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VALUES – THE CORE OF CULTURE

ABSTRACT Cultural values are formed by a particular community and not individually. Any member of a given community comes across these values and may assume an individual attitude towards them. Discovering values and exploring them is a defining characteristic of a free, thinking, and active individual. In the culture of any society there are values on which there is a general agreement; they are the basis of its identity; actions of social institutions and individuals focus upon them; they create a stimulating environment; their implementation binds society together; they unite what is fragmented and universalize what is individual and temporary. Such values are called central or native values (A. Kłosowska) or higher values (S. Ossowski). They determine the quality of a given society and its cultural specificity. In any culture individuals seek self-fulfilment, but it always happens in the social context. Due to the fact that culture always has both social and individual character, a social group maintains the same culture and at the same time develops it. Each new generation enters the heritage of previous generations and adds something new to it but in compliance with values that have already been provided. Material products and behaviours are subject to constant change, many become forgotten, but values that are the basis for their formation remain and continue to stimulate new actions. This means that culture is a social message and a creation that requires human effort of adhering to what has already been valuable to individuals and society but at the same time creating something new that is in close correlation with the existing heritage. Fidelity to roots “is always creative, ready to descend into the depths, open to new challenges, alert to the ‘signs of the times’ [...] Fidelity to roots means above all the ability to create an organic synthesis of perennial values, confirmed so often in history, and the challenge of today’s world” (JOHN PAUL II 2000: 204). So far, significant changes in individual and social life in the European culture have taken place with the dissemination of the following

values arranged in threes: truth – goodness – beauty; faith – hope – love; freedom – equality – brotherhood. Undoubtedly, they are all spiritual values. The first three values served as the basis for Greek democracy; the next three as the basis for the development of Christian communities; the last three values underline the development of modern international relations where every nation and every state has a guaranteed right to its existence and development but with respect for individual rights. This context raises the question – which triad of values would be most beneficial for today's modern societies? Most certainly the value of solidarity should appear among them because this idea was stated by the social movement that freed societies from the totalitarian structure of Soviet politics. The dynamics of the implementation of this value resulted in the fall of the Berlin Wall and initiated a more complete unification of Europe. Apart from solidarity, two more values should also appear: human dignity and social justice. Therefore, the triad of values that could be the basis for the development of modern society would be: human dignity, justice, solidarity within each society and on an international scale.

Keywords: cultural values; core values; values in modern society

INTRODUCTION

The term 'culture' brings to mind various ideas. Descriptive definitions of culture, created mostly by ethnographers and historians (e.g. Edward Tylor,¹ Maria Bogucka²), mention such constituent elements of culture as language, customs and habits, religious beliefs, rituals, ideas, values, moral norms, laws, forms of social organization, material goods and the process of their production, or educational institutions.

Both sociologists and anthropologists draw attention to the interrelation of cultural elements, their organization and their mutual dependence.³ This prevents cultural anthropologists from reducing the meaning of culture to the mere list of its constituent elements, forcing them to seek their manifestation in every culture. Therefore, a sense of cultural distinctiveness of any society does not depend on the multitude of cultural components or on their originality, but rather on the links between them, their structure, the interconnections and influence of particular elements on one another

¹ "Culture [...] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." TYLOR 1871: 1.

² Maria Bogucka in her analysis of the history of Polish culture sees it as „a group of (material and non-material) human products, socially accepted ways of being and systems of values that are typical of a given era and territory.” BOGUCKA 2008: 8 [translation – Z.S.].

³ This is emphasized by Clyde Kluckhohn in his definition of culture "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups [...]" KLUCKHOHN 1962: 25.

(WHITE/DILLINGHAM 1973), their systematization (OSSOWSKI 1967: 173-193.), the 'cultural order' or the 'axionormative order' (ZNANIECKI 1971: 563-564).

In the semiotic approach, Umberto Eco, continuing the thought of Ferdinand de Saussure, highlights the components and functions of culture⁴. Both signs and meanings are important and used for interpersonal communication; they are inseparably connected with people, and through interpersonal communication they acquire their significance, activate new meanings and are repeatedly introduced in new forms. The formative and creative processes of culture are inseparably interlaced with interpersonal communication. The weakening of social bonds further decreases the value of cultural formation processes and diminishes the continuity of cultural heritage, and as a result no new cultural content of a given society is created. The weakening of social bonds in terms of primary groups (family, neighbours, nation), parents and children, teachers and students, various religious and political groups or social categories could serve as a reason behind the cultural crisis of a given society, a break in its continuity, or the relative scarcity in cultural output in various social groups and in society as a whole.

Although academics have failed to arrive to a single comprehensive definition of culture, some of its features tend to be universally emphasized.

1. Culture is a sphere that is constantly created and recreated by humans. The interplay of cognitive, volitional and emotional powers and human energy constantly expands and enriches the world of culture which, according to Bronisław Malinowski, is essentially an advanced and sophisticated apparatus which helps man cope and adjust nature to his needs. However, man's cultural formation process can be detrimental both to nature and to himself, as the products of such process could destroy nature or make it hostile to man. It is a highly topical issue, which is visible in the establishment of many new environmental organizations that protect nature and natural heritage from the negative influence of culture, especially from the rapidly growing material culture. Man lives in two worlds, the one he is presented with – the natural world, and the one that he creates – the cultural world. The mutual complementary relationship of the two, its incompatibilities and the level of these incompatibilities are all dependent on the values that man chooses and the manner in which he chooses to implement them.

Man always seeks to give a concrete shape to what he meets, experiences and wants. Even the most sublime idea calls for a specific material shape. The value of love should be expressed in a kind gesture, friendly word or a small gift that would remind both parties of the subtle feeling they share. The values such as truth, freedom or justice should be expressed in various artefacts (behaviour, customs, material and spiritual products, law, institutions etc.). Any cultural products are just objectification of

these or other values realized outside of the human body [...]. They persist in such a manner in which they have an objective reality as something permanent, often for a longer period

⁴ According to Umberto Eco, signs are viewed as a means of interpersonal communication or as elements of sign systems.

of time than the duration of an individual human life; they are frequently forgotten, waiting for someone to rediscover them, to revive their system of assessments and standards to which they owe their existence and which was subsequently abandoned or which disappeared with the people who used it (RODZIŃSKI 1989(a): 225).

Culture is a set of values which serve as a direction for human actions and desires and which form the basis for the evaluation of everything that man believes in, wants or does. It gives him the ability to differentiate between good and bad, real and unreal, beautiful and inharmonious. The value orientation category of good and bad belongs strictly to the world of culture and it is not used in relation to nature. In case of nature one can only evaluate to what extent nature serves (or does not serve) man and whether something is functional or non-functional, whereas in the world of culture everything created by man can be interpreted in the categories of good and evil.

2. Culture is inextricably linked to the social aspect of human life. Culture is created and transmitted by a particular social group or community. It always belongs to someone, a specific collective entity. The most natural culture-forming groups include family, ethnic group and nation or religious group, but at the same time specific groups can also create their own culture. Culture provides such groups with means for establishing interpersonal communication in a group but also outside of it. Man lives within the culture he belongs to; he expresses himself in it, which means that he embodies the values shared and implemented by most members of the group (or community) to which he belongs but at the same time he maintains individual consciousness. Therefore, his understanding and realization of these values and may slightly dissent from the general approach.

Values, although permanent, can be variously interpreted and implemented by different individuals, groups and social categories, hence within the same culture some groups are at variance with the larger culture and they are most often referred to as sub-cultures. Polish or American culture establishes peculiar subcategories of culture such as of men and women; the young and the elderly; bank employees and the military; clergy and laymen; members of the Neocatechumenal Way and skinheads; conservatives with national profiles and liberals with cosmopolitan leanings. This cultural diversity is based on different preferences, store of knowledge, experience, living conditions and vision of the past and future of society. The diversity of values and forms of their realization in the same culture ensures its cultural development that springs from internal dynamics. Combining all the above-mentioned features of culture it can be defined as follows: culture is an integrated system of values, psycho-social behaviours and products created and adopted in a social group (community), designed to satisfy human needs and to provide interpersonal communication, all of which are fully understood only in this particular group (community). Assuming such definition of culture, the author of this article deliberates the priority role of culture, types of cultural values and their functions, and as an example discusses a set of Polish cultural values which played a very important role in the past and are still treasured up to this day. Each society has a specific set of values that are particularly important, their implementation is

rewarded, and which is constantly renewed (in various forms), because these values are the basis of identity, continuity and development of society.

1. THE PRIORITY ROLE OF VALUES IN CULTURE

Many anthropologists that try to define the essential elements of culture come to a conclusion that the answer lies in values. According to Heinrich Rickert (RICKERT 1915: 20) “all cultural phenomena contain an embodiment of a recognized value.”⁵ This opinion is shared by Florian Znaniecki (ZNANIECKI 1971), who believes the cultural world is a world of values that are the primary data of human experience, irreducible to any category of natural world. Everything that is perceived as culture is related to these values. According to Andrzej Tysza (TYSZA 2001: 49), they are the “main basis of culture, its most important component and its main frame.” Values are what defines culture, its character and quality. At the same time, culture forces individuals and groups to serve these values. This is the understanding of culture shared by (inter alia) Stefan Czarnowski, Stanisław Ossowski, Antonina Kłosowska or Leszek Korporowicz. Value is automatically assumed to be something positive, but in fact where there is truth there is a lie, where there is justice there is injustice, where a person helps others there is someone who harms them. Therefore, what is perceived as values by some could be seen as anti-values by others. In the culture created by man there are values and anti-values, or in other words, positive and negative values. This does not occur in the world of nature and material beings. The topic of positive and negative aspects of material beings refers to their functionality for humans, that is whether or not they serve their function. In the world of culture negative values (or anti-values) are seen as something that is not conducive to human life and development but rather they lead to its destruction or demise. Therefore, the basis for the evaluation of an individual or collective action is the relation of such action to a human being. The life and development of an individual is the ultimate criterion for distinguishing values and anti-values, thus ultimately culture is human-centred. “Therefore, just as Copernicus taught people to look at Earth by focusing on the Sun, in a similar manner the complex cultural issues should be tackled by focusing on a human first” (RODZIŃSKI 1989(a): 227) or, in the opinion of religious people, on God in whose image and likeness man was created. Culture is thus based upon the belief that a human being is the most precious value of individual and social life. Culture in which anti-values are given equal authority to values becomes inhuman. The most extreme example of such situation occurred in the concentration camps and extermination camps during the totalitarian regimes of Hitler and Stalin. Man is a fundamental and primary point of departure in respect to culture, and, according to Znaniecki, all products are only secondary values (KŁOSKOWSKA 1988: 45, 56). Therefore, every culture is humanistic (or human) with that respect that some cultures are more so than others. Mankind is the content of culture, postulate and objective of both individuals and social groups, and both a result and a consequence of historical

⁵ Translation – Z.S.

processes. In any human activity, more human elements are admired, preserved, transmitted, and, if destroyed, reconstructed; at the same time, any inhuman elements are condemned. This is particularly visible in biographies of significant individuals and in the assessment of artistic and literary works. Shaping the humanity in man, namely the development of those features that are desired by an average person, constitutes the general purpose of culture.

Values form the basis for the formation, continuity and development of each culture. They are essential; in fact, they form the core of culture. Such opinion is shared by the most eminent scholars of culture, many of which use this criterion to make a categorization and division of culture or civilization (understood as a combination of similar cultures) into big forms; each of them constitutes a distinguishable whole. The most popular and well-known concepts in this field were developed by Feliks Koneczny and Samuel P. Huntington. Koneczny on the basis of the dominant values of his contemporary cultures distinguishes Arab, Byzantine, Brahmin, Chinese, Latin, Turanian and Jewish civilizations. Taking into account the value of man and the position he has in a given civilization, Koneczny (KONECZNY 1935) views Latin civilization as superior and has the lowest opinion of Turanian civilization which is dominated by violence and destruction. Over sixty years later, on the basis of values that prevailed in each culture and religion Samuel P. Huntington (HUNTINGTON 2000) distinguished Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western and Latin American civilizations.

Researchers of culture, when they try to assess the quality of cultures, penetrate through most noticeable behaviours and cultural products and seek values that inspired them. However, at present quality is one of the most ambiguous concepts. Undoubtedly, there is a great number of definitions and classifications of values. In the most general sense, according to Adam Rodziński (RODZIŃSKI 1989(b): 42) value is the "worth of just anything; whether for an individual, a group or for everyone it will always be a real worth and not just an implied one that was 'read' incorrectly." What is worth discussing is the cultural understanding of values, accompanied by the philosophical, ethical, psychological and sociological one.⁶ The cultural approach defines value as:

1. Normative and existential judgements (valuing orientations), commonly accepted in a given society, which support the development of an both individual man and society; for example truth and justice form the foundation of a peaceful coexistence (social cohesion); goodness is to be desired and evil is to be avoided; freedom must be protected and defended; human life is the greatest value and should be cherished and not harmed or destroyed in any way; knowledge is a prerequisite for innovation and leads to higher positions in society and as such it should be broadened and improved.

2. Psychological conditions and corresponding behaviours that are prevalent in a given society, for instance the willingness to help others, hospitality, sacrifice for others or the common good, tolerance towards different views and customs, respect for the elderly, patriotism.

⁶ Definitions of values and their classification in terms of sociological and philosophical are discussed by many authors, e.g. MISZTAŁ 1980; MARCZUK 1990; PAWEŁCZYŃSKA 1992; KOWALCZYK 2006; DAKOWICZ 2006; DYCZEWSKI 2009(a): 185-205.

3. Products, historic sites and events which are widespread and widely appreciated. In the Polish society these include for instance the oldest Polish hymn “Bogurodzica” (The Mother of God), the poem “Pan Tadeusz” by Adam Mickiewicz, the Wawel Castle in Krakow, the Jasna Gora Monastery in Czestochowa, the Jagiellonian University, the Catholic University of John Paul II in Lublin, the victory over Teutonic Order in Grunwald in 1410, the Union of Lublin in 1569, the Battle of Warsaw in 1920, the election of Karol Wojtyła as pope, the overthrowing of the communist regime by the Solidarity movement in the 1980s etc. The importance of these cultural artefacts, sites or events is passed on the young generations of Poles in the process of family socialization and education.

4. A general belief popularized in a society that a given system of values, norms or behaviour patterns is important for the functioning of a society, e.g. Christianity, is valuable for Polish society and inextricably associated with it, hence this relationship should be cherished; the Ten Commandments (Decalogue) comprise the basis for both individual and social life; The European Union and Poland’s EU membership is viewed positively.

Such understanding of cultural values is emphasized by their following features:

1. Values in a cultural approach are transcendent in relation to individuals, namely they exist independently of them; 2. they have a super-individual and supra-temporal character, therefore values are universal; 3. they have binding power, hence they fill people with the urge to act in accordance with them.

In the cultural understanding values exist beyond individuals and have both social and individual character. Individuals learn and experience them and either interiorise them or not. If individuals accept values as their own they realize them in their own manner. Cultural values often demand sacrifices and renouncement, yet such acts bring benefits and happiness. An example of such situation is death in defence of the liberty of the fatherland, faith or justice. Ultimately, the valuable does not bring benefits or happiness to individuals, but it is what is valuable that renders happiness and brings benefits. Saint Maksymilian Kolbe was happy to make an exchange for Franciszek Gajowniczek and die of starvation in order to save Gajowniczek’s life, despite paying the highest price for his heroic act. In fact, a great number of people with unbounded enthusiasm and determination defended their national freedom. It is also important to note that Christians repeatedly speak out against killing unborn children even when medical indications and the public are in favour of an abortion, and the abortion is further justified by poor material conditions.

A cultural value may be defined in the following way: it is a socially sanctioned value that is typical of a given culture, interiorized by members of a society and it helps them make choices, directs them to their goals and means for achieving them, and it also strengthens the action in the same sociocultural domain in which it is rooted. An objective criterion of the importance of a cultural value is its place (or role) in a given system of values. A subjective criterion is the place and role of a given value in the life and personality of a concrete individual, i.e. if and to what extent values are factors that affect development of one’s personality.

Assuming such understanding of a cultural value it is also believed that:

1. Not all cultural values are equally important for a society; however, they form a particular hierarchy. Some cultural values are so crucial that in absence of these values a given society would disintegrate or change substantially. Apart from these there is an abundance of other values that function in a society. They can be widespread and popular but they are neither typical nor important. A society would not lose anything from its own character if these values weakened or disappeared. The primary criterion of the hierarchy of cultural values is the extent to which a given value serves the development of a society and its members.

2. Individuals, as well as particular societies appreciate different values at different times. This depends on the awareness of the significance of these values, as well as on current needs and conditions. Therefore, the choice and popularity of values depend on a situational context. For example, in comparison with their ancestors modern people are more aware of their physical health so they can take greater care of it. Moreover, they have a greater respect for work and education.

3. The same values in private life and in public life may be understood and realized differently. Two factors are crucial here: consciousness and external conditions. The same value in different periods of time can be realized fully, partially or even be entirely rejected. In times of the partitions or during the German and Russian occupation, an average Pole did not work productively in the state administration sector or in state enterprises because Poles were convinced that such work would have a deteriorating effect on their own society. Therefore, they often simulated work or even boycotted it. As a result, the occupant came to a conclusion that Poles do not appreciate the value of work, are negligent and lazy. Such a stereotype became especially popular e.g. in Germany and it is still strong today, despite the fact that Poles in Germany are one of the most diligent workers. The judgement was hasty and untrue as the same Poles worked hard and creatively in the private sector, especially the self-employed ones.

Cultural values are formed in the mutual relations between an individual and groups to which he belongs, with family life as the first stage of the process. Family passes on values to its members and organizes their lives on the biological and spiritual level. These values are later confronted with the values of any social group that an individual interacts with, the values of any people that are perceived as significant or the values encountered through education or media. All these circumstances can strengthen, modify or alter values, as they are not static but rather linked to the personality development, identity and changeability of living conditions. The transition from one social group to another often causes a clash of previously adopted values. On the whole, this is how one's own individual system of cultural values is formed.

Cultural values neither offer any precise guidance, nor impose any firmly established life plan; instead, they are gradually recognized, experienced, assimilated and implemented in an individual manner. Cultural values play a double role: they stimulate individuals to act according to their content and make them refrain from any actions contrary to it. The barrier to innovation which is sometimes built by cultural values may be so difficult to break through that even the best organized violence or rationally

planned action is crashed in the collision. An example of this phenomenon was an unsuccessful attempt to nationalize private farms and organize State Agricultural Farms (PGRs) in Poland after World War II. The socialist government tried various means to carry out this plan but the cultural barrier was so strong that it resulted in a complete failure. State Agricultural Farms were successfully organized only on the grounds that previously belonged to great landowners that were legally deprived of their property or on the Recovered Territories. Altogether the State Agricultural Farms covered only about one-fourth of all cultivable grounds, while the rest remained in the hands of private farmers because Polish peasants did not consent to nationalization of their lands. It was a remarkable phenomenon in the whole socialist bloc because in other countries the government managed to carry out their nationalization plan much better than in Poland. The reason behind this failure could be the fact that Polish peasants valued private ownership of their land as they fought for it during partitions and defended their lands and properties from the communists. A private farm was not only a place of work and a source of income but also a symbol of personal freedom, independence and a pillar of Polishness. Polish peasants practically treated their lands as something sacred which made it impossible to pass them into foreign socialist hands.

Nowadays material, hedonistic values (collectively referred to as consumption values) are widespread. They occupy a prominent place in the society's consciousness and they contribute to the expansion of store chains and help those political parties that make unrealistic election promises to improve living conditions – the promises which are usually proved worthless after the election. Even though the majority of voters are aware that these political parties would not keep their promises, they still vote for them; it proves that consumption values are so highly desired that people are ready to base their votes on false campaign promises.

2. TYPES OF VALUES AND THEIR REALIZATION

Undoubtedly, there is a great diversity among values and literature offers a number of different types of their categorization. The most common classification of values within the field of social sciences is the one proposed by Max Scheler (1874-1928), because the types of values he distinguished most closely correspond to human needs. Therefore, by adopting this classification the author of this paper distinguishes the following categories of values:

1. Hedonistic values. Pleasure becomes the greatest value and the main goal of actions. It is desirable to have a comfortable flat, a car that is elegant and fast, and to be able to lie on the beach during summer, not thinking about anything else than the sound of the splashing waves. It is easy to only befriend people who can say nice things about us. Pleasure is the basic criterion for taking any kind of action and evaluating interpersonal relations. There has never been a shortage of such people who make pleasure the main principle of their lives. They keep in mind that life is short and they focus on the temporal thing and the measure of their happiness is in direct relation to their attainment of pleasure.

2. Vital values. Anything that contributes to the physical attractiveness and physical fitness is valuable and desirable. Anything that is potentially damaging to human life and body is perceived negatively. Weakened vitality usually leads to the loss of meaning in life. In societies that exhibit a high regard for vital values and are concerned with the cult of youth, old and disabled individuals do not enjoy a high position in the society and such state contributes to the recognition of various types of euthanasia.

3. Material values, material goods. Anything that increases the number of things one owns, raises the standard of living, or contributes to a comfortable and carefree life belongs to this category. Any loss of material goods or a decrease in the standard of living is considered to be detrimental. Endless multiplication of goods often cause individuals to engage all their power and abilities to pursue those goods; this often results in negligence of health and family life and generally leads to harmful consequences.

4. Sociocentric values. Anything that expresses the collective will and effort of individuals is perceived as valuable. Such values include nation, country, religious group, family or a political party. Individuals may take various actions in order to ensure the development of these values; sometimes they even willingly sacrifice their life. Throughout history there have been many who advocated the superior position of their own nation, country, religious group or family and the positive aspect of everything that served their development. In the name of development they oppressed individuals, groups, social categories or even whole nations that in their view were obstacles in the process of pursuing goals of their own party or nation.

5. Aesthetic values – harmony, order, beauty, and all that compels admiration, moves or excites, brings solemn feelings and stimulates creativity, makes life more happy and creative.

6. Ethical values (also called altruistic values) – they include various forms of good, i.e. those activities that strengthen the life and development of human beings and other living creatures. The implementation of good is accompanied by other values such as justice, mercy, support, generosity, forgiveness, honesty, diligence, hospitality etc. Whoever cherishes these values becomes closer with other individuals and as such these relationships are built on solid foundations.

7. Cognitive values – that is the knowledge and truth about an individual and the world. Man in search for the truth gains a broader and more in-depth knowledge about himself and the world and eventually comes to a better understanding of the reality and can shape it in a more creative way taking a broader role as a creator.

8. Religious values – they include God and eternal life in communion with God and other spiritual beings. Religious values bring man into the supernatural world; they let him expand his horizons, leave the temporal world, reach the state of holiness and enter the realm of the supernatural, as well as obtain a fuller understanding of himself, others and the world.

The first three types of values are closely interlinked with the human body, instincts and senses, feelings and desires and the need to confirm one's own existence. Their realization is marked by utilitarianism, pragmatism and striving for success expressed by experiencing pleasure, having a beautiful body, high standard of living and a good social

position. Efficiency becomes a priority and frequently the idea that the end justifies the means is implemented. This idea is usually also put into practice during the realization of sociocentric values when they become the dominant ones.

The realization of the first four types of values is, in fact, limited by a variety of circumstances e.g. time, space or material possibilities; nevertheless, they can be fully implemented. An individual can satisfy his hunger and thirst so that he feels completely full; he can arrange his flat to meet all his needs; the nation or country that he identifies with can overtake his cognition, understanding and desires to such an extent that he will sacrifice everything for their development. However, the idea of satisfying hunger and thirst, gaining prestige or political importance is not necessarily associated with happiness and meaningful life. The implementation of these values does not provide an individual with complete fulfilment as these values do not stimulate his development nor lead to the full enjoyment of life. Therefore hedonistic, vital, utilitarian and socio-centric values are also called instrumental. In addition, their implementation is often made at the expense of others and involves various forms of inflicting harm.

The implementation of the next four types of values has the following significant features that distinguish them from the previous i.e. instrumental values:

1. Their realization does not have to be justified by other values; hence they are values in themselves.
2. The realization of these values involves all aspects of human capacity and it takes place within an individual who thereby develops comprehensively.
3. These values when implemented cannot be fully satisfied. It means that one cannot fully satisfy the need of knowledge, the need to do good, the need of beauty, the need of admiration and the need to be loved by God and others. No one in his right mind would say that he has already experienced everything, learnt everything, been good enough to others, seen all the beauty and loved the loved one just enough. Despite the best efforts man is aware that he still knows too little, does not do enough good, always has room for improvement, and does not love his loved one or God enough. The conclusion is obvious – as long as man learns, recognizes, realizes and lives according to these values he will still feel a lack of fulfilment and he will want to realize these values because he is never able to do it completely and through the repeated implementation of these values he evolves. These values are somewhat perfect even though they are not perfection.

4. The realization of these values provides an individual with a feeling of satisfaction and happiness but it is often accompanied by effort, suffering or even sacrificing one's own life.

5. They form a basis for the evaluation of a particular individual or social group.

Values of this kind are spiritual. Antonina Kłosowska (KŁOSKOWSKA 1981: 196-215) calls them autotelic, while other researchers refer to them as desired or developmental. They include, among others, truth, virtue, beauty, love, justice or God. Man finds them particularly important and they affect every sphere of his life and every aspect of his personality. They are independent of individuals and serve as a sign. An individual should apply these values in every stage and every sphere of his life (which ba-

sically means anytime and anywhere). For instance, the value of charity should always be implemented and any actions that are in opposition to it are viewed negatively. Only autotelic values give meaning to individual lives, and at the same time to culture and social life. They go beyond an individual and hence are socially valuable. They are predominantly popularized and defended by those who have little to lose in the sphere of material possessions and social system. Such people do not have luxurious mansions, expensive belongings or lucrative bank accounts and they do not obtain support from rich and influential people; in general, most of them are intellectuals, clergy or young people.

3. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VALUES AND ITS EFFECTS

Values serve important functions in the life of individuals and society: they arouse interest; shape the consciousness; broaden experience and stimulate action; formulate objectives; appeal to the conscience; integrate actions and give meaning to their outcome; integrate people and societies; but at the same time diversify the society, stimulate, determine and stabilize its development or disrupt and block it. The realization of these values requires constant effort, but such effort is not futile as these values offer protection but man must constantly be cautious of their proper understanding and hierarchy. Jan Strzelecki aptly commented that "values are fragile without a constant effort of man and man is fragile without a constant effort of realizing them" (TYSZKA 1999: 175).

Man and the society in which he lives need values to exist and develop. Therefore the values that are recognized, implemented and serve as inspiration are essential both for individuals and the society. Values determine cultural products and they are essential for defining the overall culture.

According to Jadwiga Puzynina (PUZYNINA 1992: 185), the promotion of hedonistic values and encouraging people to choosing them is, always has been, and always will be

the greatest danger to man. Man obsessed with hedonistic motivations becomes an easy prey for authoritarian appeals. At the same time, he limits horizons of his creativity and opportunities for self-realization. He also reduces his participation in the lives of others or his participation in various communities (such as his family or nation). Finally, he risks living in deception as he usually proclaims a different set of values than the one he truly follows.⁷

Furthermore, the belief in vital and economic values is not less dangerous, as they are tinged with utilitarianism. According to Puzynina (PUZYNINA 1992: 185)

The belief that that the value of an action is determined by its utility firstly does not reveal the ultimate value hidden behind the notion of utility (which in most cases is hedonism), and secondly it easily leads to recognition of what is encapsulated in the statement that the

⁷ Translation – Z.S.

end justifies the means and consequently leads to the elimination of differences between moral good and moral evil.⁸

The domination of sociocentric values poses a serious threat as it can lead to various forms of totalitarianism and restriction of rights of individuals and social groups. The belief that one's nation, country, ethnic group, political party or even family constitute the most important value lets them gain a better, more privileged position which leads to aggression against other groups, limiting their rights or even their destruction. This type of situation occurred during the regime of German National Socialism and Ukrainian nationalists in south-eastern Poland.

The realization of hedonistic, vital, material or sociocentric values should be kept under constant consideration, control and limitations because they can easily become dominant as they are closely related to basic human needs, man's existence and his continual striving for higher standards of living.

Popularization, realization and domination of autotelic (spiritual) values do not pose the aforementioned dangers. Raising awareness and increasing implementation of these values transforms members of the society into more analytical, free and comprehensively developed individuals; at the same time the entire society perfects forms of its existence and development, shapes its ability to handle conflicts and tensions by peaceful means. As a result, the value of economic goods and the quality of life increase. Modern societies are firmly focused on economic development and achieving a prestigious position among other societies and as such they need spiritual values and should put more effort into their popularization and show greater concern for their realization.

Man responds to values, realizes them and in this manner shapes himself and the world. The values according to which he directs his cognition, desires and actions are certainly not without significance. It is worth noting that all the above-mentioned values mean "something" to a particular person, and they must be evaluated with this particular person in mind. Therefore, in considering value one cannot omit the personal aspect of a human individuality.

In the process of realization of values man offers a piece of himself and in exchange values serve man – they strengthen his existence and help his development. Józef Tischner (TISCHNER 1982: 87) concludes that

at the centre of the universe human value, that is a human being, is a value of special significance. This value does not need 'justification' because it is already 'justified' by values that serve man. Therefore this value is primary, absolute [...]. Man cannot be a means to a goal; he must be the goal himself. Otherwise man would serve something that should serve him.⁹

By applying these words to the previously mentioned hierarchy of values it could be stated that hedonistic, vital, material and sociocentric values consolidate the individual

⁸ Translation – Z.S.

⁹ Translation – Z.S.

or collective life of individuals. On the other hand, spiritual values open one's mind to others; they integrate man into an interpersonal community, and religious values incorporate him into the divine realm and save his life from oblivion and death. Culture that is disconnected from transcendent reference points – such as truth or religious events – is neither conducive to a deeper understanding of man, nor contributes to the creation of a stable axio-normative order and continuity of culture.

4. AN ATTEMPT TO RECONSTRUCT THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SYSTEM OF VALUES OF POLISH CULTURE DEVELOPED

The values that function in society are closely linked with ideologies and current fashion, with policies of ruling groups, economy, technology or its position among other societies. Thus, as soon as these factors change the world of values that has been internalized by all members of the public inevitably changes too, though often at a slower pace. Even such basic values as truth, virtue, beauty, justice, hard work, family, fatherland, honour, God or the supernatural world do not have a fixed social value attached to them. The old world of values can – undoubtedly and for a long period of time – function in a new reality, but after a while something will start to change. If basic values do not alter, what changes is their interpretation and the ways of their realization.

At this point it is worth discussing values that have functioned in Polish society in the recent past and the present. The description is general and brief, hence the statements provided here are simplified and most probably subjective and as such they should be an inspiration for further discussion.

The Polish system of values preserved in Polish literature and contemporary Polish consciousness had been formed throughout all periods of Polish history but it was clearly defined only during the partitions which took place in the XIX and the early XX century. The conditions in which this process took place are not without significance. In this period Poland went through the partition to three different states and had to function in three different social, political, economic and religious systems. The invaders' government discriminated Polish culture, applied all sorts of methods in order to divide Poles against themselves and to impose germanization and russification. However, Polish society divided between the three invaders was united by Polish culture and the Catholic Church, which distinguished Poles from Protestant Prussians and Orthodox Russians. The Catholic Church with its universal character did not take part in the government as much as the Protestant Church or the Orthodox Church and consequently it enjoyed some freedom of action. The two characteristics – its universal character and independence from a dominating power allowed the Catholic Church to be the basis for unity of the residents of the Commonwealth territories divided among the three invaders and those that emigrated; it was also the biggest foundation for storage, continuity and development of the Polish culture. The Catholic Church took advantage of its position, but the governance of alien invaders noticed this role of the Catholic Church and in order to weaken it its estates and cultural products were con-

fiscated, its activity limited, monasteries destroyed and the clergy that showed patriotic attitude were sent to prison or were forced into Russian exile. In this period the bond between the Polish culture and the Catholic Church strengthened and everything that was Polish began to be associated with being Catholic.

During the First Partition of Poland it was mainly the representatives of Romanticism that shaped the cultural values of Polish society; during the Second Partition – the representatives of Positivism; during the Third – the representatives of the Young Poland movement.

Romanticism had a profound impact on the popularization of the following values in Polish society: 1. feeling of the unusual; intuition; irrationality; mystery; supernatural world; God; sensitivity to what is sacred. 2. devotion to “higher” matters 3. independence, freedom, patriotism 4. experience, especially the experience of suffering 5. transcendence, that is going beyond oneself, beyond one’s capabilities; the pursuit of perfection; omnipotence; omniscience; the sense of the world and the unity of people and the universe. The model of a Pole who is attached to his country and religion, loves his motherland and fights for her freedom and is devoted to the great cause of her independence was shaped on the basis of values popularized by social elites, especially poets, artists and educators (e.g. A. Mickiewicz, J. Słowacki, A. Grottger). A patriot, a conspirator, one who fights even though he knows he shall lose but still waits for a great change and believes that it should come one day was a model to be followed.

During the period of Positivism, after two failed uprising (1831, 1863) slightly different values became emphasised among the Polish society in comparison the period of Romanticism. These were: rational thinking; professionalism; respect for practical knowledge; education and work; technology; effort; social commitment; love for the homeland expressed in the action of shaping Polish cultural awareness and economic development. There was also a general belief that another uprising would not help Poland’s struggle for independence. Therefore, waiting for the opportune time to regain independence was advised as it was thought impossible to restore it without the international support and a favourable geopolitical situation.

Representatives of the so-called Young Poland (1890-1918), in the period immediately preceding the regaining of independence would popularize the following values: experience; the will to act; authenticity; aestheticism; equality; justice or freedom.

During the partitions these values were interpreted and promoted by writers, poets, intellectuals, clergy, activists, educators, educated gentry and the middle class. The values gradually spread to the lower social classes; this happened through family, informal education (lodgings), monasteries, parishes or various associations (cultural, scientific etc.). Nonetheless, it was family that played the most important role. Maurycy Mochnacki (MOCHNACKI 1984: 217-218), Polish politician and historian of the XIX century, described its role in the following manner:

Poland, a political power eliminated from the European map, removed from there by deceit, managed to find in itself a peculiar kind of existence, yet unknown to history, a kind of homely existence, a familial one, stronger than any of the alien powers that divided it

[...] What has been left inside is a burning life, unaffected by external turmoil. The governance did not drain all there is [...], what history has proven, despotic hereditary monarchies perish when they lose their independence, but our Republic raised from the dead so many times, and I believe it could do so because two centuries preceding its political destruction it was not a hereditary starostaship of a king, as by this time it consisted more of people than of the governance, more a family than a country. Home, family – they constitute the whole secret of Polish insurrections. Familial existence, strong at the time of the political collapse that is the spark of our uprisings [...]. Polish nation after the partitions still has the image of a great, Slavic family using its domestic virtues to overcome adversity.¹⁰

Mochnacki's comment on the XIX century Polish family stated that it was family that distinguished the Polish society from other despotic countries, and the Christian-Slavic culture of Polish families was the basis of national existence and a guarantee of the continuity, identity and autonomy of the Polish society among other European societies of that time.

In a similar manner to how Otto von Bismarck with the words "The Prussian teacher has won" claimed that the victory of Prussia over France in 1871 accounted for the Prussian education system, Polish family played a similarly important role in the history of Poland. In this manner, when Poland disappeared from the map family and the Catholic Church played a crucial role in the development of Polish socio-cultural identity and eventually lead to the rebirth of Poland in 1918. It could even be said that it was the Polish system of values, so tenderly cherished and protected over the years, which lead to the defeat of the invaders. Those who interpreted and popularized these values would in the course of time come to hold positions of authority and, often unwillingly, become political leaders. To exemplify this phenomenon it is worth mentioning Adam Mickiewicz (poet, who can be compared in greatness to Johan Wolfgang Goethe) in the early period of the partitions, and Ignacy Paderewski (composer) in the final period, who, appointed the first Prime Minister and Foreign Minister since Poland's rebirth, signed the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which officially recognised the country's independence. Following the newly regained independence of 1918, the Polish society strengthened its system of values by adding such qualities as the will to act in every aspect of life, perfectionism, desire of being respected, uniqueness of character, strong personality, drive for learning and action. In a country devastated by partitions, especially in the territories previously annexed by the Russian Empire, the popularisation of these values had a great impact on the country's fast recovery. The development of practically every area of life, especially education, industry or communication was so dynamic that within one generation before the outbreak of World War II Polish society could be placed on the par with many Western European countries. Values promoted among Polish society clearly distinguished it from neighbouring Germany and Russia which in 1939 once more invaded Poland and brutally divided the country. Polish society again had to fight for its survival and cultural identity. Anna Pawełczyńska

¹⁰ Translation: – Z.S.

(PAWEŁCZYŃSKA 1973: 163) in her study of Polish society under the German and Russian occupation claims that

a vast majority of Poles in the period of 1939-1945 was brought up in the spirit of traditional patriotic and Christian values. These values laid the foundation for many impulsive and improvised reactions. No one indulged in the cult of power as it was not in line with these values. Both national and religious traditions influenced Polish mentality in such a way that it would oppose any form of brutality, violence or any action against the values which unified Polish society.¹¹

Once again Polish cultural values could celebrate a glorious victory, a phenomenon visible in the history of Poles during World War II. Urszula Wińska (WIŃSKA 1985) perfectly encapsulated it in the title of her book *Values have won*, which is a collection of 158 memories of Polish women who were prisoners in the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

Even though Polish society was biologically and economically weakened, especially with the removal of its elites (intelligentsia) during the occupation and in the first decade of People's Republic (PRL), it began to rebuild the country with the aid of values that originally helped them to survive. However, the new socialistic government was against this culture and by any means tried to reorganize it and spread new, respective values: 1. complete rejection of religious values; 2. superiority of the state over individuals; 3. fighting seen as the main principle of life and social development; 4. state property over private property; 5. breaking off with the past and tradition 6. state as the only patron of culture, in charge of all artistic and cultural activity.

For two generations Polish society successfully defended itself against the popularization of values alien to it. A large section of the population accepted social changes but was against accepting any alterations that would affect cultural values, as reflected in the rise of Solidarity in the 1980s. More than ten million Poles demanded improvements in their living conditions and freedom in deciding about their own values. In addition, among 2,8 million members of the Polish United Workers' Party, which was the official promoter of socialist values, a significant number of these members did not agree with them. In the period of political upheaval they quickly joined Solidarity and opted for an entirely different system of values, switching from their former socialist views to liberal ones and becoming their enthusiastic propagators.

The change in the political system that occurred in 1989 lead the Polish society to the path of the so-called modernity as this year introduced democracy, free market economy and opened the road to the so-called new culture. Undoubtedly, this kind of culture is hard to define or assess, especially in the aspect of values that are the main point of interest of this paper. Moreover, there are many terms used to refer to the new culture such as: popular culture, consumption culture, global culture.

This kind of culture introduces a huge range of values that, however, do not form a coherent system as many of them are in fact mutually contradictory. Similarly to a free

¹¹ Translation – Z.S.

market of goods in economy there appears to be a free market of values in the modern Polish culture. If some common values are found a very liberal interpretation is allowed. Collective memory that nurtures values valuable for Polish society gets distorted by political history, as the interpretation put on certain events is guided by political interests of parties or groups, often acting contrary to the interest of the country. The memory of crucial historical figures – intellectuals, saints, heroes who fought for justice and freedom – is often neglected, and their place in collective memory is taken by film stars, businessmen and celebrities.

Ethical and religious values are pushed aside or even neglected; instead, hedonistic, vital and economic values are promoted. This leads to a situation of uncertainty, moral relativism, ethical minimalism, ambiguous character of principal symbols and elimination of axiology from one's social life, reducing other people and the world to a mere description and increasing consumption. There is a lack of moral authorities and role models who would promote religious and spiritual values. What links different elements of modern popular culture is not the combination of religious and spiritual values but rather technology and aesthetic and any values that are present are the hedonistic and utilitarian ones. This facilitates the spread of anti-values; consequently, new forms of violence, exploitation, brutality and violation of good manners appear.

Polish society currently faces a peculiar kind of crisis of values which is becoming increasingly dangerous due to the fact that many individuals who perform public functions have drastically changed their socialist system of values into a liberal one – from the allies of the Warsaw Pact they transformed into supporters of NATO; from the faithful friends of the USSR and other socialist countries they became enthusiastic propagators of the European Union. On the other hand, many former activists of Solidarity adopted liberal views and personal interests took precedence over the common good. In turn, a peculiar kind of axiological chaos has been formed. It manifests itself in trials for political or economic offenses that take long years and arrive at a variety of completely distinct verdicts due to the lack of permanent values that could provide the basis for the assessment of human actions. Legal codes fail because the same laws are applied differently to seemingly identical situations.

However, the symptoms of the crisis of values that is now observed in Polish society should be interpreted neither as a collapse, nor as a disintegration of Polish culture. Instead just like any other crisis, this one must be simply overcome. It is worth recalling the idea expressed in one of the Prefaces for Christian death that "life is changed, not ended." This could be related to Polish culture which simply transforms which is why representatives of Polish culture are looking for ways that would help them find themselves in the new political and economic reality. Polish culture has entered a new stage of development and younger generations are obliged to find new interpretations of values that constitute its core; they need to create new products inspired by the permanent values of Polish culture that worked well in the past and at the same time correspond to current knowledge and imagination, desires and capabilities; they also need to create new values. The effects of this process are already visible and they include such phenomena as: increased respect for work, seeking new methods of work organization;

development of organized forms of altruism; more precise indicators of social justice; respect for knowledge and increased educational aspirations; deeper religious life manifested in the creation of new religious groups and movements; fuller understanding of life and the development of various forms of its protection.

5. THE VALUES THAT FORM THE BASIS OF POLISH CULTURAL IDENTITY

Polish culture today, although in its external forms very different from the one that developed one or two hundred years ago, is firmly rooted in the overall cultural heritage and constitutes a continuation of values that are anchored in it. These values are visible in poetry, literature, music, painting, architecture, noble figures, important events and heritage sites. They are echoed and reinterpreted; in fact, even today's media so focused on the news tend to do so. This ensures the continuation of Polish culture which is still the same culture, although it may appear different because it is in the state of constant development. The core values of Polish national culture cherished and passed on to younger generations set the limit to possible changes. Such values are the reason why Poles who live outside of their own country find themselves so different from people that surround them.

Below the author presents a short analysis of values present in Polish culture which are clearly visible in the Polish cultural heritage, constantly recalled by the creators of modern Polish culture and, to an extent, clearly present in the consciousness of an average Pole who if he happens to find himself outside of Poland clearly notices the differences between him and society members of the country of his stay.¹²

1. Family closeness and a sense of community. A successful marriage, family life and children are all crucial in the eyes of Polish society. Young Poles place them above any other values. Marriage and family life have not lost their importance; just the opposite, majority of people believe that the importance of marriage and family life is increasing rather than decreasing. Despite migration and social mobility, family bonds remain strong. Choosing a life away from the family is never seen as a self-imposed obligation (DYCZEWSKI 2009(c): 191). A strong family bond also includes the deceased members of the family – Poles frequently visit the graves of their deceased relatives. On All Saints' Day trains and roads are overflowing with people because almost everyone is on their way to visit the graves of their relatives.

2. Home. In fiction and memoirs, home, whether rich or poor, is shown as a hospitable, safe and serene place with characteristic trees and flowers that surround it. In its interior, except for typically functional items one would also find items of decorative or religious character, family heirlooms and, above all, one's loved ones.

Home in Polish culture has a distinct symbolic value and exceptional importance which was referred to in the periods of chaos and unrest especially in moments of per-

¹² A more detailed discussion of typical Polish cultural values may be found in: DYCZEWSKI 2002; DYCZEWSKI 1992; DYCZEWSKI[2009(b): 149-179; KŁOSKOWSKA 1990; LEWANDOWSKI 2008.

sonal or collective calamities. It provides the basis for restoring order in one's personality and social life. In addition, it is closely associated with nation's history; the bond between home and nation became stronger and richer during the period of partitions, during the German and Russian occupation, and during the reign of the communist regime. During these periods, home was viewed as a place of shelter, safety, comfort, mutual aid, national and religious tradition and production of necessary goods.

Strong familial bonds and the attachment to one's home was to a great extent the reason behind the fact that Polish society managed to avoid slavery, enjoyed liberty and lead a free life. Two kinds of lives existed: an official one, based on imposed laws and institutions; and an unofficial one, based on one's home and family life. The opposition against the communist regime, the circulation of the so-called unofficial culture, the development of Solidarity – these all found a source of support in the institutions of home and family. Home is still the place where many old values and traditions are cherished; it satisfies all needs throughout the different stages of one's life that the state cannot meet; it is viewed as the bedrock, the most important place in the Polish consciousness.

3. The bond between generations and a sense of affinity. The enduring bond between generations and a strong sense of affinity in Polish society is visible in the following aspects: frequent cohabitation of generations; frequent and good relationships between generations and relatives; a wide range of mutual support; a great involvement of grandparents in the upbringing and education of grandchildren; the importance of intergenerational cultural transmission. The majority of adult Poles views their grandparents as the source that provided them with moral principles, love, religious faith, the knowledge of many historical events and virtues such as dutifulness, diligence, self-discipline, willpower, love of the country and a variety of other practical skills.

A strong bond between the generations and family members proves its real worth in the modern society because it protects against loneliness, helps to develop a sense of dignity and an attitude of openness and helpfulness to others (DYCZEWSKI 2010: 238-324).

4. Children. A child is the most desired value. The vast majority of the young generation of Poles (18-26 years) wants to have children; also the vast majority also believes that the average Polish family should have more children. Limiting the number of children in one's family, a situation that occurs among the youngest generation of parents, is conditioned by the bad housing situation and poor living conditions, the desire to provide a better life for one's child and the increased aspiration of achieving a higher standard of living.

5. High position of mothers. In Polish culture, in comparison with the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon countries, the position of wife and mother was and is high. Its establishment has its basis in the following conditions specific to Polish society.

1. From the Middle Ages to the present day women has been equal to men in terms of inheritance (with the exception of certain periods, and in specific regions and social classes), while in the majority of western countries it was the eldest son that had a privileged position and the right to inheritance, often leaving younger siblings dependent on him. Full voting rights (both active and passive) were granted to Polish women right after Poland regained its independence – in

1918, while in the UK it happened in 1928, in France in 1944, in Italy 1945, and in Switzerland it did not happen until 1971.

2. In Polish religiosity the cult of the Mother of God is highly developed, and her virtues and maternity are highly respected. This religious attitude towards the Mother of God was adopted towards any woman who is a mother. The mere state of motherhood that likened her to the Mother of God helped to develop the attitude of special respect, support and help for any woman (e.g. offering one's seat to a woman with small children, letting women through the door first, lifting and carrying heavy things for them etc.).
3. Woman: wife-mother is usually in charge of organizing the whole domestic life. This situation is expressed in a well-known saying "Ojciec jest głową rodziny, a żona-matka jej duszą" (the father is the head of the family; the mother is its soul). She is responsible for the home interior, the atmosphere of celebrated holidays, thus her role is to shape aesthetic feelings and interests; she passes down family traditions and maintains genealogical knowledge. During the periods of partitions and occupation, in the situation when the husband-father died in the fight for freedom, wife-mother was left as the only breadwinner and protector of domestic life. She was also involved in the public affairs of her community.
4. Woman-wife-mother has a completely dominant role in the process of domestic socialization. She has a strong emotional bond with her children and can easily observe their needs and abilities. She introduces them to life, teaches them to perform domestic chores and helps them to develop their preferences and characteristics such as diligence, honesty, kindness, responsibility, selflessness and dedication. She also increases their political knowledge and develops patriotic attitude among them.

6. Religiosity. For centuries religion has been closely linked to Polish society. In the most difficult times the nation's faith in God gave it the strength to survive and to rebuild the devastated country and a chance for moral renewal. Polish society today is among the most religious societies in Europe. Polish religiosity is characterized by the following qualities: 1. It has more experiential than rational character, but it is a rational experience; 2. It is firmly connected with family, hence the current popularity of religious family movements; 3. It is strongly linked with the nation; during the partitions and in the period of German and Russian occupation the Catholic Church and the Polish nation were equally oppressed, hence the political character of Polish religiosity. 4. There is a strong cult of the Mother of God; 5. Religiosity is expressed in a wide variety of rituals, celebrations and holidays, especially Christmas, All Saints' Day and the Day of the Dead 6. In contrast with Western Europe there is a strong bond between young people and the Catholic Church, and also between the Church and poorer members of society.

7. Emotionality and rationality complement each other. Polish culture does not lack rationality but it is completed by emotionality which works as a buffer against excessive pragmatism. In relationships and actions Poles are characterized by strong emotionality, which usually manifests itself on such occasions as family celebrations or while receiving guests. It makes relationships more affectionate, enhances sensibility, but also

stands behind the feeling of irritability. It certainly does not promote acquisitiveness and economic calculation which seem rather common in contemporary societies.

8. Open intimacy and patriotism. In western countries public affairs are discussed in offices and conference rooms while home is a private space, safe from strangers and public eye. This thought is expressed in the English saying "My home is my castle." On the other hand, in Poland where public life in recent decades was often constrained by invaders, occupants or the communist rule, this private sphere of home was opened as a space of public discussion where decisions about social and political issues were made. Home was a place of national education and meetings on national liberation. It is often said that the French Revolution, which introduced the idea of civil equality to European countries, began over discussions in one of the Paris cafés; whereas Poland's Solidarity, which restored democracy and helped former communist territories of Eastern Europe become sovereign entities once again was largely built upon the institution of family and home. Home was a space of discussion on the restoration of Poland and the whole Eastern Bloc, where opposition activists from the present Czech Republic, Hungary, German and other republics of the former Soviet Union. Such combination of the intimacy of private life and openness to public affairs is typical of Polish homes.

9. Hospitality. The concept of hospitality is valued within any society, but it is expressed in various manners. Polish hospitality is characterized by: 1. high willingness to receive guests and to meet all their needs; 2. a feeling of great joy caused by the presence of the guest; 3. generosity towards the guest; 4. various ways of showing respect. For centuries Polish families have greeted their guests with openness and warmth. All this is expressed in a common Polish saying "Gość w dom, Bóg w dom" (Guest in the house is God in the house). Nowadays the guest is still seated first at a table, he is offered the best accommodation and the host dedicates time and money to his guest, and when saying farewell presents his guest with a gift.

10. Socialized individualism. Polish individualism is deeply rooted in democracy and in the style of family upbringing. Children, especially younger ones, enjoy great freedom and later are free to choose their own school, education, profession and life partner. This is conducive to the development of their individual skills, talents and curiosity, but also leads to the growing sense of independence. Such attitude in adults often hinders the success of collective initiatives. However, in critical situations even the greatest individuals understand the superiority of the common good and act in favour of it.

11. Sense of dignity and honour. In the past these terms were associated with nobility; during the partitions – with intelligentsia and patriotic gentry; between the wars – with all those who had a sense of responsibility for regained freedom and the creation of a new statehood. The sense of dignity was so strong that anyone who betrayed the duties of their office or abused it would relinquish the office or could even commit suicide. The German and Russian occupants systematically eliminated such people. During the period of PRL (People's Republic of Poland) human dignity was constantly violated and people were required to adopt an obsequious attitude to authority. The Polish Round Table Talks which officially initiated the change from the socialist system to a democratic one at the same time created an unfavourable situation for the for-

mation and reinforcement of the attitude of dignity and honour. Too many figures with ambiguous attitudes in philosophical, religious, social or economic matters obtained key administrative positions. Acting in one's own self-interest and the pursuit of the benefit of one's family or party dominated the process of public decision-making. As a result, public life abounded in numerous scandals and abuses of power, and corrupt local and state officials went as far as developing links with the criminal world. Dignity and honour, so highly valued in the past, lost their value in the new socio-political reality. Nowadays acts of resigning from an office due to fraud scandals rarely take place.

12. Freedom – sovereignty – patriotism. These three values are deeply rooted in the tradition and consciousness of Poles, who in the last two centuries struggled with political violence, fought for their lands and for themselves, and engaged in a battle for religious freedom. The concern for the nation and state was expressed in the struggle for the following: the dominance of the most progressive social forces; providing social order; the continuity of Polish cultural identity; and a significant position of the Polish society among other societies and countries. Patriotism was expressed in a deepened sense of responsibility for the future of the country and the quality of life of its citizens.

13. Lack of vindictiveness and ease of forgiveness. In the last two centuries Poles suffered many cruel injustices. Millions of innocent and respected citizens were brutally murdered. Cultural goods were stolen and the country's economy was destroyed. Resorting to hatred, revenge and terrorist attacks seemed natural, especially that the occupants often provoked this kind of behaviour and emotions. Clergy and intellectual elites would put in a great deal of effort in order to eliminate the attitude of hatred, teach forgiveness and the necessity of building good relations. They recounted many stories of forgiveness and reconciliation in order to provide people with inspiring examples. Gradually, the promoted attitude entered the consciousness of Polish society; it is visible in many Polish folk sayings such as "Nie czyń drugiemu, co tobie niemiłe" (Do nothing to others you would not have done to you) or "Lepiej krzywdę darować, niżli się prawować" (It is better to forgive than to argue). There are many prayers and poems that contain the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation, especially from the period of occupation and imposition of martial law in the 1980s. There are many examples of forgiveness and reconciliation between the oppressors and the oppressed e.g. the letter of Polish bishops addressed to German bishops from December 1966, which could be summarised in the words "Przebaczamy i prosimy o przebaczenie" (We forgive and ask for forgiveness). Those who were aware of the harm done to Poles by Germans during World War II did not know how to interpret such attitude. Worth recalling is also the fact that immediately after the funeral of Jerzy Popiełuszko (1984), thousands of people spontaneously gathered round the building of the Security Service which bore the blame for the savage murder of the priest and shouted "We forgive, we are sorry."

14. Democracy – citizenship – criticism of government. Starting from the early period of Polish history, there has been a clear attitude of submission to governing authority. Although Poland before the partitions was a monarchy, it was never an absolute monarchy but rather was considered one of the few European republics of that time. This opinion was justified in the institution of wolna elekcja (free election) in which

the nobility voted for the candidate to the throne; the sovereignty of the nobility and the system that emphasized its existence.

Polish parliamentarism emphasized the sovereignty of the nation. Therefore, the royal power was severely limited, which is visible in constitutions and laws such as the act of *Nihil Novi* (1505) or the Henrician Articles and the so-called *pacta conventa* (1573). The latter required the king to convene the parliament every two years and allowed the possibility of revolting against the king if he was accused of committing serious violations against the law.

The sense of sovereignty and equality among the nobility (who were much more numerous and diverse than in other European countries) could gradually be observed in all layers of Polish society. The Great Sejm (1791) equated the civil liberties of the bourgeois and the middle class, while the first constitution after regaining independence in 1918 provided equal rights to all adult Polish citizens.

The notion of citizenship developed quite early in the Polish political culture while in other European countries people were still "subjects." The main difference lies in the fact that subject has mainly instrumental value, the power over him is placed in the hands of the monarch, dictator or party, who can decide on his fate; on the other hand, being a citizen is expressed in the consciousness of participation in power and a sense of responsibility for its decisions. A balance of individual freedom and social order, personal interest and common good is a sign of a mature democracy.

15. The sense of service and readiness for self-sacrifice. The sense of service is primarily associated with national heritage, religion or country and it can be seen in actions that require effort and bravery. These actions are performed voluntarily and honourably, with no financial benefits. Those who decide to be involved in such actions gain approval and respect, and become part of the collective memory. Polish history provides many examples of this kind of service; since the Middle Ages it had been present in the form of *pospolite ruszenie* (mass mobilization). Many public functions were honourable, performed without any financial compensation. During the partitions any person who had a sense of belonging to Polish society had a moral obligation to defend his cultural heritage and the Catholic Church. There are many heroes from this period who sacrificed their life and wealth in defence of Polish values. The sense of service is displayed most often in emergency situations; it also shows in everyday situations but is not equally strong.

16. Openness to other cultures – tolerance. For centuries the Polish society had willingly borrowed elements from other cultures and incorporated them into their own. Poland first received Christianity from the Czechs; the image of Our Lady of Częstochowa that became a national symbol had originally come from Russia; Polish education incorporated many elements from the German, French or English system of education; Polish artistic work adopted elements from Italian and ancient cultures; moreover, Poland experienced no religious wars.

The spread of openness and tolerance towards other cultures was encouraged by the following factors: 1. a clear dominance of Christian values with their universal character and deep respect for fellow human beings; 2. multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism of the state, where various nationalities managed to coexist peacefully (Poles, Lithu-

anians, Ukrainians, Russians, Germans, Jews, Armenians, Tatars, Karaites, Roma and other, smaller ethnic groups); 3. the harmony of various religious groups (Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish, Protestant, Muslim); 4. borrowings cultural elements from neighbouring societies – Christian Latin culture from the West, Christian Byzantine culture and Muslim culture from the South-East; 5. elective monarchy instead of an absolute one, which allowed many political and religious freedoms; 6. a long period without statehood, which forced Poles to live in many different religious, social, political and cultural systems which provided an opportunity for a deeper understanding of differences while maintaining their Polish identity.

17. The triumph of hope over realism and ignorance. Hope is closely linked to the attitude of defence and perseverance. It appears in situations of extreme danger and is associated with an attitude of sacrifice. It is firmly rooted in the Christian faith, in providence and the goodness of man, but also in a kind of irrationalism, which is not equal to the lack of rationality but is closely linked to the experience which in turn makes it difficult to examine different perspectives provided for the decision-making process. Hence, the concept of hope is often associated with gullibility, lack of cynical calculation, weak pragmatism. Poles often make a decision without considering all possible consequences. They scale their abilities up to their aim, rather than the aim down to their abilities.

18. The Polish language. The development and improvement of the Polish language constituted one of the main topics of concern in the Age of Enlightenment. There was an attempt to purge the language of Latin elements and enrich it with legal, economic and scientific terminology. The demotic and middle-class speech variety, spoken language of villagers or everyday language were often used as sources. The Polish language gradually became a national value. In the late 18th and in the early 19th century different forms of the Polish language emerged such as the official language, office language, public language, language of political journalism or literary language. Such terms as nation, freedom, independence, uprising, and rebirth became ubiquitous. During the partitions when the invaders wanted the Polish language eradicated it gained tremendous value especially in the eyes of poets, writers, clergy, and it was defended with great devotion. Between the 17th and 20th century it became the symbol and factor of integration of the Polish population.

More values could be added to the above list, as only the ones that are still cherished in most of modern Polish families and are present in the process of socialization have been included. Their interpretation depends on such elements as legislation, social elites, journalists, political parties, cultural policy, and teachers. Currently there appears to be no coherent approach to the idea of popularization of common Polish values, characteristic of Polish society. In fact, there is a complete chaos in this area and a sheer lack of responsibility when it comes to joining the two main tendencies: preserving and developing one's own culture with its typical values, and, at the same time, opening oneself to other societies and new cultures in order to enrich one's own culture with new elements.

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