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## Why do we reject the wisdom from the past? Reflections on the practical dimension of values in historical education

### Abstract

In times of rapid changes and large amounts of information, a lot of people, especially the young, attach no importance to the past. This is despite the fact that historical education develops intellectually and spiritually, building the identity of the individual and the nation and helps to understand problems of the present. Historical education is the totality of the various elements of education and knowledge which is connected with the transfer of achievements of our ancestors and the evolution of attitudes. In historical education these values occupy an important place. History allows us to understand the behaviour of other people, their emotions and needs. It is very important in history to respect norms and principles of tolerance and democracy. The values of historical education build the authority of and respect for rulers, reinforce a sense of connectedness with one's homeland, the place of birth and residence. Historical education teaches young people values such as responsibility for their actions, it mobilizes them to work for their environment and creates the need for role models and figures of authority figures. We should remember that the education of young people in history classes helps them function in the modern times and surrounding reality. A history teacher should implement the students to participate in the modern world by showing and shaping the educational values of well thought-out and accurately matched examples from the past to the age of the students. These issues, based on the statements of valued researchers, are addressed in the presented article.

**Key words:** society, values, attitudes, historical education

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## Introduction

The eminent French historian, co-founder of the *Annales* school, Marc Bloch, wrote in *The Historian's Craft* that "Misunderstanding of the present is the inevitable consequence of ignorance of the past" (Bloch 1953: 43). At the same time, when the first edition of Bloch's book appeared, in 1940, when Luftwaffe airplanes bombed London and other English cities, there was a debate over the need to reduce the English budget, and most ministers almost without discussion wanted to limit spending on culture and education to help war production, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill allegedly questioned "Then what would we be fighting for?". Also words of the Mexican historian Carlos Pereyra come from the first half of the last century. When he was asked "Why do we need history?" – he answered without hesitation - "Whoever does not refer to historical knowledge can't answer any questions about the present day". We referred to these statements, agreeing, among others with the theses of Piotr Majewski's lecture from 2016, in order to once again try to draw attention to the role and importance of historical education in its broadest possible perspective. And we do this because we are sad to state that these universal statements, which the vast majority of historians agree with, are unfortunately less and less accepted by the opinion of modern societies. This applies to both European nations that are closest to us, and societies on other continents. Unfortunately for those people, learning about the past, at the stage of school history education, is an impractical occupation. As a result young people especially are not very eager to learn history at school and rarely choose it as a field of study.

The problem raised does not give peace to historians. And it is hard to be surprised. But at the same time, the opinions they draw, in terms of the causes of the phenomenon and its possible consequences, are no longer the same. We will present two of these opinions here. The first of these are the observations and opinions about the British historical education model in the book by Niall Ferguson *Civilization. The West and the rest*. Ferguson, an author known in Poland thanks to the best-seller book *The Ascent of Money* published in 2010, began his lecture in *Civilization*, probably not by accident, with the statement that today people pay too little attention to the dead and make a false choice of the future by rejecting the past (Fergusson 2011: XVIII–XIX).

The professor of political and economic history at the University of Oxford, Harvard and New York also stated that "For roughly thirty years, young people at Western schools and universities have been given

the idea of a liberal education, without the substance of historical knowledge. They have been taught isolated ‘modules’, not narratives, much less chronologies. They have been trained in the formulaic analysis of document excerpts, not in the key skill of reading widely and fast. They have been encouraged to feel empathy with imagined Roman centurions or Holocaust victims, not to write essays about why and how their predicaments arose” (Fergusson 2011: XIX). Later in the text Ferguson draws attention to one more serious problem when he writes that: “Thanks to an educationalists’ fad that elevated ‘historical skills’ above knowledge in the name of ‘New History’ – combined with the unintended consequences of the curriculum-reform process – too many British schoolchildren leave secondary school knowing only unconnected fragments of Western history: Henry VIII and Hitler, with a small dose of Martin Luther King, Jr.” (Fergusson 2011: XVIII). The argument which he invokes is the statement that: “There are multiple interpretations of history, to be sure, none definitive – but there is only one past. And although the past is over, for two reasons it is indispensable to our understanding of what we experience today and what lies ahead of us tomorrow and thereafter. First, the current world population makes up approximately 7 per cent of all the human beings who have ever lived. The dead outnumber the living, in other words, fourteen to one, and we ignore the accumulated experience of such a huge majority of mankind at our peril. Second, the past is really our only reliable source of knowledge about the fleeting present and to the multiple futures that lie before us, *only one* of which will actually happen” (Fergusson 2011: XVIII–XIX). All this is based on the observation of the model of education of young Britons. Not only from the perspective of the scientist, but also the father of four school-age children. Ferguson's opinion is naturally only one of many voices that come to Poland from the West about the condition of modern historical education. But this voice is important and opinion-forming. Will it turn out to be real? Time will tell.

Ferguson's remarks, although important, are not revealing. It is enough to quote, and this is the second of the announced opinions, the words of the Polish historian Janusz Tazbir who at the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century publicly asked the question: Will history be needed by his fellow citizens in this century, when in Western Europe, to which Poland is becoming so similar, the interest in old centuries is decreasing (Tazbir 2007: 85). Unlike Ferguson, however, Tazbir suggested that one should not be too afraid of declining interest in history, because, as he emphasized, experience “(...) seems to indicate that the happier nation is, the less it looks back to the past” (Tazbir 2007: 1). The difference in the assessment of the described phenomenon, as you can see, was very clear.

## Values in teaching history

For many years in the didactics of history a number of the goals of teaching this subject have stood out: cognitive, educative, ideological, philosophical and propaganda-political as well as ideological-educational, sometimes also referred to as social. The task of the latter in historical education is to specify the intended changes in the system of values and attitudes of students. We encounter them every time when we refer to universally accepted values, such as humanism, tolerance or democracy (Bieniek 2009: 13). This is because man as a human being is not subject only to natural and social laws, but also to the laws of values.

At this point, it is essential to point to the culturalist theoretical perspective of the Polish researcher and professor Stanisław Pietraszko, the founder of the first academic field of cultural studies at the University of Wrocław in 1972, for which the sphere of values was crucial in developing his own theory of culture.

The theory of culture of Professor Pietraszko captured the research subject as a relatively autonomous sphere of human life - no longer as a state of consciousness, a psychic sphere or belonging to social life. It has become reality in behaviors and products, it manifests in ideas and thoughts. "Its ontic status is not physical or material, not mental, but relational and structural" (Pietraszko 1992: 5). And most importantly, culture in this approach was to be a way of life for people which relies on the relationship of this life to values. Importantly, his theory was axiological in a descriptive, not a normative sense.

Admittedly, this cultural theory was subjected by the author himself to subsequent criticism, and in Wrocław academic cultural studies it was basically abandoned, but still, as Barbara Fotyga points out - as long as it is used and verifiable in empirical research - it is not only a perfect and valuable source of inspiration, but also indicates a strong relationship that takes place between meaning and value (Fatyga 2017: 31). These theories not only distinguished cultural studies from the other humanities, pointing to the relative autonomy of the sphere of culture, but also established the theory of culture in the world of values.

Unfortunately, the issue of values in historical education is not particularly popular with historians, methodologists, didactics and history teachers themselves (Maternicki, Majorek, Suchoński 1994: 137; Rulka 2004: 413). This situation seems so strange and incomprehensible that in the didactics of history shaping the system of students' values with the help of historical knowledge was and is appreciated, and the object of historical investigation itself is filled with values (Kula 1958: 146;

Zielecki 2007: 143). In short, one cannot understand past generations – social groups, national groups and individuals – without asking questions and seeking answers about their value systems. Seeking effective tools to get to know, describe and translate into historical school education, historians are particularly keen to use the sociological concept of values, mainly because it strongly emphasizes the historical volatility of social values (Maternicki, Majorek, Suchoński 1994: 137). Also the very term “value”, having no single, strictly defined meaning and being variously understood, causes many problems to historians and educators. Sociology turns out to be helpful with the definition proposed by Jan Szczepański, in which we read that we should name “a value”: “any material object, idea or institution, real or imagined object, in relation to which individuals or collectives take an attitude of respect, ascribe an important role in life, and feel a strive to achieve it like compulsion. Values are those objects that provide individuals and groups with a mental balance, give satisfaction, striving for them or achieving them, give people a sense of well-fulfilled duty or which are necessary to maintain the inner cohesion of the group, its strength and importance among other groups” (Szczepański 1963: 54; Jałowiecki 1976: 213). Janusz Rulka described the value as a trait or set of features appropriate to a person or thing, constituting its qualities that are valuable to people. He also stressed that the concept of values is characterized by ambiguity, and in Polish conditions, universal values come from Judaeo-Christian sources (Decalogue) and Mediterranean culture – Greek and Roman. From the first we owe the introduction and dissemination of such basic values as – truth, goodness and beauty (Rulka 1999: 412).

The “truth” mentioned among the primal values is an extremely important element in the educational process. Education in the truth is of particular importance, but at the same time difficult because of the possible manipulation of the past in the course of historical education (Wojdon 2018: 5). That is why it is essential that the teacher brings the student to the truth, helping them to discover it and to be guided by the truth in everyday life. Historians and history educators during the inter-war period spoke about the issues of respecting historical truth in historical education. For example, Wanda Moszczeńska emphasized that “scientific truth and its inviolability are no longer even a goal, but a basic condition for all teaching” (Moszczeńska 1931: 23). A similar opinion was expressed several years later by Ewa Maleczyńska, who pointed out that “Truth in teaching history is the basic element of education” (Maleczyńska 1937: 14). The same issue was raised by Jerzy Maternicki in 1968, who wrote that the basic purpose of historical education can

only be realized if historical truth is recognized in school as the prime value (Maternicki 1968: 41), and at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Andrzej M. de Tchorzewski, who stressed that the truth lies at the base of each educational process, which can be understood as an action aimed at generating desired changes in the student's behavior, dispositions and the whole personality under the influence of learning and mastering knowledge. For this reason, truth is treated as the basis of the process whose essence is the creation of conditions for the young person to learn the basic truths belonging to natural law, established law and absolute law. The learning of these rights serve in the educational process, to a special degree, the history lessons during which (in a free and democratic state) the content is transmitted according to the actual situation. This means that one of the most important tasks of historical education is to consistently refer to truth-based thinking. As Tchorzewski quoted: "The basic feature of thinking towards the truth is in each case intellectual activity (...). It is indispensable to man especially in periods of great changes, because thanks to it he can better understand, evaluate, accept or reject what changes bring with them as a result of opposition to the existing order" (Tchorzewski 1999: 24).

At this point it should be recalled that Jerzy Maternicki is also the author of the definition of historical truth commonly adopted by the didactics of history. In the proposed approach, we read that historical truth is "(...) every historical assertion, as well as every sequence of these assertions, consistent with the historical reality model that can be constructed on the basis of an existing source database, in a way that respects the generally accepted principles of research conduct, as well as the requirements of the scientific history workshop" (Maternicki 1999: 33).

The quoted opinions and definitions clearly indicate that the individual grows into the world of values gradually, and apart from many factors, the process of education plays a particularly important role. In this context, the significance of history, broadly including also school historical education, which is not only a science of values, but above all an expressive means for disseminating values, should be particularly appreciated. What is particularly important, the luminaries of sociology also have an awareness of this state of affairs. Jerzy Szacki, in his work devoted to tradition, stressed that history provides legitimation of values approved by the society and imposes specific behavior patterns and enforces their application. Hence, he derived the origin of historical knowledge, which was to be distinguished as an area of social consciousness that is a treasury of values created a long time ago and, from

the point of view of certain groups, should be preserved for posterity (Szacki 1971: 246).

In the didactics of history, a group of values which should be at the center of interest of every history teacher stands out, noting at the same time that this sentence is burdened with a certain risk, because the world of values is inherently subjective and is the subject of numerous discussions and disputes. The author of the first of the mentioned proposals is Jerzy Maternicki, who stated that the highest value for man is the human himself and deduced from it the conclusion that in the process of teaching history everything that brings together different nations and states should be more strongly emphasized, not that which divides them. School history should, in this context, facilitate the understanding of other cultures, and thus bring the world of their values closer to our world of values. It should also warn young people about the harmfulness of prejudices and the need for tolerance, with the exception of destructive forces that pose threats to the world.

Another value, which the cited historian pointed out, should be the saturation of historical education of Polish youth with elements of state thought. In the system of values of many Poles, the Catholic Church also takes a high priority. It is understood as a community of believers and at the same time an institution of religious and social life. Therefore, the quoted researcher, emphasized that within the framework of school historical education the role of the Church and the values transmitted by it must be raised, because "There was a time when this fact was negated or shamefully kept silent, undoubtedly with a significant detriment to youth's historical and social education" (Maternicki, Majorek, Suchoński 1994: 139).

As the most useful in historical education Janusz Rulka proposed in turn a typology of values presented by Roman Ingarden and modified by Andrzej Grzegorzczak, which distinguishes cognitive, moral, aesthetic and ontological values (related to being). The same researcher pointed out however, that from a psychological and sociological point of view, the division into declared, recognized and felt values (which in every human are developed to varying degrees) is very important (Rulka 1999, 413).

In the classification proposed in the academic textbook *Introduction to the didactics of history* published in 2007, its author Alojzy Zielecki stressed that although values are subject to classification, their criteria are very diverse. As the most distinguished, he listed the values that are: declared, recognized and felt. He also pointed out that the valuation of events, phenomena and historical processes is supported

by emotional processes (Zielecki 2007: 143). In this context, we must remember that although the concept of “a value” generally has a positive connotation, each value is accompanied by its anti-value. For example: truth – falsehood, freedom – enslavement, democracy – totalitarianism. Other scholars, in turn, pointed out that the primary task of historical education should be to create universal values among its participants. They recognized humanity, which is as a source of both primate and derivative values, as a universal value. To the primate values they included: bioethical, cognitive, moral and aesthetic. Describing the derivatives, they emphasized that they exist only in the anthroposphere as part of a whole, in which they are reinterpreted at the moment of the validation of the existing world (Denek 1994: 27; Gołaszewska 1990: 129–130).

The didactics of history emphasize that the evaluation process is revealed most in students when they are involved and have an emotional attitude to the known historical value, that is, they accept and approve it or criticize and reject it as contrary to their own system of values. In the first case, this usually leads to the inclusion of successively learned values in the system owned by the student. This, in turn, may lead to its reconstruction. And that is what shaping the value system of school youth is all about, understood as the educational goal of teaching history. It is desirable that the changes taking place in this way have a positive character and are socially accepted, because values succumbing to the student's awareness of generalization manifest themselves in a general attitude towards life (Zielecki 2007: 144).

Janusz Rulka pointed to the problems mentioned above in 1999 when he wrote that in the conditions of the disappearance of the external enemy, which occurred with the beginning of the system transformation period (which in itself was positive and rare in the history of Poland), school historical education lost, to a large extent, the opportunity to educate the value system based on the central concept of patriotism. This circumstance, as he emphasized, should have led historians, educators, methodologists and history teachers to take up the issue of values in historical education (Rulka 1999: 7). A similar opinion was also expressed by Andrzej M. de Tchorzewski, who emphasized that the serious problem of contemporary school history education in Poland is its detachment from the need to seek answers to fundamental existential questions such as: Who am I? What is the world to which I belong and which I co-create?; What is my place and role in this world?; What am I searching for?; What is the purpose of my various activities? The questions mentioned in the text have, in fact, always intrigued young people. It was no

different also in the period of changes which were initiated in Poland in 1989. It was at that time pointed out that in the world of mixed concepts, norms and unstable systems, they gained a special meaning (Jędrychowska 1990).

Such a situation means that many young people are, in a satisfactory way, mastering the conceptual material, e.g. the factography necessary to pass a test in history, but has a serious problem with writing a short historical essay in which they will show how the values passed in the course of school historical education may affect their daily lives. And this in turn is related to their functioning in the local, regional, national, state or supranational community, such as the European Union (Tchorzewski 1999: 21).

The possibility of functioning in such broader, modern structures is greatly influenced by the students' learning a tolerant attitude and the attitude of a democratic teacher who should be able to convey constructive models of interpersonal communication to them. As Dorota Anna Michałowska notes, in the realities of teaching in Poland, the teacher has too little time to pursue content that goes beyond the current core curriculum. Only in the case of ethics teachers, and only those of them with a pro-democratic attitude, is there a balance in devoting time to knowledge, skills, teaching democratic attitudes, critical thinking and communicative competence of pupils. The goals of ethics lessons concern education and upbringing equally: both the student's knowledge and cognitive abilities, and social competences, including strengthening interpersonal and intercultural tolerance (Michałowska 2013: 114).

The history taught at school, how often you can read in the studies of history educators, is based on values to a greater extent than the scientific narrative. This is determined by its character and the didactic function performed. According to Jerzy Maternicki "If history has to teach something, instill desirable values in young people, shape their attitudes, what it is expected to do, it can't give up the expressing opinions on the past events" (Maternicki 2004: 415). As much as possible, the valuation should be the result of the student's own work. By encouraging students to form their own assessments the teacher of history must however remember that it is very important that students should disclose and specify their assessment criteria and use substantive arguments. This approach is a necessary condition for raising students in a spirit of respect for the truth – for people who will not use emotional arguments. Historical education in school practically during every lesson creates situations that affect the upbringing of a young person. It is important for students to realize how many factors and conditions, both substantive and non-formal, influence the formulated

assessments in this process. Therefore particular caution is recommended in the case of assessments referring to contemporary history, since many of them are dependent on the current political situation (Maternicki 2004: 416). At this point, however, opinions of some historians should be noted, the position of which was expressed by Wojciech Wrzosek saying that in shaping of historical thinking, and thus also the transmission of educational values, a much more important role than historical education plays “spontaneous participation in culture”. The quoted historian claims that the basic image of historical thinking is shaped in a spontaneous way in culture, and institutionalized historical education in a very limited extent violates this “mental baggage”, even consolidates it, and does not change it. (Wrzosek 1999: 11–13).

In order to educate and prepare students for living in a democratic society, the teacher should refer to various spheres of human life: cultural, social, economic and economic as well as political. The more often the teacher refers to current events, the more it can affect the student's involvement in various spheres of social life and can have a greater impact on developing students' awareness related to belonging to different spheres of social functioning of the individual. The research carried out by Dorota Anna Michałowska shows that in Poland they do it uncommonly (two or three times a month) and focus mainly on issues related to the immediate environment, that is what is happening in the region, in Poland and in Europe, but less often they talk about what is happening outside of Europe, in the world (Michałowska 2013: 109–111).

Intentional changes in the emotional sphere of students, their attitudes and the system of values are the basic educational goals set for school historical education. The most important changes in the student value system that we are interested in can be triggered by the appropriate selection of the content of education. As emphasized by Alojzy Zielecki “Value in relation to the educational purposes of historical education can be understood as a trait of a man or an idea, related to a person, his needs, aspirations, interests, or as a person or thing in the sphere of feelings and spiritual and material needs” (Zielecki 2007: 143).

## Values and the core curriculum

The issue of values to be instilled in students is comprehensively presented in the preamble to the core curriculum of 2018 (Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego z komentarzem. Szkoła ponadpodstawowa. Historia 2018: 10–11). In order to analyze this topic in the

2012 core curriculum (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2012), reading the entire document is more effective. And to summarize the 2017 regulation, we analyzed both the basis (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2017) and the preamble to this basis (Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego z komentarzem. Szkoła podstawowa. Historia 2017).

In the regulation of 2012, which refers to teaching history at primary school level, key values such as honesty, responsibility, perseverance, self-esteem, respect for other people are listed (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2012: 10). It is worth emphasizing that the preparation of children to learn about more abstract concepts is to emphasize from the beginning of school education on the ability to distinguish between good and evil in contact with peers and adults (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2012: 12, 14). The school's tasks related to teaching the subject 'history and society' mention the formation of attitudes among students in civic engagement, social sensitivity by perceiving manifestations of injustice and responding to them, responsibility, a sense of bond with the local, national, European and global community, tolerance for a different opinion, behavior, habits and beliefs, and opposing manifestations of discrimination (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2012: 64).

The authors of the 2017 core curriculum for primary school aim to introduce students to the world of values, including sacrifice, cooperation, solidarity, altruism, patriotism and respect for tradition, strengthening the sense of individual, cultural, national, regional and ethnic identity (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2017: 11). They indicate that education is to promote the development of students' civic, patriotic and social attitudes. The school's task is to strengthen the sense of national identity, attachment to national history and tradition, to engage in the school and local community, as well as volunteering. The school is to raise a child in a sense of acceptance and respect for the dignity of others (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2017: 14). The importance of instilling such values as patriotism, truth, justice, goodness, beauty, freedom, solidarity, responsibility, courage, criticism and tolerance is emphasized. Emphasis is also placed on awakening love for the homeland, respect and attachment to the history of one's own nation and its achievements, culture and native language. Equally important is the formation of ties with the home country, civic awareness, attitudes of respect and responsibility for one's own state, strengthening the sense of dignity and national pride (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2017: 22). Therefore, it is worth emphasizing that the preamble to

the core curriculum indicates that the school provides tools for self-expanding knowledge, but with the necessary criticism and care for the accuracy of historical communication, without of mindless apology and criticism (Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego z komentarzem. Szkoła podstawowa. Historia 2017: 10).

In the preamble to the core curriculum from 2018 (Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego z komentarzem. Szkoła ponadpodstawowa. Historia 2018: 10), the hypothesis is put forward that freedom is the supreme value of Poles. It also directly mentions the importance of creating a European community of values. However, when specific educational goals that should be pursued during historical education are mentioned, we find among them: love for the homeland, attachment to the tradition and history of one's own nation, shaping bonds with the country and civic awareness, an attitude of respect and responsibility for one's own state, a sense of dignity and national pride – no longer taking into account the European context (Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego z komentarzem. Szkoła ponadpodstawowa. Historia 2018: 11). In the 2012 core curriculum, the community is implied rather narrowly - emphasis is placed on native history. Thinking about community in supranational categories and about the values that are used to build democratic communities is contained in the core curriculum for lessons in 'wiedza o społeczeństwie [Social Studies]'. The student is supposed to, for example, justify that you can be simultaneously Polish, European and a member of the world community, they also learn the values that are the foundations of modern democracy – and discuss the concepts of freedom, equality and justice (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2012: 151). The same is true in the 2017 edition (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2017: 107).

The analyzed core curricula mention that knowledge derived from the past should serve the student to better understand the mechanisms of the present. The authors of the document from 2018 suggest looking for rules from the past, as if they could be directly placed in the realities of modernity. This entry suggests that the rules that govern the world have not changed throughout history. It is therefore quite conservative and affirmative thinking about the past and our history. The text from 2012 says that we should pay attention to those threads from the past that may become currently relevant to us, and which were secondary from the perspective of the era to which they belong. This approach to the past is a historical look at the mechanisms that govern the world.

The preamble to the 2017 core curriculum on teaching in primary school includes the theme of the idea of freedom – which is 'constantly

present in our history' (Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego z komentarzem. Szkoła podstawowa. Historia 2017: 10). This idea would express the community of values most co-created by Poles.

The 2018 preamble on teaching in high school and profiled technical high school, develops the previous topic and is profiled according to the hypothesis of freedom as the supreme value for Poles. Such thinking gives less freedom in interpreting history, because it is a certain pre-imposed thesis that affects the interpretation of past events – including those that are difficult to assess or evaluate explicitly. Furthermore, the idea of freedom is not more precisely defined in this document, which is why its pursuit can be interpreted differently. The idea of freedom can be defined by juxtaposing, for example, ideas of responsibility and community. Freedom can both combine and divide, can be positive and negative. The core curriculum of 2012 and 2017 do not impose any overriding value, which gives the possibility of a more free interpretation.

## Students' attitudes

The problem of educational values in historical education is closely related to the formation of students' attitudes. The literature on the subject states that knowledge about students' attitudes can be used by a history teacher to design educational goals. As the most frequently shaped attitudes, it is mentioned: patriotic, civic, social, humanistic and humanitarian (Zielecki 2007: 149–158). In the opinion of the didactics of history, this wealth of historical knowledge creates numerous opportunities to create attitudes in the form of historical education goals at all levels / stages of education. School historical education enables students to reveal real attitudes, as well as to react to received and used messages about the past. In this situation, the teacher has the opportunity to observe changes in the personality of individual students on an ongoing basis. The observations indicate that the structure of student attitudes is dynamic, so through appropriately selected historical content and the manner of their transmission, you can influence their character and dynamics. "The direction of these changes – as we read in the study *Introduction to didactics of history* – should give the assumed educational goals of students' historical education" (Zielecki 2007: 149), and the process itself should be permanent and consistently implemented throughout the period of education.

Being aware of all kinds of distortions and manipulations, researchers and specialists in the field of school historical education point out that history has never been fully “deaf to the needs of life”, which combined various goals, including ideological and political ones. This in turn caused that history is considered to be an effective tool of educational influence on students. This leads to imposing on historians, although they usually do it without coercion, the need to evaluate the past, adjudicate what was good and what was wrong. Historians, as J. Maternicki himself pointed out, have been doing it for a long time, but they are not willing to admit to such a charge (Maternicki 2004: 414).

In the discussions on the condition of the school education, for a dozen or so years there has been a problem of explicitly renouncing schools from raising young people and concentrating on just transferring knowledge and training practical skills. Another problem that affects school historical education in the context of developing educational values is the widely recognized and widely described lack of expressive and universally recognized authorities of Polish society.

This problem is related to the influence of postmodern views, propagated for decades, in which the deconstruction of history dominates with its most visible manifestation of discourse about the relativity of truth and other values. Postmodernism, therefore, has no impact on the perception of historically valuable historical figures. And although this does not always bring negative consequences, it often leads to the emergence of cognitive chaos in the minds of young people who may seriously interrupt the lack of values in adult life in building interpersonal relationships in family, regional community, and finally national.

We mean characters whose life could be a model of attitudes and behaviors for young people. There is no lack of such attitudes, but in the media buzz, unfortunately, mainly the heroes of cheap scandals break through, and important and valuable people who work hard, recall their accomplishments in the future. The fact that these hopes are not in vain shows the current popularity of characters like Witold Pilecki, Irena Sendler or Ryszard Siwiec who have been absent for many years in the minds of Poles.

In the context of the above-mentioned conditions of the modern world, it is worth recalling that the human world is a world of values, and history as “learning about people in time”, attempts to discover the system of values of ancient cultures, societies and generations. This activity is necessary for a better understanding of people of the past and for a fuller explanation of the motives of their actions. It is very important to remember that it is forbidden for historians and history teachers to im-

pose on the historical figures the contemporary system of values because values as variables have evolved under the changing conditions of life, philosophical and religious trends, progress of education and many other factors (Maternicki 2004: 413-414). In this context, it is worth noting that nowadays an increasing group of supporters expresses the view that historical cognition is a historian's dialogue with the past in which the contemporary interpreter is the dominant side. This means that historiographical metaphors influence the course of historian's actions, and that he thinks in the way that is valid in his time and culture (Wrzosek 1999: 18).

## The tasks of the History teacher

In an article about the issues of the canon of historical knowledge and the values shaped by school historical education, we want to devote a separate place to defining the conditions that a teacher of this subject must fulfill in order that the didactic process he had could have the chance to meet certain goals. This task will be greatly facilitated by the results of research carried out in the second half of the 1990s at all Polish universities, which then educated history teachers. The work of the team made up of history educators was led by Alojzy Zielecki, and his conclusions clearly indicate that the history teacher, if he is to educate young people, should also have extensive historical knowledge, knowledge of history didactics, and the ability to use knowledge from history of historiography, the ability to analyze the core curriculum, creating history curricula and lesson narration, and to freely navigate the problems of the theory of historical knowledge and history methodology, constantly expand the substantive and didactic interests, understand the necessity to shape students' historical consciousness, be able to create means of controlling historical knowledge pupils, disseminate their own scientific and methodological achievements, treat students as partners participating in the process of education, develop their personality in all its components and improve its own organizational and managerial skills (Zielecki 2007: 370–371).

During the process of shaping the personality of students in the spirit of commonly accepted values, it is important to make teachers aware of history and also to create a number of very important attitudes. Consequently, a history teacher should: understand students' emotions, stimulate them to overcome discouragement and intellectual apathy, be mentally immune in situations giving rise to threats and failures, control their

own emotions during classes, concentrate on one and many tasks, and in the same way in relation to one student and the whole class, i.e. to be able to concentric and divisible attention, strengthen the will to overcome difficulties, focus on tasks, develop the tact and pedagogical culture, enrich the value system and finally accept and respect the basic ethical rules related to the performance profession, i.e. be selfless, just, objective, trustful and discreet. An analysis of this list shows that the task the history teacher begins each day when starting a lesson is not simple. Undoubtedly, however, when they are able to apply to it, then it is the best model of educational values for students. Teachers highly appreciate such teachers when they are at school and they respectfully remember after many years.

In the textbook, published a decade ago, presenting the school dimension of historical education, its authors have included an important issue. Therefore, it is worth to call it *in extenso*: “In the last dozen or so years – as Ewa Chorąży, Danuta Konieczka-Śliwińska and Stanisław Roszak wrote – historical education has undergone revolutionary transformations from the model of a centralized transmission of «knowledge about the world» to the concept of emancipation «teaching for the world». Similarly, historiography, freeing itself from the positivist and processual-quantitative tradition, was increasingly looking for new areas and research methods in the new history of culture, historical anthropology or micro-history. In the course of many educational transformations (Polish and European) one could also hear the postulates of subjecting detailed school disciplines to the primacy of pedagogy and psychology. From the history chairs, there were voices about the need to restore the priority of historical knowledge over pedagogical experiments. Any attempt to appropriate historical education, however, ended in failure. The most prominent historian, erudite and expert on sources can't cope with the process of transferring knowledge, skills, attitudes without knowledge of basic knowledge from developmental psychology or pedagogical principles. The first will allow the student to understand and become subject to the next stages of his intellectual and social development, the second – to understand his own role in the teaching process. In turn, an excellent psychologist and educator, equipped with knowledge about student development and able to apply appropriate teaching techniques, methods and strategies, will remain helpless in the face of historical matter, from which he will have to extract important facts, processes, places of remembrance, discover myths and stereotypes” (Chorąży, Konieczka-Śliwińska, Roszak: 2008: 9). However, the above conditions and transformations do not change the old truth, which says that historical educa-

tion creates a huge field for developing values. And these, in turn, shaped in the course of historical education help us to function in the world. The teacher cannot forget, however, that valuing, and especially assessing characters and events from history, and cannot obscure the most important thing, which is the young person's understanding of the past and its events, phenomena and processes (Maternicki 2004: 414).

## Conclusion

We conclude our deliberations with a reference to the thoughts of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, which he made in his work in 1998, eloquently titled *When we stopped learning from history*. The end of the twentieth century, for a then fifty-year-old, born in Germany, but for many years working at Stanford University, professor of literature, was the time when at least professional historians had to seriously answer the situation in which the claim that *we can learn from history* has lost its power of persuasion. “A serious response – more than just repeating apologetic gestures and discourses – as emphasized by Gumbrecht – would certainly take into account the paradox that books about the past attract more and more readers, and that in most Western education systems history as a subject and discipline is still not at risk or removal, while lecturers, university authorities and people who pay tuition fees, feel that the validating discourses on the functioning of history have become only rigid rituals. Perhaps we would miss their decorative pathos if they disappeared from history textbooks and inaugural talks; maybe we would be sad if the past ceased to be the subject of quiz shows and a point of reference in the rhetoric of some politicians. Nevertheless, in practical situations no one relies on historical knowledge. In the last years of the twentieth century, people no longer consider history as a solid basis for everyday decisions about financial investments, overcoming the crisis in the natural environment, sexual morality or preferences in the field of fashion” (Gumbrecht 2006: 187).

Was Gumbrecht right when he wrote this twenty years ago under the influence of the observation of American society? If anyone has any doubts, we encourage you to visit any bookstore and press room, where shelves are filled with books and periodicals, and then ask any history teacher and academic lecturer of history, if this contributes to the knowledge and understanding of the past of their pupils. It should be restored that the issue of the academic crisis of historiography, with a simultaneous rapid increase in the importance of the so-called alterna-

tive history has recently been referenced in a book about public history (Stobiecki 2018: 31). There are many reasons for this situation, but with this text we would like to draw attention to two of them. The first is a fatal cutting off from the canon, which has always been the basis of intergenerational contact and an extremely important factor in connecting around important ideas. This word sounds like an epithet to many today, because we remember what the great ideologies of the 20th century led to (like the crimes of national socialism and communism). But big ideas are not only evil. If that were the case, our public space would not be filled with schools, museums, libraries, theaters, philharmonics or operas, which, after all, have grown from such ideas and needs. The second, inseparably connected with the canon, is the world of values. They help to educate and shape characters. Escape from these values has become in many schools a form of surrender to the abusive behavior of students. Contemporary “escape from value“ is an “escape from freedom” – carefully described by Erich Fromm in 1941. That is why it is a pity that on the occasion of ongoing discussions about school historical education we usually argue about the nuances of the core curriculum, and lose the field seeing things fundamentally. The construction of the house, as emphasized by the eminent Polish historian Michał Bobrzyński, does not start with ornaments and the roof, but the location of solid foundations, and those in historical education, next to the canon of the most important facts, are primarily the patterns of noble attitudes and values that should accompany every human being all his life.

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szkoły I stopnia, kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły specjalnej przysposabiającej do pracy oraz kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły policealnej (Dz.U. 2017, poz. 356) [za:] <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20170000356/O/D20170356.pdf> (dostęp: 7.04.2020).

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## **Dlaczego odrzucamy wiedzę z przeszłości? Refleksje na temat praktycznego wymiaru wartości w historii**

### **Streszczenie**

W czasach szybkich zmian i dużej ilości informacji wiele osób, zwłaszcza młodych, nie przywiązuje większej wagi do przeszłości. Dzieje się tak pomimo, że edukacja historyczna rozwija intelektualnie i duchowo, budując tożsamość jednostki i narodu oraz pomagając zrozumieć problemy teraźniejszości. Edukacja historyczna to zbiór wielu czynników, które generalnie wiążą się z wykorzystywaniem osiągnięć naszych przodków oraz ewolucją ich postaw. W edukacji historycznej wartości te zajmują ważne miejsce. Historia pozwala nam zrozumieć zachowanie innych ludzi, ich emocje i potrzeby. W historii bardzo ważne jest przestrzeganie norm i zasad tolerancji oraz demokracji. Wartości edukacji historycznej budują autorytet i szacunek, wzmacniają poczucie więzi z ojczyzną, miejscem urodzenia czy zamieszkania. Edukacja historyczna uczy młodych ludzi wartości, takich jak odpowiedzialność za ich działania, mobilizuje do pracy na rzecz środowiska i stwarza potrzebę wzorcowych postaci i autorytetów. Edukacja młodych ludzi na lekcjach historii pomaga im funkcjonować w czasach współczesnych w otaczającej ich rzeczywistości, dlatego też nauczyciele historii powinni wdrażać uczniów do uczestnictwa we współczesnym świecie, pokazując i kształtując wartości edukacyjne. Należy jednak pamiętać, aby przykłady z przeszłości dopasowywać do wieku uczniów. Zagadnienia te porusza niniejszy artykuł, prezentując wypowiedzi cennych badaczy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** społeczeństwo, wartości, postawy, edukacja historyczna