hence, I will limit myself here only to a brief discussion of the issue.

One important element in these considerations here is that the family brings its offspring into the world of meanings. Here I will once again draw on the words of Leon Dyczewski: "man lives as if in a double world: in one which he perceives and senses, which exists independently of him, beyond him, and in one that he creates himself, which exists in the form of names, concepts, definitions, divisions, connections – this is the world of meanings. Getting to know the world of meanings is the basis, and the key to getting to know the world and oneself"⁵².

It is therefore difficult to overestimate the importance of family in the transmission of tradition and/or cultural heritage. It must be un-

⁵¹ I will limit myself to only two collections of studies devoted to this issue containing plenty of bibliographic references. I have in mind *Rodzina. Młodzież. Regionalizm*, ed. A. Kociszewski, A.J. Omelaniuk, W. Pilarczyk; Ciechanów, 2000, as well as *Edukacja regionalna młodzieży w rodzinie, szkole i środowisku*; ed. A. Kociszewski et al., Ciechanów, 2001.

⁵² L. Dyczewski, *Rola rodziny w tworzeniu, przekazie i zakorzenieniu w kulturze narodowej*, In: *Rodzina. Młodzież. Regionalizm*, ed. A. Kociszewski, A.J. Omelaniuk, W. Pilarczyk; Ciechanów, 2000, pp. 19–36.

derscored, however, that parents and family members perform their culture-creating functions how they themselves see fit; as Dyczewski remarks, they are, in a special way, free⁵³. If we also consider the topics and reflections presented above, when strengthened by political and ideological factors, this freedom takes the form of an unrestricted freedom based on slogans and clichés. One might wonder whether, given this function, anyone considers the parents' competences in the same way as one does for teachers or pedagogues. Many political and ideological illusions require us to believe that we do not have to.

It is not my place to judge these matters one way or another. However, I want to point out that given the aforementioned understanding of cultural heritage, which was not taken into account by hundreds of my adults interlocutors, it cannot come as a surprise that, along with other elements of the cultural legacy, many questionable behaviours and attitudes have snuck in. A negative attitude toward the most intimate space enclosed by some architectural structures is, after all, creating a negative attitude toward the space of the family, the space of home. The fascination with Americanisation also includes the loosening of intra-family ties, so limiting internal diversity in terms of positions and roles, as well as causing the avoidance of assigning meanings. In all of this, there is one more paradox. This is the principle that children between the ages of 3–8 years most strongly exhibit the greatest cognitive abilities, so building foundations that will shape their attitudes toward the world, themselves and others; although this is very well-known and emphasised by psychologists and pedagogues, it seems to enter into parents' consciousness only selectively⁵⁴.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁵⁴ What convinces me of this are not just the interviews I conducted in connection with this interesting research area. I have also, at times very personal, knowledge and experience that this period is trivialized by many parents who assume that many matters and phenomena are beyond the grasp of a child this age. This is true, but we also know that during this period the child builds at least some basic constructions. This knowledge comes from conversations with respondents, my students from various forms of education, as well as many pedagogues and parents whom I know personally.

Both in my interlocutors' responses, as well as in the literature on the subject, the term 'cultural heritage' is used in two ways: both instead of and together with the term 'tradition'. Jerzy Szacki's attempts at organising this term were necessary because of its ambiguity and, above all, due to its universal use in the social sciences. Owing to its scope, the importance of this concept is emphasised by almost all cultural researchers. The term 'tradition' is used "to describe and explain the more or less unchanged repetition of the structure of behaviours and thought patterns for several generations or for long periods of time in individual societies (having more or less distinct territories and populations derived from one ethnic trunk) and groups with legal status, as well as in regions that include several territorially separate societies that constitute a unit in so far as they have a common culture and, thus, common traditions"⁵⁵.

Szacki's analysis enables us to distinguish three aspects of tradition understood in the context of cultural heritage: heritage as such; the transmission of heritage; and the attitude toward the past and its heritage at the level of the group. As Szacki writes, "The first notion of tradition that we find in the literature can be called a functional one: the Centre of interest is often the act of transferring from generation to generation of such or other, mostly spiritual, goods of a given community. the second term is called the objective one, because it is connected with the shift in the researcher's attention to how these goods are transferred, what kind of goods are they, what is transferred. The third concept we can call subjective; in the foreground we find the given generation's relation to the past, its consent for inheritance, or protests against it"⁵⁶.

Józef Burszta also takes up a similar position, writing that "tradition is all the heritage from the past, material and immaterial, existing in the past or at a given moment in life, or taken from the past for

⁵⁵ E. Shils, *Tradycja*; In: *Tradycja i nowoczesność*, ed. J. Szacki, Warsaw, 1984, p. 33.

⁵⁶ J. Szacki, *Tradycja. Przegląd problematyki*, Warsaw, 1971, pp. 97–98. See also by the same author *Tradycja*; w: *Encyklopedia Kultury Polskiej XX wieku. Pojęcia i problemy wiedzy o kulturze*; ed. A. Kłoskowska; Wrocław, 1991, pp. 205–217.

the benefit of a specific community or group of people, appropriately valued due to its origin, hence selectively transmitted to the following generations”⁵⁷.

Ryszard Kantor⁵⁸ draws here our attention to the important thread, also emphasised by many other authors, which is that the attitude toward tradition is the key to understanding the mechanism of its selection, understanding why these or other elements of heritage gain recognition in the human community and persist in the current reality. In my opinion, Ossowski also points to this aspect throughout the entirety of his study. According to him, this relationship is expressed by means of specific muscular and psychological reactions, which are simultaneously components of cultural heritage, passed on to successors, to subsequent generations.

The regionalists that I have studied did not notice this aspect in searching for anonymous agents responsible for the not-quite-true interpretation of the behaviour of today’s young generation as a lack of respect for tradition and cultural heritage. We could ask the following question: what kind of an attitude towards tradition and cultural heritage has been passed on by the adults to their successors? The issue here is not only, or not at all, about overthrowing monuments in honour of the Soviet Army, monuments to Lenin, etc. We could even overlook the destruction of Jewish and evangelical cemeteries in the name of whatever (urban development, road construction, housing developments, etc.). Among the many other examples there is also an attitude toward nature: the Vistula, the Tatras, the Baltic Sea.

In concluding this discussion of cultural heritage, it is fitting to add, or even emphasise, a few other small, but important and often overlooked, points. The power of tradition or cultural heritage is not embedded in any of the so-called objective values. As Ossowski wrote, “everything to which we attribute cultural value has it only as a result of the reflections of the personalities of people who understand it in

⁵⁷ J. Burszta, *Kultura ludowa kultura narodowa*, Warsaw, 1974, p. 342.

⁵⁸ R. Kantor, *Rola rodziny w przekazywaniu tradycji regionalnych*; In: *Rodzina. Młodzież. Regionalizm*, ed. A. Kociszewski, A.J. Omelaniuk, W. Pilarczyk; Ciechanów, 2000, p. 38.

their own particular way”⁵⁹. Thus, the power of tradition is embedded in people whose dynamic attitudes toward the past continually subject tradition (cultural heritage) to verification, turning it into, as E. Shils puts it, both part of the mechanism of endurance and of the mechanism of change⁶⁰. The essence of tradition, as Kantor writes, “is its ubiquity; the fact that modern man, though he rarely realises it in full, is immersed in the past”⁶¹.

One cannot fail to see, and thus not be warned against seeing, the consequences of narrowing the concepts of tradition and cultural heritage to a size comfortable enough for adults (I am referring here to the regionalists that I have researched, teachers). Referring to history, and to the history handed down to the youth, Stefan Czarnowski has made these, still pertinent, observations: “Today we demand from [history, perhaps also tradition -auth.] to genetically explain for us the present, but many historians [and regionalists –auth.] and all history curricula pose before it other tasks, moral tasks and tasks meant to shape the young psyche toward worship of antiquity, love for it, “understanding” of it, in the sense of the ability to experience it. ... Nevertheless, such a justifying past, psychologizing and moralising history is a social function, leading to the such a shape of the psyche as is needed by the ruling class”⁶².

And yet, it was also Czarnowski who noticed that “the present does not lose its rights even in the most traditionalist group. We are constantly changing our attitudes toward antiquity, still working on its transformation into the present. For antiquity lasts only as the present, and the present is a transformed, updated antiquity, and a nascent future”⁶³.

⁵⁹ S. Ossowski, *Z zagadnień psychologii społecznej*, In: *Dzieła*, vol. III, Warsaw, 1971, pp. 11–12.

⁶⁰ Quoted in R. Kantor *Rola rodziny...*, op.cit., p. 39.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² S. Czarnowski, *Kultura*, Warsaw, 1948, 3rd ed., p. 196.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 197.

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