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SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION OF CULTURAL PHENOMENA*

The issues of social differentiation of cultural phenomena, as considered in the context of our conference's theme, must focus on a number of questions. These questions are related, on the one hand, to methodologies of social history and its autonomy as a field of research in its own right, and on the other, to the theory of culture and methodologies of history of culture and, again, its autonomy as an independent discipline. With respect to Polish medieval studies, these issues are essential, since too little importance, especially in recent decades, has been attached to theoretical foundations of research. Even though medievalists are less to blame in this respect than historians specialising in other eras, most publications characteristically avoid any theoretical considerations more extensive than narrowly understood issues of methodology. Also, the *longue durée* of dealing with cultural issues in a textbook fashion has been a prominent feature in academic syntheses. Proof of this can be found by comparing the respective chapters of the most recent general synthesis of medieval history by Roman Michałowski and the respective university textbook by Tadeusz Manteuffel,[1] or the successive takes on Polish medieval history by various researchers hailing from different schools and groups.[2]

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[1] Roman Michałowski, *Historia powszechna. Średniowiecze* (Warszawa, 2009); Tadeusz Manteuffel, *Historia powszechna. Średniowiecze,* (Warszawa, 1965, and subsequent editions).

[2] See for example Henryk Samsonowicz, *Historia Polski do roku 1795* (Warszawa, 1967, and subsequent editions); Jerzy Topolski (ed.), *Dzieje Polski* (Warszawa, 1975); *Wielka historia Polski,* ii: Jerzy Wyrozumski, *Dzieje Polski piastowskiej (VIII wiek –1370)* (Kraków, 1999); Stanisław Szczur, *Historia Polski. Średniowiecze* (Kraków, 2002).

Regardless of the scope of chapters devoted to the High and Late Middle Ages and the differences in concept, their place is always at the end of a chronologically arranged presentation, with the discussion of high culture being an essential part thereof. It even happens that a 'textbook' presentation differs from the understanding of culture laid down in other monographs of the same author. The posthumously edited collection of works by Tadeusz Manteuffel [1902–70 – ed.], the creator of the Centre for Medieval Culture at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the man behind the project aimed to offer a synthesis of Polish medieval culture, issued under the title (not of the author's choosing) *Kultura Europy średniowiecznej* [The culture of Medieval Europe],[3] discusses, in turn, the development of medieval society in Western Europe, the migrations, government and culture of the Slavs, the importance of conversions to Christianity, the medieval town and countryside, including issues of economy, the institutional history of main monastic orders and the ideologies of voluntary poverty, access to knowledge in medieval Poland, the relationship between science and religion, and finally, the processes of transition in the Early Modern period, with their social, economic and political transformations in particular. In a word, we are dealing with a questionnaire-based synthesis of medieval civilisation (mostly from the eighth to the thirteenth century), while in his university textbook, Manteuffel limited his presentation to the 'cultural phenomena' in the narrow sense.

In the preface, Manteuffel attempted to explain the term 'Medieval European culture' by reference to the understanding of culture proposed by Stefan Czarnowski [1879–1937]. Among the domestic theories of culture that affected Polish medieval studies, at least until the 1970s, this understanding should be considered of major importance and therefore it is fitting to remind its principal assumptions and theses.[4]

1. Culture is common resource and a collective achievement (creative intelligence is a species-related and biological feature independent of society; a human being outside his or her environment/culture is a biological individual, a specimen of the species).

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[3] Tadeusz Manteuffel, *Kultura Europy średniowiecznej*, (ed.) Stanisław Trawkowski (Warszawa, 1974).

[4] Stefan Czarnowski, 'Kultura' [1938], in *id., Dzieła*, Nina Assorodobraj and Stanisław Ossowski (eds.), i: *Studia z historii kultury* (Warszawa, 1956), 13–23.

2. We can speak about culture only when a discovery or invention is retained and passed on to subsequent generations, becoming a permanent achievement of humanity. Not every achievement of humanity, however, can be considered as culture.[5] Individual social achievements can be considered as culture when they become a common resource independent of its creator and turn into a steady pattern regardless of accidental circumstances. This means that culture consists of objectified components that bring individuals to form a single community.

3. Culture is an intergroup phenomenon (there is no 'family' culture).

4. A human being is the product of a cultural community (understood not as a group of individuals belonging to the same species, but as society). Hence, culture is a social phenomenon first and foremost, and we should treat it as an accumulation of society's achievements.

5. Everything in human being has its social order and is defined in relation to society, save only that which results directly from its physical and psychological constitution.

6. While recognising the difference between 'spiritual' and 'material' culture as a convenient tool, Czarnowski strongly stressed their interdependence and therefore considered the division of facts relating to all social phenomena, including culture, into psychological and material, to be unfounded. Material culture has a social nature and civilisation is the highest degree of culture.

Czarnowski discussed the variety of cultural phenomena in a number of works, out of which I would like to mention three: *Zasięg kultury* [The Scope of Culture],[6] *Kultura religijna wiejskiego ludu polskiego* [The Religious Culture of Polish Rural Society][7] and *Warunki społeczne zmiany znaczenia symbolów literackich* [Social Conditions of Change in the Meaning of Literary Symbols].[8] The conceptualisations and conclusions found there are, to various degrees, present in later research of Polish medievalists, but have not always been borrowed directly or even indirectly from Czarnowski, whose theory of culture was greatly indebted to Durkheim's brand of sociology. The statements of Czarnowski deemed of most importance for this discussion are the following:

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[5] The exceptions proposed by Czarnowski, such as linguistic dialects are, however, not indisputable.

[6] Czarnowski, *Dzieła*, 132–51.

[7] *Ibid.*, 88–107.

[8] *Ibid.*, 197–216.

1. Material and spiritual life has strongly marked regional and local features.

2. A monk, craftsman, musician, pilgrim, student, soil-tilling serf, knight, merchant and town burgher are not just members of the same cultural community (in this case, the Catholic Church), but also co-creators of culture, holding different ranks and fulfilling different tasks in a single system of producing, exchanging and consuming cultural goods.

3. The territorial extent of this system is therefore identical to the extent of culture.

4. However, when considering the religious culture of Polish rural society, Czarnowski assumes that variations of phenomena occur due to the manner in which they are received (in this cause, the receptiveness of peasants to the doctrine of the Church) and adjusted to the conditions of material and spiritual life, thereby determining the nature and displays of piety.

5. Continuing with the example of religious culture (which of course can be applied more generally to other cultural systems), the dissimilarity of acculturation methods (if I may use a term Czarnowski avoided) results from the fact that each 'positive' religion (such as Christianity, Islam or Buddhism) has a current standard that regulates the practice of individual peoples and social classes, but allows deviations, deficiencies and transformations that depend on the nature of general culture in which a community and each of its classes is immersed.

6. Czarnowski goes even further by analysing (in an effort straddling the realms of sociology and psychology) the meanings and changes of literary symbols. As a culture develops, literary symbols (or, in fact, any other symbols) change their meaning or even lose their symbolic value depending on changes in social conditions, understood as a system of all social phenomena, ideal as well as material, in which the group is immersed at the time. This system of all social phenomena cannot, however, be understood narrowly, as social conditions, but, much more broadly, as the social framework of a particular cultural component (in this case, literary symbols), or in an even broader sense as the cultural framework.

7. Czarnowski explains this further in his discourse and states that a literary symbol changes its meaning (or at least that meaning becomes nuanced), whenever it shifts from one group to another in the same culture – in other words, the driving force is its reception.

8. Elements of culture, in this case symbols, may at most (but not exclusively) be treated as tools to consolidate social stratification. He writes: "Literary symbols cement the separateness of the elites, allowing them to take a distinctly high position with regard to other groups and thereby justify their rule or their elitist nature within a specific scope". That 'rule' is understood by Czarnowski as forcing good manners, refined speech or fashion (i.e. cultural patterns) onto other social groups.

Therefore, Czarnowski defines culture first and foremost as a social phenomenon. Culture leads to a system with regional and local variants (subsystems). Czarnowski's theory of culture is strongly founded on sociology. Nevertheless, he considers history of culture as an autonomous discipline whose independence should be guaranteed by historians, for example through founding professorial chairs of history of culture at universities. In a short, unfinished paper devoted to this issue, Czarnowski explained (while analysing the Edict of Milan as an example) what research questionnaires do not belong to history of culture, but did not expand on his last sentence in which he outlined the questions posed by historians of culture.[9]

Czarnowski's *Kultura* [1938], recently brought back from oblivion (after more than fifty years from the original edition) and containing his texts on sociology and history of culture published at various stages of his academic career and compiled for the first time shortly after his death (1937) and immediately before the Second World War, did not make a major impact on Polish historians of pre-Modern culture. It shared the fate of other modernising currents in Polish historiography (and sociology) in the interwar period that were terminated by the war and replaced by rote Marxism imposed as the official methodology. Czarnowski's theory, recalled among others in the paper of A[leksander] Gieysztor [1916–99] at the Ninth General Congress of Polish Historians (1963) and (via Jan Szczepański however) in the discussion on another address of Stanisław Russocki [1930–2002], remained the purview of a small group of historians and enjoyed no lasting recognition in academic curricula.[10]

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[9] Czarnowski, 'Historia a historia kultury', in *id.*, *Dzieła*, v: *Publicystyka. Posłowie. Wspomnienia*, 84–8.

[10] Aleksander Gieysztor, 'Podstawy społeczne i treści ideowe wcześniejszego średniowiecza polskiego', in *Historia kultury średniowiecznej w Polsce. IX Powszechny*

The domination (qualitative if not quantitative) of economic history in post-war medieval studies, turning gradually and more distinctly towards social history only from the 1960s onwards, marginalised the history of culture, its material aspects being afforded a primacy. The history of culture thus became the prey of obsolete research questionnaires or focus on minor matters, and since the 1960s has fallen under the far-reaching influence of various 'sociologisms'. The latter constituted a significant, if one-sided, progress in opening to trends that also dominated Western European historiography, especially the triumphant *histoire nouvelle* championed by *Annales*. A case in point is the first volume of *Kościół w Polsce* [The Church in Poland], edited by Jerzy Kłoczowski [1924–2017].[11]

In the post-war development of Polish medieval studies, the mid-1960s witnessed a breakthrough in approaching the history of culture. It had its origins at the Ninth General Congress of Polish Historians with important papers and stormy discussions, bearing proof that a critical approach to Marxist methodology – which some addresses even dared to ignore – was looming on the horizon. Soon afterwards, Tadeusz Manteuffel established the Centre for Medieval Culture at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences which he was heading. It is worth to devote a while to the Gieysztor paper mentioned above, because it not only fitted the main current of Western, sociologising culture research very well (even despite some clear concessions to Marxism, especially in metaphorical language), but also because the research questionnaire it postulated was later partially implemented in the *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej* [The Culture of Medieval Poland] synthesis.[12] The questionnaire included norms, values and standards of behaviour, social mentality, beliefs and ideologies of groups and classes, and mentality expressed through human works and behaviours (the 'spiritual' culture, also called immaterial/psychic/consciousness

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Zjazd Historyków Polskich w Warszawie 13–15 września 1963, *id.* (ed.), ii: *Referaty i dyskusja* (Warszawa, 1964), 7–40; Stanisław Russocki, while discussing the paper of Stanisław Trawkowski, 'Miasta Polski średniowiecznej jako ośrodki kultury', *ibid.*, 182.

[11] Jerzy Kłoczowski (ed.), *Historia Kościoła w Polsce*, in *Średniowiecze* (Lublin, 1968). This work was also greatly affected by Gabriel Le Bras' sociology of religion, mostly, however, as a methodology of research and not a wider theory.

[12] Jerzy Dowiat (ed.), *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej X–XIII w.* (Warszawa, 1985); Bronisław Geremek (ed.) *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej XIV–XV w.* (Warszawa, 1997).

culture). Yet, Gieysztor cut spiritual culture down to fit the narrowly defined framework of social conditions and denied its superiority over society, warning that it might be treated as a hypostasis. While formulating his position, Gieysztor appears vacillating, recoiling from a too radical break with Marxism. While he referred to the inspirations of social anthropology, ethnography and sociology (with culture treated as a compact system of structures and functions peculiar to each society), and granted that social phenomena serve to bind social structures with sets of information (signs, symbols and values) – an approach quite close to contemporary theory of communication – he nevertheless did not abandon Marxist metaphorical language. These phenomena, he says, "in antagonistic [class] societies attempt to provide them with momentary and shaky balance, or at least impose loose integrating ties, qualitatively different from those expressed by social oppression or law enforcement".[13] Social determinants, treated in the preliminary part [of Gieysztor's paper] almost as if they were absolute, come out much weaker in the conclusion, which is to the effect that the system of ethical notions and motivations, together with the personification of supernatural forces (religion), result in increasing the cohesion among the baptised and separate nobility from the rest of society. Cultural alienation of the ruling class can lead to social disintegration. This was a direct reference to one of Czarnowski's statements: "The borrowing of foreign cultural elements may disrupt the operation of the social system and even the system itself". That this did not happen in Christianised Poland is explained by Gieysztor by the small scale of influence of missions (compared to the thirteenth century "onslaught of foreign culture"), their use of Slavic languages and state-based organisation, the maturity of native culture to receive a new cultural system, the preponderance of native elements in the resulting culture, and the melting of elites into the lower strata (*urbs* and *suburbium* inhabitants, etc.). In the same paper, Gieysztor sketched three circles (discussed in more detail in a later article about national consciousness)[14] with differing scale of reception of the new culture: the ruling class, the early town, and traditional rural culture.

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[13] Gieysztor, 'Podstawy', 12.
[14] Gieysztor, 'Więź regionalna i narodowa w polskim średniowieczu', in *id.* (ed.), *Polska dzielnicowa i zjednoczona. Państwo, społeczeństwo, kultura* (Warszawa, 1972), 9–36.

At the same Congress, a more cautious approach to modernisation of history of culture was taken by Stanisław Trawkowski [1920–2008], who favoured, if inconsistently, economic and social determinism in the development of culture, its structures and phenomena.[15] In a paper on urban culture, he warned against the wholesale application of conceptual apparatus and methods derived from sociology or ethnology. Even though discussion participants (the paper resulted in a stormy discussion and, on occasion, unjustified criticism) noted that precise terminology was lacking and the metaphorical language was untainted with the newest historiography fashions and trends, Trawkowski enunciated the resulting problems in a modern and accurate way that bore witness to his great scholarship on the development of European towns. He not only emphasised that the feudal and state-based nature of early towns in the tenth and eleventh centuries determined the main facets of their cultural image (a topic actually not researched until relatively recently)[16], but also stressed the question of receiving Western culture, which was mostly the achievement of a small group of newcomers. The hypothetically negative answer to the question whether the ethnic aspect can serve as an accurate foundation to explain some features of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century urban culture resulted, however, more from the prejudice of Trawkowski and the previous generation in favour of the civilizational inferiority of the

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[15] Trawkowski, *Miasta*, 5–32; discussed *ibid.*, 164–92. The very strongly expressed economic and social determinism of culture was already put forth in the paper's introduction: "The most essential features of a society's cultural structure are determined by the existing economic and social conditions, and the development of these conditions is the bedrock of cultural transformations". That development was highlighted in a generally delineated opposition (as regards the variety of cultural phenomena) between the town and the countryside: "the importance of economic transformations, ties and opposites between the town and the countryside is peculiar not just because the centers of transmission between the respective cultural systems were mostly driven by them, but also because they decided the nature of social ties and antagonisms and the differences in ideologies, and therefore the material and psychological possibilities and conditions of mutual diffusion of cultural elements between various environments, strata and classes" (*ibid.*, 143–6). However, in the published full text of the paper, economic structures and their transformations are treated rather as (only) the reference framework of cultural processes.

[16] Halina Manikowska, 'Princeps fundator im vorrechtsstädtischen Breslau. Von Piotr Włostowic zu Heinrich dem Bärtigen' [2000], in Eduard Mühle (ed.), *Monarchische und adlige Sakralstiftungen im mittelalterlichen Polen* (Berlin, 2012), 291–316.

Slavs espoused by German historians than from conscientious research. It should be noted, however, that the main issues sketched in the paper and in the resulting discussion were generally not tackled in either the first or the second volume of *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej*.

The problem of cultural reception, so fundamental for Western Europe, was taken up at the Congress in a paper by Jan Baszkiewicz [1930–2011] (reception of Roman law) and in the comments made by Stanisław Russocki.[17] The model they sketched was a much reduced and simplified version of the so-called diffusionist model, consisting of three phases: 1. penetration of new ideas to intellectual elites, 2. local incorporation and novel application of these ideas by the elites (Baszkiewicz), 3. dissemination of achievements with their simultaneous adjustment and modification depending on local possibilities and needs.[18] Baszkiewicz's paper also voiced the opinion that reversed or at least relativized the subordination of cultural phenomena to social phenomena. His research postulate was to search for "first and foremost those [foreign] influences that effectively helped to intellectually 'equip' authors, had lasting influence on social consciousness and consequently, while moulding human imaginations, also formed political and social institutions, norms of conduct and religious dogmas".[19] This position was strongly supported by Jerzy Kłoczowski, who posed a question that reversed the manner of perceiving the relationship between society and culture which was dominant at the Congress. Speaking about the scholastic culture as then studied in Western historiography, he twice stressed that the basic nature of the problem was not limited to inquiring "in what manner university culture … arose from the totality of transformations occurring in society", and that the question of "how [it] influenced social evolution on its own" was equally valid. In a word, "studying the influence of these [university] milieus and their products on the totality of social life is of essential importance". Kłoczowski's further

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[17] Trawkowski, *Miasta*, 85–90.

[18] Contemporary reception theories underline that everything which is subject to transmission is necessarily destined to be transmitted and the reception process is not limited to pure 'consumption' of cultural products, but rather tends to develop a new quality during the stages of incorporation, adaptation, reaction, reply and even rejection.

[19] Jan Baszkiewicz, 'Prawo rzymskie i prawo kanoniczne w kulturze politycznej Polski XIII i XIV stulecia. Zagajenie', in *Historia kultury średniowiecznej*, 46.

arguments betrayed the approach of a historian of culture who fell under the sway of sociology, whose research task was to determine "the manner in which scholastic culture milieus influenced slow changes in the very foundations of intellectual and psychological life of mankind, in what we could call the structures of mentality, thinking and feeling of particular categories of people". The task was, therefore, to reflect on the influence of philosophical and theological thinking within the framework of integral social development.[20]

If we review the entirety of culture-related currents in medieval studies immediately following the Congress, it must be noted that they remained far behind the history of material culture which has been split off (without good reason, according to Czarnowski), institutionalised and granted the stamp of legitimacy (in 1919, a decree of Lenin established the Academy of Material Culture History). The greatest achievement of medieval studies in the 1960s I reckon to be the volume of the *Kościół w Polsce* series devoted to the medieval period, in which, it must be noted, history of culture was made subordinate to the social history of the Church. However, there is no need to complain about this.

In the 1960s and 1970s, any cultural studies that wished to appear modern had to play second fiddle to the *Annales* brand of social history which, in Marc Bloch's seminal study of feudal society,[21] revealed its tendency to expand uncontrollably, swallowing up all disciplines of history.[22] Consequently, and I believe fortunately, it has left behind its sociologism, which especially in post-war years had been rife with Marxism. To sketch the matter in a very cursory manner, this resulted in the split of various currents in social history that arose before the war under the influence of sociology. In France, this was on one part the 'total' history of civilization and its medieval chapter by Jacques Le Goff, issued in Poland under the symptomatically altered title of *Kultura średniowiecznej Europy* [The Culture of Medieval Europe].[23]

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[20] Kłoczowski's statement in the discussion, *ibid.*, 94 ff.

[21] Marc Bloch, 'La société féodale. La formation des liens de dépendance', *L'évolution de l'humanité*, xxxiv (Paris, 1939). Polish edition: *Społeczeństwo feudalne*, trans. Eligia Bąkowska (Warszawa, 1981).

[22] Cf. Roger Chartier and Daniel Roche, *Sociale (Histoire)*, in Jacques Le Goff, Roger Chartier, and Jacques Revel (eds.), *La nouvelle histoire* (Paris, 1978), 515–21.

[23] Jacques Le Goff, *La civilisation de l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1964). Polish edition: *Kultura średniowiecznej Europy*, trans. Hanna Szumańska-Grossowa (Warszawa, 1970).

On the other, it was the social history[24] launched among modern history French specialists with connections to the *Annales* school (such as Ernest Labrousse), which having started from the paradigm of society organising itself into classes defined according to their place in relations of production,[25] in later studies widely expanded its source base and turned to quantitative methods. In respect of these methods, entirely new possibilities were offered by the first computers. Everything was counted and treated statistically, at times revealing anything but the studied reality. A case in point are studies of criminality based on court ledgers, which contrary to assertions eventually produced not statistics on crime, but on court cases. The history of culture was likewise not immune to the allure of statistical methods. Their limitations and consequences for research questionnaires were indeed recognised first by the most distinguished quantitative history researchers, mostly dealing in historical demography.[26] The next decade brought the retreat of 'sociologism', while quantitative history was still holding its ground in various areas of historical research. Instead, on the one hand, the history of mentality extended its influence, and on the other, impacting the former, historical anthropology went from strength to strength, conquering one discipline after another.[27]

The history of mentality may be treated as a bridge between sociologised social history and historical anthropology. Its forerunners were

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[24] Cf., among others, Ernest Labrousse, *La crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'Ancien Régime et au début de la Révolution*, i: *Aperçus généraux, sources, méthode, objectifs, la crise de la viticulture* (Paris, 1944); Adeline Daumard and François Furet, 'Structures et relations sociales à Paris au milieu du XVIIIe siècle', *Cahiers des Annales*, xviii (Paris, 1961); Roland Mousnier, 'Problèmes de méthode dans l'étude des structures sociales des XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles', in Konrad Repgen and Stephan Skalweit (eds.), *Spiegel der Geschichte. Festgabe für Max Braubach zum 10. April 1964* (Münster, 1964), 550–64.

[25] Despite the seemingly identical or similar terminology and metaphorical language, disputes with 'orthodox' Marxists abounded, a good example of which is Labrousse's wide understanding of the bourgeois category, from which the Marxists excluded hired workers, rented property owners, government officials etc., as well as his dispute with Pierre Villar.

[26] Cf. especially Pierre Chaunu, 'Histoire quantitative, histoire sérielle', *Cahiers des Annales*, xxxvii (Paris, 1978).

[27] Three researchers, who actually used very extensive research questionnaires, may serve as an example of the abandoning of quantitative historical demographics – Philippe Ariès, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber.

works written after the First World War by researchers with not just varied fields of interests, but also with different backgrounds: Johan Huizinga,[28] Maurice Halbwachs[29] or Norbert Elias.[30] Oriented more on regional than social differences, aiming to construct models of mentality as *longue durée* processes, the history of mentality also posited that these models had a dispersed existence and questioned their consistency.[31] This in turn led historians of mentality to study, on the one hand, the individual components of collective *longue durée* mentality (such as attitudes towards death[32]) and, on the other, microhistory.

Instead of the ubiquitous classes and strata, key concepts now involved ties, structures, rituals, symbols and symbolic meanings and attitudes. Social history abandoned large modelling of society in favour of studying the segments of social structures differentiated according to various criteria: functional identity (family, age group, job-profession), membership in religious or ideological systems, intellectual background. This perspective encompassed both microhistory and syntheses of public life observed on the level of monarchy and, likewise, that of the town. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie can be counted among the founders of the microhistorical current: having started as a Braudel-school total historian and quantitative demographer, he

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[28] Johan Huizinga, *Herfsttij der middeleeuwen. Studie over levens- en gedachtenvormen der XIVde en XVde eeuw in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden* (Haarlem, 1919). Polish edition: *Jesień średniowiecza*, trans. Tadeusz Brzostowski (Warszawa, 1961) [English edition: *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. Frederik Hopman (New York, 1924) and *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Peyton J. Rodney and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago, 1996)].

[29] Cf. especially Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris, 1925) and 'La mémoire collective chez les musiciens', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, cxxvii, 3–4 (1939), 136–65; as well as *Esquisse d'une psychologie des classes sociales*, Petite bibliothèque sociologique internationale, série B: Les classiques de la sociologie, ii (Paris, 1938).

[30] Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, vols. i–ii (Basel, 1939). Polish (partial) edition: Jacek Banaszkiewicz (ed.), *Przemiany obyczajów w cywilizacji Zachodu*, trans. Tadeusz Zabłudowski (Warszawa, 1980); *id.*, 'Die höfische Gesellschaft. Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie', *Soziologische Texte*, liv, (Neuwied, 1969).

[31] See the articles in the *La nouvelle histoire* encyclopaedia cited above: Michel Vovelle, *L'histoire et la longue durée*, 316–43; and Philippe Ariès, *L'histoire des mentalités*, 402–23.

[32] Philippe Ariès, *L'homme devant la mort*, vols. i–ii, Points Histoire, 82/83 (Paris, 1977). Polish edition: *Człowiek i śmierć*, trans. Eligia Bąkowska (Warszawa, 1989).

became (with his study on Montaillou) the observer of a small *longue durée* society.[33] In turn, an excellent and novel example of anthropological and historical synthesis is the work of Richard Trexler, one of the founders of historical anthropology, entitled *Public Life of Renaissance Florence*.[34] In the book, the relationship between social history and history of culture is defined as much more complex than in overly sociologising approaches. What interests Trexler is the manner in which the Florentines from Dante to Michelangelo interacted with one another, with foreigners and with the realm of the divine. He wrote: "Yet genius in Florence as elsewhere emerged from a collective way of life, from systems of formal communications that focused, identified and evaluated the actions of its residents … [Ritual] played a central part in the recurrent, powerful political process by which major urban groups competitively created and asserted the primacy of their own definitions of the city's rationale and structure".[35]

Social history done in this way became problematic due to cultural conditions of social phenomena, which means, no less and no more, a reversal of the previously dominant research perspective. In other words, social varieties (differences) are transmitted or caused either by cultural differences (literacy, lifestyle, uneven and varying access to culture). The influence of such a cognitive position made the theory of communication, which was at that time making inroads into social history and history of culture – initially as mostly psychocybernetics or social cybernetics with a strong mathematical foundation – acquire an anthropological perspective, encompassing increasingly more dimensions in studies on, for example, political history, which should rather be referred to as history of political culture.[36]

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[33] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris, 1975). Polish edition: *Montaillou, wioska heretyków 1294–1324*, trans. Ewa D. Żółkiewska (Warszawa, 1988).

[34] Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life of Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1980).

[35] *Ibid.*, XIII, XIX. In this respect, Trexler questions the position of Weber, who while recognising that social order in the ancient city was characterised by ritual exclusivism, yet distinguished it from the medieval city where he believed ritual social identity was absent.

[36] An excellent example are the works of Gerd Althoff, especially *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter. Kommunikation in Friede und Fehde* (Darmstadt, 1997); and *Die Macht der Rituale. Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 2003); as well as Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: the Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge, 2008).

The new social and cultural history of the 1970s was still influenced by sociology but – as was the case with anthropological influences – in particular empirical sociology, mostly from the Chicago School (one of whose pillars was Florian Znaniecki [1882–1958]). It was from there that medieval studies derived the important issue (including notions and concepts) of oral history that resulted in focusing on the importance of oral transmission in culture, especially medieval culture. The research questionnaire was also extended with such issues as the desire for and display of prestige, striving for dominance, need for security. The Chicago School was also, to put it briefly, impacting social history, for example the history of crime, which back then enjoyed great popularity alongside the history of mentality. Both disciplines were unified in the work of Bronisław Geremek [1932–2008] who studied, among others, the margins of society and attitude to exclusion, two not necessarily tangent dimensions of historic reality: sociocultural values and socioeconomic relationships.[37]

The greatest achievement of Polish medieval studies in those years, at least as regards the subject and the historical period dealt with here, was the second volume of *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej*, whose concept was for the most part the work of Geremek. Already in the introduction, he cited the most important inspirations derived from such related disciplines as social history (especially, as apparent while reading the book, the *Annales* school), history of mentality, ethnology and structuralism. However, his understanding of culture transmitted to the book's co-authors was clearly saturated with the thought of Czarnowski.[38] In contrast to the first volume edited by Jerzy Dowiat,[39] the authors abandoned the distinction, so dear to Manteuffel, between material and spiritual culture, yet put a very strong emphasis on the social stratigraphy of culture, making social structure the most important point of reference for cultural phenomena.

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[37] In his belief, an individual or a group may participate in relationships of production while rejecting a society's ethical norms or being excluded from its hierarchy of values. Cf. especially his *Ludzie marginesu w średniowiecznym Paryżu. XIV–XV wiek* (Warszawa, 1971); *id., Litość i szubienica. Dzieje nędzy i miłosierdzia* (Warszawa, 1989).

[38] Cited only in the footnotes to the chapter authored by Geremek, 'Poczucie przestrzeni i świadomość geograficzna', in *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej XIV–XV w.*, 628–68; footnote 45.

[39] Dowiat (ed.), *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej X–XIII w.*

They did not, however, propose to reduce cultural processes "to social coordinates", recognising that, when determining cultural levels, it was more important to distinguish between learned and popular culture and that the "place in culture" is determined "more by the level of literacy or settlement-related issues than social condition".[40]

Apart from cultural products which (with the exception of the conceptually diverging chapter on art[41]) were not autonomous compared to other issues, the second volume's questionnaire covered also socially varied cultural models. Their presentation took into account cultural stratigraphy, both as regards differences in the cultural inventory of particular strata and milieus, and oppositions resulting from the level of literacy and the degree of high culture assimilation (learned versus popular culture, elite versus mass culture). The differentiation of culture was therefore structured around cultural models of particular milieus. The strongly marked sociological approach (based on estates and differences in material status) is particularly apparent in chapters written by Jacek Wiesiołowski [1940–2016], which deal with the culture of peasants, nobles and ecclesiastics. The differences were also situated spatially (cultural regions, urban versus rural areas, city versus town). In these sections of the work, the basic reference framework for culture became social structure as well as the manner and locations of culture formation (i.e. the issues of reception) which was analysed as social differences in cultural behaviours and participation in culture. The social differentiation of cultural phenomena is also present in the third part of the synthesis entitled 'Collective imagination and mentality' and dealing with collective imagination, feelings and behaviours (attitudes towards death, sin, recreation), faith and knowledge, ideology, political culture and historical consciousness, the sense of space.

The impact of sociology of culture was most apparent in the general research programme by which the authors were guided: capturing collective features within a community organised by state, political, ethnic, religious or civilizational (and thus strictly *social*) structures. Chief importance was given to capturing *longue durée* processes such as the collective behaviours and means of communication and expression

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[40] Bronisław Geremek, 'Poziomy kultury: przekaz ustny i kultura literacka', in *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej XIV–XV w.*, 366.

[41] Tadeusz Trajdos, *Pomniki sztuki gotyckiej* w *Polsce, ibid.*, 766–856.

of thoughts and feelings, which relegated the dynamics of histori-
cal processes (the emergence of the united monarchy, its eastward
expansion which served as a background for the shifting of cultures,
urbanisation etc.) to the role of historical context, not recognised by
all authors.

The image of medieval culture drawn in the first volume stopped
at the early thirteenth century and in the second dealt mostly with
the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Thirteenth century was thus
ignored, skirting around the huge issue of cultural reception follow-
ing the influx of German settlers into Polish lands. On the other
hand, the new culture reception processes found an important place
in the first volume, with Christianisation and Occidentalisation of
native culture being one of the most important issues treated there.
As point of departure for reconstructing these processes, Dowiat took
the assumption of necessary syncretism, both religious and (more
specifically) cultural, and the pyramid of cultural change effects – from
the wide bottom of 'people' slowly abandoning the former cultural
system to the very narrow top formed by the royal court and groups
of nobles who converted to Christianity. The author did not, however,
use a much more dynamic acculturation model. Acculturation as
a term first appeared in American anthropology at the end of the
nineteenth century and in social sciences in the 1930s. In that period,
it was much in vogue among the so-called diffusionists who studied
the reception of culture according to a dissemination-focused model,
analysing the impacts, contacts, flows and absorption of new cultural
currents and trends.[42] Alfred Louis Kroeber, one of the most renowned
American anthropologists of the early twentieth century, introduced

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[42] The 'classic' definition of acculturation, considered to have been proposed
by Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville J. Herkovits in 1936, is as follows:
"Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of
individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact,
with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups.
… Acculturation is to be distinguished from culture-change, which it is only but
one aspect, and from assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation. It
is also be distinguished from diffusion, which, while occurring in all instances of
acculturation, is not only a phenomenon which frequently takes place without
the occurrence of the type of contact between peoples specified in the definition
given above, but also constitutes only one aspect of the process of acculturation"
see 'Memorandum for the study of acculturation', *American Anthropologist*, xxxviii,
149–52. Cf. also Elikia M'Bokolo, 'Acculturation', in *La nouvelle histoire*, 21–4.

into this model an important distinction between the dissemination of a particular culture through contact (later refined as the impact model) and through stimulation.[43] Such understanding of acculturation processes found its use specially in studies on the cultural consequences of colonialism, conducted most intensively in the 1960s when the colonial empires were on the wane. They influenced Polish sociological, ethnological and ethnographic studies, but had a much lesser impact on historical studies (Józef Chlebowczyk [1924–85]) of borderland areas, recently discussed by Iwona Kabzińska.[44]

In Polish medieval studies, a model approach to the issues of acculturation was used generally only by Andrzej Janeczek in his works devoted to Red Ruthenia.[45] Thus, there remains an area untilled by historians, inviting the scrutiny of archaeologists and urban historians of the 1950s–70s. It includes the changes in culture caused by German colonization – by peasants, burghers, and knights – which have recently been dealt with, albeit on a limited scale and in the United States, by Piotr Górecki.[46] One must, however, be cautious in using culture reception models, especially the sociological and psychological theories of assimilation and acculturation. This also applies to studying the interaction between supraregional movements and local situations following the centre-periphery relationship. The methodological problem lies both in adapting these theories to former (medieval, in our case) societies and in the ambiguity of notions such as assimilation or acculturation, as well as the variability of underlying conceptualizations, all the more so when the latter are subordinated to the ideology of multiculturalism and the exaltation of national (ethnic) minorities at the expense of other minorities. For instance Josef Schmidt, rejecting the concept of multicultural society,

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[43] Alfred L. Kroeber, *Anthropology* (New York, 1923).

[44] In the address entitled 'Człowiek na pograniczu kulturowym' given at the 2nd Congress of Polish Medievalists in 2005.

[45] Cf. especially Andrzej Janeczek, 'Ethnicity, religious disparity and the formation of the multicultural society of Red Ruthenia in the late Middle Ages', in Thomas Wünsch and Janeczek (eds.), *On the Frontier of Latin Europe: Integration and Segregation in Red Ruthenia, 1350-1600* (Warszawa, 2004), 15–46.

[46] Cf. Piotr Górecki, 'Pamięć, forma literacka a tworzenie historii: opat Piotr z Henrykowa jako dziejopis i doradca prawny', *Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych*, lx (2000), 71–110; *id.*, *A Local Society in Transition: the Henryków Book and Related Documents*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies. Studies and texts, 155 (Toronto, 2007).

says that a society can have only one culture and uses the notions of subculture and partial culture (*Teilkultur*).[47]

As one of the fundamental issues, the reception of foreign culture, is absent from the second volume of *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej*, a conclusion can be drawn that the questionnaire prepared for the book and carrying it out was a half-hearted effort compared to the most important and fertile trends of Western historiography in the 1970s. I believe this was caused not so much by the novel approach to the history of culture in Polish historiography that was reflected in the volume, but by the stronger impact of social history compared to the theory of culture on one hand and the failure of metaphorical language, something taken for granted today, to take root in Polish medieval studies on the other. Hence the chapter titles such as 'The town: social structures and lifestyle' or 'The ecclesiastical milieu and culture'. Younger members of the audience may need to learn that the term 'monastic culture', now so ubiquitous, was only introduced to historical studies by Jean Leclercq and Georges Duby. The synthesis, commenced in the early 1970s and finished in the mid-1980s, did not, however, betray a predilection for the currents of cultural studies that were to dominate historiography in recent years, which considered symbolic structures and social communication systems as the primary factors organising culture.

In the synthesis, much space was devoted to rural culture explained by Jacek Wiesiołowski, shown first by a social historian and then by a cultural historian that did not shy from using ethnographic studies pertaining to later eras.[48] The first approach (which is also present in the image of Polish gentry culture[49]) strongly (and, in my opinion, excessively) accented social processes as triggers for cultural phenomena. The other approach heralded a breakthrough which was more clearly seen in later studies of Stanisław Bylina [1936–2017] on 'popular' religiosity.[50]

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[47] Josef Schmid, *Deutsche Bevölkerungsfrage und politisches Handeln. Eine argumentative Analyse* (Bonn, 1990).

[48] Jacek Wiesiołowski, 'Środowisko społeczne wsi' and 'Kultura i obyczaje kręgu wiejskiego', in *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej XIV–XV w.*, 117–29; 130–69.

[49] *Ibid.*, 170–88.

[50] Among his many works, see the recently published synthetic approach: Stanisław Bylina, *Religijność późnego średniowiecza. Chrześcijaństwo a kultura tradycyjna w Europie środkowo-wschodniej w XIV–XV w.* (Warszawa, 2009).

In studies on social differentiation of cultural phenomena, the separate nature of 'popular' culture enjoys a quasi-dogmatic status[51]. The first shot at analysing Polish history according to research questionnaires suggested mostly by the *Annales* school must be considered to be the 'Elite and mass culture in late medieval Poland' conference organised by B[ronisław] Geremek in Kazimierz nad Wisłą in 1975.[52] As with the history of mentality, at that time this subject was quite fashionable and promising in French and, in part, Italian historiography. Recognised immanent features of popular culture include conservatism, *longue durée*, seemingly unlimited possibilities of comparative studies and openness to methods used in anthropology. Another motive and the overarching objective of historians was reaching the 'people' not visible in the sources, at least medieval ones, to the 'silent majority' beloved by Gurevich[53] and others, and finally the admiration of then-discovered Bakhtin,[54] whose hypothetical vision of 'popular' culture (drawn, as we remember, from a work found at the apex of high culture) was immediately treated as gospel truth.

Springing from folklore studies born in the late eighteenth century from the fascination with the peasantry (or the people), popular culture, as a concept and area of study, made a definitive distinction between elites and the people (or the unspecified remainder of society), a division that became the point of departure and an important

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[51] Halina Manikowska, 'Does the concept of "popular religion" in the Middle Ages still make sense? Regarding Alicja Szulc's *Homo Religiosus*' [2010], *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, cxxi (2014), Special Issue, 157–168.

[52] Bronisław Geremek (ed.), *Kultura elitarna a kultura masowa w Polsce późnego średniowiecza* (Wrocław, 1978).

[53] Among many Aron Gurevich's works in which he attempted to find a way of reaching the 'people', the following should be mentioned in particular: *Problemy srednevekovoj narodnoj kul'tury* (Moskva, 1981). Polish edition: *Problemy średniowiecznej kultury ludowej*, trans. Zdzisław Dobrzyniecki (Warszawa, 1987) [English edition: *Medieval popular culture: problems of bielief and perception* (Cambridge, 1988)]. Note also his *Kul'tura i obščestvo srednevekovoj Evropy glazami sovremennikov. Exempla XIII veka* (Moskva, 1989). Polish edition: *Kultura i społeczeństwo średniowiecznej Europy. Exempla XIII wieku*, trans. Zdzisław Dobrzyniecki (Warszawa, 1997)

[54] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Tvorčestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaja kul'tura Srednevekov'ja i Renessansa* (Moskva, 1965). Polish edition: *Twórczość Franciszka Rabelais'go a kultura ludowa średniowiecza i renesansu*, trans. Anna and Andrzej Goreń (Kraków, 1975) [English edition: *Rabelais and his world*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA, 1968)].

element of conceptualising the culture of the studied historical period, not least of the Middle Ages. The main issue, however, was how to define 'the people'. As regards social and economic disparities, the people as opposed to the elites is a notion that finds very limited temporal and spatial usage which in the categories of medieval culture is blurred and uncertain – does the term mean peasants, lower social classes in general, or perhaps all those who did not have direct access to the written word? Hence there occurred problems with defining the opposite pair and replacing the 'popular' (culture or religion) with another epithet such as 'mass' or 'unlearned'. The distinction between the elites and the people, first made in economic and social history on the basis of social and economic disparities, was therefore extended by the extremes of cultural norms. A good example here is the notion of popular religion (religiosity), defined as a system of beliefs and rites found on the margins of society and opposing, or at least differing from, the official religion of the clergy (and the elites who adhered to it).[55] The new, polysemous and non-literal terms, the generally unclear composition and doubtful conceptualisation made popular religion, especially in the 1970s, the focal point of a very interesting and inspiring discussion rather than a field of study in its own right. On the other hand, the completed studies, often using excellent methodology and greatly expanding the field of historiography and our knowledge about medieval religious practices and rites, have eventually failed to produce a system of beliefs and practices which could without hesitation be called 'popular' or 'mass' in the sense of being separate and autonomous from the official religion. A more vociferous opposition to this line of research was already heard in the 1980s, for example in the works of André Vauchez or certain English historians who strongly distanced themselves from the famed and often methodologically excellent output of the *Annales* school. In recent years, researchers have placed more emphasis on religious life. Here, the solution to the problems of social and cultural distinctions turned out to be their higher complexity and the matching of cultural norms to the differences between specific milieus (urban, rural, and

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[55] Cf. especially Raoul Manselli, *La religion populaire au Moyen Âge. Problèmes de méthode et d'histoire* (Montréal, 1975); and Etienne Delaruelle, *La piété populaire au Moyen Âge* (Torino, 1975); Alphonse Dupront, *Du sacré. Croisades et pèlerinages. Images et langages* (Paris, 1987).

royal religiosity). British historians aimed at presenting a rationally coherent image of medieval spiritual life and piety as a system (with pilgrimage being an important and representative part thereof; see Jonathan Sumption[56]), or offering detailed studies of such topics as the religious formation of the laity and their participation in liturgy on the verge of the Reformation. The concept of 'popular' religion became useless. It was replaced by 'traditional religion' that did not evoke artificial distinctions and remained within the boundaries of 'official' religion (Eamon Duffy[57]); the conclusion was that distinguishing between 'elite' and 'popular' religion was tantamount to drawing distinctions that did not exist (Ronald N. Swanson[58]). In the 1980s, as the focus shifted elsewhere, namely to the religious message and its reception, the concept of 'popular religion' was being increasingly replaced with another – 'religion of the laity' – which more adroitly captured the division between the teachers and the taught in the Church.[59] The subordinate position of the laity as the latter did not have to mean that laymen were passive and defensive: the twelfth-century religious revival, with its apostolic movement, voluntary poverty and mendicant orders, prove this more than enough.[60]

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[56] Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: an Image of Medieval Religion* (London, 1975).

[57] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven, 1992).

[58] Ronald N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215–c. 1515* (Cambridge, 1995). See also the recent book of Caroline W. Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, 2007).

[59] Klaus Schreiner, 'Laienfrömmigkeit – Frömmigkeit von Eliten oder Frömmigkeit des Volkes? Zur Sozialen Verfaßtheit laikaler Frömmigkeitspraxis im späten Mittelalter', in *id.* (ed.), *Laienfrömmigkeit im späten Mittelalter. Formen*, *Funktionen*, *politisch-soziale Zusammenhänge*, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs. Kolloquien, 20 (München, 1992), 1–78.

[60] An important role in shifting the focus and recognising medieval Christianity and spirituality as a complex system was played by the studies of André Vauchez, see especially *La spiritualité du Moyen Âge occidental VIIIᵉ–XIIᵉ siècles*, Collection SUP. L'historien, 19 (Paris, 1975). Polish edition: *Duchowość średniowiecza*, trans. Hanna Zaremska (Warszawa, 1996); *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge: d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques*, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 241 (Rome, 1981); *Les laïcs au Moyen Âge: pratiques et expériences religieuses* (Paris, 1987); *Ordini mendicanti e società italiana, XII–XIV secolo* (Milano, 1990), as well as *Poteri carismatici e informali: chiesa e società medioevali*, Agostino P. Bagliani, Jole Agrimi, André Vauchez (eds.), Prisma, 150 (Palermo, 1992).

Abandoning the concept of popular religion also made it possible to turn to the laity's religious creativity (the great domain of celebrations) and religious imagination (including those aspects that could not be rationalised theologically). Finally, it allowed scholars to distinguish the immense area of Christian teaching, i.e. religion crafted *ad usum populi*. Statements questioning not so much terms like 'orthodoxy' or 'superstition' as their understanding were discovered or recalled. The distinction between popular and official religion shut out from the latter thousands of forms of piety which historians, often misled by medieval zealots, recognised as contrary to the dogma and falling outside the never clearly defined system of learned religion. One could recognise here, at least to some degree, a distant echo of the concept of Raffaello Morghen,[61] the master of Raul Manselli, according to whom the strength of Christian religious tradition in the Middle Ages was divided between the Church hierarchy and the 'untamed' and basically uncontrolled religious movement ingrained in the religious consciousness of the laity.

To return to wider studies on popular culture, the conceptualizations used therein were affected not only by old-time ethnography and newer ethnology, but also sociology and, most of all, anthropology. Historians referred to Robert Redfield's definition of 'little tradition':[62] in each civilization, the 'great tradition' which is the heritage of a few thinkers (like medieval 'learned men' and educated clergymen) exists in parallel to the 'small tradition' which is the heritage of many individuals who generally do not engage in much thought (the masses or 'the people'). This definition, radically hierarchical and thus reductionist, has been corrected by Peter Burke in his studies on popular culture: in late medieval and early modern Europe, the great and little traditions were not perfectly reflected in social hierarchy, because the elites participated in the latter but the 'common people' did not participate in the former.[63] I believe that this correction is

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[61] Raffaello Morghen, *Medioevo Cristiano*, Biblioteca di cultura moderna, 491 (Bari, 1951).

[62] Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture: an Anthropological Approach to Civilization* (Chicago, 1956), particularly the chapter entitled 'The Social Organization of Tradition', 67 ff.

[63] Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1978). Polish edition: *Kultura ludowa we wczesnonowożytnej Europie*, trans. Robert Pucek, Michał Szczubiałka (Warszawa, 2009).

insufficient as well. Participation, even reduced, in the 'great tradition' was ensured primarily by the liturgy. Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas stated that members of the laity who did not celebrate the sacraments or study theological questions can demonstrate forms of faith suitable for their estate. This faith, however, is identical to the faith of scholars and ecclesiastics.

However, even in this area of study the most difficult issue was not so much reaching the culture of the 'silent people' than capturing the relationships and contacts between the too sharply distinguished elite and mass cultures (which was, in fact, the subject that the Kazimierz conference [of 1975] was devoted to). One had to find places for this contact (understood literally)[64] and the methods of transmission,[65] long considered unilateral – from high (scholarly, or elite) culture to popular culture, which always resulted in the reduced reception of the former. Yet, paying attention to transmissions in the other direction, from the oral culture of lower classes, aroused inordinate excitement and optimism concerning the importance of this channel in the enriching of high culture. The second volume of *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej* took a more moderate stance on this. When studying culture as a social phenomenon, contemporary Polish medieval studies, while disposing of a wide range of methodologies and research methods,[66] bounded between studying detailed, unique cases on the one hand and a model, abstract approach that searches for and defines regularities on the other, seem to be stuck somewhere in the middle, preferring to describe collected source data. In recent years, while I was studying more the manner used to describe reality in the Late Middle Ages[67] rather than the reality itself and embodying more or less successfully the travelling historian, the post-Gadamer hermeneutist, or even the

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[64] The title of one of the chapters in the second volume is noteworthy, see Hanna Zaremska, 'Miejsca spotkań kultury masowej: karczmy i łaźnie', in *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej XIV–XV w.*, 239–55.

[65] Cf. the very accurate recent approach of Wojciech Brojer, *Diabeł w wyobraźni średniowiecznej. Trzynastowieczne exempla kaznodziejskie* (Wrocław, 2003).

[66] This methodological pluralism was, I believe, very accurately characterised by Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology* (New York, 1983). Polish edition: *Wiedza lokalna. Dalsze eseje z zakresu antropologii interpretatywnej*, trans. Dorota Wolska (Kraków, 2005), especially 29–44.

[67] Halina Manikowska, *Jerozolima – Rzym – Compostela. Wielkie pielgrzymowanie u schyłku średniowiecza* (Wrocław, 2008).

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post-Wittgenstein analyst ("do not ask for the meaning, ask for the use"), I could find no help or guidance in Polish works.

According to Clifford Geertz, the vocation of social sciences (including both social history and history of culture) is to discover the order of social life. Yet his research programme, as befits an anthropologist, is mostly oriented on uncovering the sense of institutions, imaginations, actions, behaviours and customs for those who created them, moved within them and used them. His anthropology of culture deals with the structures of meaning according to which individuals and communities lead their lives, and especially symbols and systems of symbols conditioning the development, transmission, imposition, sharing, alteration etc. of these structures. Geertz thus abandoned the former objective of these sciences, which was to uncover the dynamics of social life; he was rather interested in the anatomy of thought and the analysis of symbolic forms and systems. "Culture is a system of symbolic forms. A theory of culture, if it becomes semiotic, must not only define the signs, but also trace their life in society", he adds.[68] This lesson was learned in Poland primarily by medievalists dealing with the Early Middle Ages[69] (Jacek Banaszkiewicz, Zbigniew Dalewski, Andrzej Pleszczyński) – a lesson, we might add, already begun by Max Weber, who asserted that in each political centre, the ruling elite has a set of symbolic forms at their disposal that explains their rule. The analysis of such forms and communities is an organic, not an auxiliary, part of their interpretation. The use of symbols and immersion in culture is a social activity.

Some newest studies, which we are allowed to treat as history of culture but which are sometimes distant from anthropology, also seem to return to old, pre-Marxist axioms. It is mostly culture that drives social change. In his 2006 book entitled *La religion de l'État*, Alain Boureau traces back the beginning of the still existing (though waning)

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[68] *Ibid.*, 44.

[69] Beginning with the book of Jacek Banaszkiewicz, *Podanie o Piaście i Popielu. Studium porównawcze nad wczesnośredniowiecznymi tradycjami dynastycznymi* [1986] (Warszawa, 2010), one could list here the following publications: Zbigniew Dalewski, *Władza, przestrzeń, ceremoniał. Miejsce i uroczystość inauguracji władcy w Polsce średniowiecznej do końca XIV wieku* (Warszawa, 1996); *id., Rytuał i polityka. Opowieść Galla Anonima o konflikcie Bolesława Krzywoustego ze Zbigniewem* (Warszawa, 2005); and numerous articles; also: Andrzej Pleszczyński, *Przestrzeń i polityka. Studium rezydencji władcy wcześniejszego średniowiecza. Przykład czeskiego Wyszehradu* (Lublin, 2000).

nation-state or republic to scholastic thought and its considerations on human nature.[70] Thought preceded systemic solutions, he appears to say, going back to the 'idealist' roots of scientific historiography. It may be a paradox, but in 1963 a similar statement was heard with respect to the renaissance of Roman law from Jan Baszkiewicz at the Ninth General Congress of Polish Historians that I mentioned above.[71]

The last and final remark is that Polish studies on medieval culture lack a perceivable influence (except for the rather unassuming attempts of literary historians) of the cognitive turn that forces one to recognise the entire human perceptual apparatus as a set of filters through which information about the world passes and to treat them as factors creating knowledge and culture.[72] The methodological pluralism that now dominates social sciences and even allows for theoretical (but well-thought) eclecticism is, I believe, an opportunity for history of culture to cast off the excessively heavy yoke of social history imposed in the early twentieth century by the nascent, modern, and heavily 'sociologised' theory of culture. The reversal of perspective that I have already mentioned, which consists of studying the 'cultural circumstances' of social phenomena, should not, of course, form a denial of the social nature of culture.

trans. Damian Jasiński
     Gwidon Naskrent

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[70] Alain Boureau, *La religion de l'État. La construction de la république étatique dans le discours théologique de l'Occident médiéval (1250–1350)* (Paris, 2006).

[71] Baszkiewicz's approach was criticised by Tadeusz Lalik, who said that the paper's author failed to pay attention to the essential change in European social structure during the formation of canon law and the renaissance of Roman law, namely the emergence of the system of estates.

[72] Andrzej Dąbrówka, 'Refleksja nad sposobami pisania polskich historii literatury', in Stefan Kwiatkowski (ed.), *Mediewistyka polska w XX wieku (wybrane problemy)*. II Kongres Mediewistów Polskich (Wrocław, 2008), 13–30.