

STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, PHILOSOPHY
AND HISTORY OF IDEAS 16

Maria Gołębiewska (ed.)

Cultural Normativity

This book refers to the question of cultural normativity. The texts of the book present the diverse profiles of cultural normativity: from philosophical assumptions and indications relating to the sources of axiology and normativity in general to analyses of selected examples of social practices and the reconstruction of declared or presupposed kinds of cultural normativity. The authors evaluate the distinction between normativity and normativeness as a state of norms, they describe the relationships between cultural normativity and ethics. This issue is particularly important with regard to the 20th century criticism of essentialism, the primacy of the culturalist

position in humanities and the importance of the concept of difference in social sciences.

The Editor

Maria Gołębiewska is Associate Professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The fields of her research are contemporary philosophy (phenomenology, philosophy of existence, structuralism and post-structuralism) and the modern sources of contemporary philosophy (epistemology, philosophy of language).

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Cultural Normativity

Between Philosophical Apriority
and Social Practices

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Maria Gołębowska

Introduction, or the Cultural Conditioning of Normativity

Abstract: The text presents all the main theses of the book with the qualification of the methodological positions concerning cultural normativity. The particular considerations characterise a context of contemporary reflection on cultural normativity, especially the presuppositions on the cultural authorisation and legitimisation of the individual and social actions.

Keywords: cultural conditioning, essentialism, cultural relativism, authorisation, legitimisation.

A book with texts that differ on the position of research and methodology, although thematically consistent, requires a certain guide – an introduction should be such a guide, indicating the consistency of content of the texts in the volume. Therefore, I suggest an introduction concerning the contents of the articles found herein – all the texts concern the problems of rules, regulations and laws that constitute “cultural normativity”. These texts refer to current research findings in the humanities at the beginning of the 21st century, in which, however, numerous assumptions of various philosophical and methodological traditions are present. It may be said that the book is a meeting of various modern research approaches that concern cultural normativity:

- 1) from references to variously-defined essentialism (natural law as the law of reason, a permanent species endowment of humans as specific beings – mental and physical, culture as a product specific to human beings, speaking to their specific “essence” or to the innate characteristics of the species),
- 2) through cultural relativism (which serves to explain the similarities and differences in the normativities of various cultural circles),
- 3) to methodologically diverse, modern research on cultural anthropology (semiotic and semantic studies, corporal and gender studies, as well as research on the city and social space).

The texts have been divided thematically into subsequent sections, which introduce the reader to increasingly detailed findings regarding cultural normativity.

The first section contains texts, through which their authors question philosophical assumptions and theses regarding cultural normativity, but also normativity

• Agnieszka Doda-Wyszyńska & Monika Obrębska

Values and Norms Put to the Test – Childhood Heroes and their Attitude to Suffering

Abstract: The main supposition of the text concerns the status of suffering in contemporary occidental culture (reduction, simplification and even elimination of the value of suffering). The article describes the results of a research project concerning media messages (childhood literature and films) and their heroes popular in Poland in the five last decades.

Keywords: values, norms of behaviour, personal model, heroes, suffering.

Retreat from belief in the value of suffering

Leszek Kołakowski's thesis on the contemporary era states that a retreat has occurred from the belief in the value of suffering¹. Suffering has become something, which should be abolished, deactivated, and blocked. Associated mainly with physical pain it came to be something unbearable, excessive, something, which cannot be easily turned into work. It is indeed an appropriate association as it is difficult to demand that one should suffer from pain as now the possibilities of eliminating it exist. However, it is only the tip of the iceberg, a symptom of the phenomenon.

Culture built on such a (generally "simple") interpretation of suffering is the culture of analgesics (the anaesthetised). It is a retreat from the belief in the value of suffering, which needs to be practised that is a consequence of the escape from physical pain. Suffering does not possess value in itself.

It results from the studies by Leszek Kołakowski that obtaining better and better results of reducing human suffering (particularly connected with physical pain, but also with social problems with numerous institutions dedicated to for this purpose), one takes away responsibility from individuals for their own lives and the lives of their loved ones. All institutions constitute a kind of "gigantic welfare system"². It is true that there is an obligation to efficiently fulfil tasks connected with the social role and learned profession but if one neglects them there exist institutions devoted to

1 Leszek Kołakowski, *The Presence of Myth*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989; cited: Leszek Kołakowski, *Obecność mitu*, Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1994, p. 100.

2 *Ibidem*, p. 99.

protecting us against mistakes and their consequences. These processes of insuring oneself against any mistakes and adversities are followed by the decline of professions, which were once associated with vocation, e.g. professions such as doctor, nurse, educator, artist or even soldier. It is becoming a common belief that it is possible to effectively control macro-economic processes, but there is simultaneously a sense of helplessness of individuals faced with increasing "everyday life" decisions. The more the world of things is open and full of possibilities for large human communities, the more it becomes a reality, which is available and compelling for each human individual, and the less space is offered for "effective individual initiative"³.

Perhaps for this reason tragedy is impossible in the contemporary world, as is said by the father of the protagonist in *Tango*, a play by Sławomir Mrożek. However, it does not relieve the longing for tragedy and common *katharsis*.

In the past, prior to the age of mass culture, active understanding of suffering enabled practising patience. As a consequence, creative work and overcoming difficulties and the resistance of matter followed. Kołakowski states that today even in Christianity itself suffering is less and less meaningful. Christianity seeks to defeat the model of the world organised around the concept of original sin (particularly understood as disobedience) and the real presence of evil in the world⁴. On the other hand, nowadays persecution of Christians in some parts of the world occurs on a scale comparable to the first centuries of Christianity.

"Nevertheless, it is a tradition of Christian teaching to protect us both against manic confidence in our infinite ability to advance and against suicide."⁵ However, we have lost this protective buffer because at the very centre of Christianity a pact was concluded with the world, culture was dominated by the idea that our descendants shall unite all contradictory traditions in "the harmonious entirety and they will be at the same time pantheists and theists, liberals and followers of totalitarianism, enthusiasts of violence and opponents of violence". This is a dream of returning to barbarism⁶. This barbaric unity is based on forgetting traditions and is strengthened through ousting the concept of "barbarism", because a conscious barbarian would be completely helpless, as emphasised by Kołakowski.

Therefore on the one hand, today one observes the impossibility of an event – a great event, which would leave its stigma of meaning on history but, on the other hand, (often unconsciously) one hungers for such an event.

Propaganda of success

The thesis of Jean Baudrillard complements Kołakowski's thesis. The end of history is the obsession with safety and prevention of any incident as everything comprises a potential of danger⁷. "Among highly distinctive features of our civilisation there is a conviction (more practised than uttered) that safety from suffering is worth any price."⁸ In such an understanding suffering cannot occur as a positive impulse for overcoming difficulties and misfortunes.

Human weakness consists in, on one hand, underestimating and, on the other hand, overestimating basic needs, which when repressed (disregarded) return in the form of the highest meaning of life (e.g. "I am what I eat") or finally as degeneration of the present times which, according to the diagnosis of Kołakowski, could be expressed by the question: "have I really been given the rightful element of happiness from life?"⁹

The propaganda of success relies on rebounding from misfortune (poverty, broken home, loss). Misfortune is stressful, so one should continuously distance oneself and relax. Trauma should be disposed of with sweat in the sauna and gym and overcome in "the temples of entertainment".

A negative association related to the experience of suffering, which cannot be relieved would not need the paralysis of action but such an action would probably have a supra-individual dimension. Tragedy is not only an event without a positive solution but is an event, which gives a general and universal meaning to the action of an individual. Tragedy, according to Deleuze interpreting Nietzsche's concept, dies when it becomes a personal conflict and suffering becomes internalised¹⁰.

The contemporary decline of tragedy is connected with common approval of an individual misfortune. It is a special feature of contemporary times considering the fact that it is closely connected with a general right to individual happiness. According to Baudrillard, the great ontological and eschatological problem of evil has been replaced with the concept of a minor, individual misfortune. The impossibility of reflecting on Evil is equal to the inability of imagining death¹¹. Interiorisation of suffering means dissent to death but the compromise means acceptance of

3 *Ibidem*, p. 98.

4 *Ibidem*, p. 101.

5 Leszek Kołakowski, *Cywilizacja na ławie oskarżonych* (title in English: *Civilisation in the Dock*), Warszawa, Res Publica, 1990, *Szukanie barbarzyńcy*, p. 35.

6 *Ibidem*, p. 25.

7 Jean Baudrillard, *Le pacte de lucidité ou L'intelligence du mal*, Paris, Galilée, 2004.

8 Leszek Kołakowski, *Obecność mitu*, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

9 *Ibidem*, p. 104.

10 Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Paris, PUF, 1962; cited: Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche i filozofia*, trans. B. Banasiak, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Spacja-Pavo, 1993, pp. 136–137.

11 Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *Le pacte de lucidité ou L'intelligence du mal*, *op. cit.*

misfortune. Tragedy as a song of scapegoats made misfortune something external. A dramatic event as being minor to tragedy ousts suffering ineffectively and passively, not defeating it but interiorising it. Very often it changes suffering into exaggerated or pretended suffering. Dramas (as a modern form of classical drama, usually a film one) do not change much in society's mentality. They constitute, as Roland Barthes would say, a kind of "vaccine" which "immunises the collective imagination through a small inoculation of acknowledged evil; thus it is protected against the risk of general revolution."¹²

Mind programming

On the basis of childhood media heroes selected during the authors' studies¹³, the authors looked at the methods of dealing with suffering and asked whether it affected the development of attitudes towards suffering characteristic of a given "generation". A list of all childhood heroes of given generations is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Childhood media heroes

Heroes of the 1960s generation	Heroes of the 1970s generation	Heroes of the 1980s generation	Heroes of the 1990s generation	Heroes of the turn of the centuries
<i>Cztery pancerni i pies</i>	<i>Ann of Green Gables</i>	<i>The Six Bullerby Children</i>	<i>The Six Bullerby Children</i>	Harry Potter
<i>The Six Bullerby Children</i>	<i>The Six Bullerby Children</i>	Pan Kleks	Super Mario	Winnie-the-Pooh
Pan Samochodzik	Janosik Bruce Lee	Staś and Nel from <i>W pustyni i w puszczy</i>	<i>The Lion King</i>	Percy Jackson

12 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Paris, Seuil, 1957; cited: Roland Barthes, *Mitologie*, trans. A. Dziadek, Warszawa, KR, 2000, p. 286.

13 The survey included 200 persons (and 35 persons more: 20 girls and 15 boys born at the turn of the centuries – at present 13–16 year-olds, who completed a simplified survey with questions directly about the childhood heroes). The detailed description of the survey can be found in the published article: Agnieszka Doda-Wyszyńska, Monika Obrębska, *The picture of Polish generations on the basis of the analysis of childhood media heroes and values attributed to them*, in: *The Romanian Journal of Population Studies*, 2014.

If one looked at the characters of heroes, as one remembers them from childhood, they would be more like figures, i.e. "the heroes in themselves" (brave, ingenious, helpful and cheerful) tending to assume a character of a specialist (soldier, detective, writer, robber, karate fighter), and then as a superhero (the converter of power and values – in the 1990s there appears, but does not prevail, Harry Potter who ranks first among the years of the turn of the centuries). In the generation born in the 1990s there begin to dominate heroes coming from "other worlds", that is Super Mario and The Lion King.

There are optimistic conclusions resulting from the surveys. The authors observed in children the resistance to ideology (excluding "the ideology of consumption", which is a certain end of ideologies, increasingly prevalent in Poland after 1989). Selecting the heroes of a shameful political background (*Cztery pancerni i pies*, however the heroes were indicated indirectly, not as a title of the book or TV series, but as the most frequent role-playing; Pan Samochodzik) shows "a child's point of view"; it is an interesting character, in relation to everyday life, which matters.

Value is a basic ethical notion. Value understood in the simplest way is a valuable thing but it also something abstract, perfect. The best known example of value is the ancient triad of the good, truth and beauty. Determining the hierarchy of values means ascribing to values a degree of importance. The personal hierarchy of values is most frequently revealed during conflicts and crises connected with putting the values into practice or pursuing them. The situations in which a human makes a choice between values and revises his or her own hierarchy of values are called moral dilemmas because they often require sacrificing one value for another.

Norms have a form of orders, directives connected with realising values e.g. the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" concerns the value of life. Only when values become formulated as norms can they be justified, propagated, fought against or contrasted with each other.

So as not to unravel the mystery of the present time, i.e. so as not to undermine a norm resulting from a given hierarchical order one constantly undergoes mind programming.

The thesis by Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede reads that culture is mind programming.

The Hofstedes, the father and the son, enumerate four layers of this programming: symbols, heroes, rituals and values. The layers are interrelated due to "common ideas", but can also be understood as separate¹⁴. The effect of programming

14 Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organisations. Software of the Mind*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 2005; cited: Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, *Kultury*

is crystallisation of an attitude, which is often identified with a personified hero who represents a given hierarchy of values. Heroes are a link between symbols and rituals, which influence one's personality. For example, mass culture creates "universal" heroes. The concept of the superhero introduces additional confusion in culture. It establishes dangerous connections between religion and science, reducing them both to a popularised, simplified, and thereby false version¹⁵. Most of all, superheroes are defined through supernatural power and usually, like Superman, help people to escape misfortune and not to overcome suffering.

Hero – a figure

Asking about the memories from childhood and the titles of books and films, the authors did not ask directly about heroes and values. Thus they avoided the trap of socially approved choices. It enabled reaching authentic values hidden under the costume of a cult hero. In the part examining the awareness of "mind programming", the first question of the survey is especially distinctive. The question reads as follows: "Describe briefly what you remember best – a characteristic childhood memory inspired by a book or a television or music programme, a video game, a song, a told or read story (i.e. media). It does not refer to personal events, connected with family history."

Similarly to the four layers of cultural programming mentioned by Hofstede (from the outermost and clearest to the most hidden: symbols, heroes, rituals and values), the authors distinguished four layers of awareness of cultural codes with the description of a childhood memory. The layers are the following: 1) passiveness of a memory (a memory as a sign, background): the hero – a symbol, a symbol in itself, without reference to other layers; 2) direct activity (action, playing based on a story): the hero in its right place, the hero – a figure; 3) a sense of being a doer (e.g. role-playing, adding something new, introducing a new quality into "the media creation"): the hero in action (rituals); 4) creativity (inspiration for further actions exceeding the remembered "media creation"), creating a new quality: the heroes indicating an objective beyond themselves (values).

The authors wanted to investigate "the layerisation" of childhood memories through the analysis of the first question of the survey and classifying it as type 1-2-3-4.

i organizacje. Zaprogramowanie umysłu, trans. M. Durska, Warszawa, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 2007.

15 Cf. Ben Saunders, *Do The Gods Wear Capes? Spirituality, Fantasy, and Superheroes*, London, Publisher Bloomsbury, 2011.

The authors give several examples of replies to show the differences between the levels 1-2-3-4. The replies of type 1 are e.g.: "The film *Escrava Isaura* – then even at school it was impossible to enter the common room because there was such a big crowd of people and teachers" (the 1970s).

The replies of type 2 are e.g.: "There was a cartoon *Wuzzles* and there was a song at the beginning with the words (I remember only this fragment): «I kogel-mogiel zrób i śmieję się, śmieję ha ha. Chcesz Wuzzlem być, zmieszaj się z kimś»¹⁶. And together with my brothers and sisters I recorded this song on tape (it was a lot of fun). When the words «I kogel-mogiel zrób» came, Mum said from the kitchen: «No way, there are no eggs». Mum's insertion was also recorded. When we listened to the recording it was a real hoot" (the 1970s).

The replies of type 3 are e.g.: "No event during my primary school was equal to the imposition of Martial Law, which in fact did not strike me and my family but caused that every evening we listened to the stations from London and Washington, in search for reliable news. I had little contact with other children because I did not attend pre-school so my parents did not need to hide it from me so that I would not reveal it. Because of this when I was telling stories I changed them, e.g. instead of saying the vixen killed the cock I said that she interned him etc." (the 1970s) The reply of type 3 from the 1980s: "Playing *Viper* with my peers from the neighbourhood. We enclosed our bikes so that they would look like cars and we played the roles as in the film and we organised races."

The replies of type 4 are e.g.: "I remember a music group for children in which I had always wanted to sing: *Gawęda*. I loved watching children dance and sing; I wanted my parents to send me to this group but unfortunately *Gawęda* was based in Warsaw (naturally, in the Palace of Culture!) and my parents were not keen enough to find a similar group in Poznań. [...] Finally, I found a church choir for myself and later I developed as a singer at the Dominicans'. I associated *Gawęda* with something colourful (outfit), and joyful (lyrics). Apart from that, I knew that they travelled all over the world. My dreams were fulfilled during the long years spent in the Chamber Choir of the Adam Mickiewicz University" (the 1970s).

In the 1960s the percentage share of the replies 1-2-3-4 is as follows: 47%-39%-3%-11%; in the 1970s: 50%-40%-6%-4%; in the 1980s: 61.5%-25.5%-11%-2%; in the 1990s: 56%-30%-10%-4%. In the generation of the turn of the centuries it could not be examined due to the closed type of questions.

16 "Make kogel-mogiel and laugh ha ha. If you want to be a Wuzzle, mix with somebody" – "kogel-mogiel" is raw egg yolk stirred with sugar.

In all the generations, childhood memories indicate type 1 and 2 (almost 90% of the coded memories). It is: 1) characteristic passiveness or "backgroundness" of a memory, e.g. a colour TV as a symbol of the times or empty yards during broadcasting of the first TV series in the 1970s; or 2) heroes are copied, there is role-playing. Fewer replies concern coding of "creative" levels, i.e.: 3) rituals: a sense of influence on the reality, and 4) values: introducing a new quality to the story.

Hero and other characters

Values are shaped by various tests and these in turn are connected with overcoming obstacles, which is very often laden with suffering. The strategies of dealing with suffering of the selected heroes are various. Janosik, Bruce Lee and *Cztery Pancerni* choose combat and action, *Ann of Green Gables* – fantasising; *The Bullerby Children* demonstrate a role of social support; in *The Lion King* first one observes escape reaction followed by confronting the evil. Harry Potter and Percy Jackson represent superpower in overcoming suffering. An interesting example is Pan Samochodzik who has an unstable personal life (in each volume a different girlfriend) and undergoes regression commanding young scouts.

The heroes from the 1960s and 1970s dealt with suffering alone or with the support of their family and friends. However, since the 1980s (Pan Kleks) through the 1990s (Super Mario) with a current climax (Harry Potter and Percy Jackson) there has been a magical superpower present, which solves all problems. It shows the helplessness of the contemporary child hero in the face of suffering and lack of belief that he or she will cope with suffering alone. To succeed one needs to be a superhero; an ordinary man shall be crushed by suffering. It is, as it seems, a very dangerous tendency because it shows the passiveness of the contemporary generation and unrealistic wishful thinking about problems. Earlier generations struggled against much more serious problems (war and poverty) and did not display such considerable helplessness and demanding attitude as the present generation does. The heroes were active and independent. Perhaps this was so, because they could rely on the support of their family and friends.

The current crisis of the family, which is also shown by the stories of the heroes (Harry Potter – an orphan in a foster family that is far from ideal, Winnie-the-Pooh – without a family, Percy Jackson – broken family, in each volume a different stepfather), results in lack of self-esteem and belief that one can achieve something without some external superpower. The literature for children has never been so compensatory as nowadays. Perhaps this is because never before has there been so much to "compensate for". Compensation, i.e. guiding one's activities towards the objectives, which are similar to the objectives that cannot be achieved, frequently

becomes rewarding oneself for deficiencies and defects, e.g. eating sweets as a consolation for lack of close relationships. Compensatory action gives a temporary pleasure, but when repeated it reinforces the association of a given defect with a reward and hinders its elimination. It is also accompanied by a characteristic symptom of our times: alexithymia. The author of this term is Peter Sifneos. It is defined as "lack of words to describe emotions". It is a dysfunction of identifying one's own emotions and the emotions of others. It is a kind of "emotional illiteracy" often connected with the inability to distinguish between emotional and physiological arousal and hence a person experiencing the emotion is not able to take responsibility for it. It is often related to the fear of losing control over emotions and thus "rigidity" of behaviour and thinking, superficial analyses (reducing a problem to the opposition of: pleasant – unpleasant)¹⁷.

Winnie-the-Pooh excellently illustrates the generation of "compensatory" singles who live without their families but within the network of loose, "friendly" relationships, such as on *Facebook*, beyond time and beyond sexuality. The main hero of Alan Alexander Milne's novel is an animated teddy bear. It is animated due to cartoon animation because "light years" have passed since the publication of the literary version. The book was written in 1926 and its popular film version (American family film of Walt Disney Animation Studios directed by Stephen Anderson and Don Hall, in a traditional animation technology) was created as recently as in 2011.

The *Lion King* still presented family values, in Winnie-the-Pooh the animals do not have families. It is interesting that among the heroes of the turn of the centuries Harry Potter is an orphan and Percy Jackson comes from a broken home and has stepfathers he hates.

Superhero

On the basis of the authors' studies one may observe evolution of a hero: from an adult (dominance of adult heroes in the 1960s and a balance between adults and children in the 1970s), a child (dominance in the 1980s), a computer game character or an animal (the 1990s) to a magical hero (the turn of the centuries).

In the 1990s a hero is no longer adult (*Bullerby Children*), or even a real human being (Super Mario), or a human being whatsoever (*The Lion King*). During the years of the turn of the centuries the dominant figure is Harry Potter: a character

17 René J. Muller, *When a Patient Has No Story To Tell: Alexithymia* – <http://www.psychiatrytimes.com/somatoform-disorder/when-patient-has-no-story-tell-alexithymia> (accessed 6 January 2015).

of a young wizard from the book by Joanne K. Rowling, which was transferred not only to films but also to computer games.

Harry Potter is an orphan raised in an ordinary family, the so-called Muggles who on his 11th birthday discovers his affinity with the world of wizards. *Harry Potter* is set in the world of magic, which exists simultaneously with the world of Muggles (ordinary people), but in secret from them.

After the death of his parents who were killed by the evil wizard Voldemort, the boy is placed in the home of his uncle Vernon and aunt Petunia. His foster parents keep his origin secret. He learns that he is a son of outstanding wizards on his 11th birthday. Then he is admitted to Hogwarts, a special school of wizardry.

On the other hand, Percy Jackson is a son of the god Poseidon. The mythology underlying the story of Percy Jackson is extremely reduced. At the beginning cruel Kronos devours his own children. Those children who he did not manage to devour, i.e. Zeus, Hades and Poseidon, overthrow him, imprison him in Tartarus and start to rule the world. The only thing they did not predict was the fact that young angry demigod Luke wishes to obtain the Golden Fleece and revive the wicked Titan. Poseidon's son, teenage Percy Jackson, is to thwart the plans of the enemies of Olympus.

These two heroes, most popular among today's 13–16-year-olds, are at the same time a reflection of the family model of the present day, which is mostly referred to the crisis of fatherhood. On the other hand, these heroes display supernatural power; they are gods so they do not need fathers and families. They are individualists in the full meaning of the word.

Krystyna Slany in her analysis of the marital and family life in the postmodern world notes that in the latest research studies (from the turn of the centuries) the therapists depart from previous claims that the upbringing in a single-parent family is not inferior to the upbringing in a full family¹⁸.

The weakening of the role of a man in the family is connected with the model of the egalitarian family, with fewer children and a professionally active woman. It is related to the escape of men from the involvement in the family life and raising children and even with the "promotion" of homosexuality, which obviously requires biological predispositions but the model of homosexual relationship in itself is "more partner-orientated, flexible and willing to negotiate."¹⁹

18 Krystyna Slany, *Alternatywne formy życia małżeńsko-rodzinnego w ponowoczesnym świecie*, Kraków, Nomos, 2008, p. 127.

19 *Ibidem*, pp. 131–132.

The heroes of the present become detached from values. They are subjected to fashion, which stresses "the visually accessible symbols rather than the symbols carrying a meaning, highlights the actors rather than the characters they play."²⁰ A superhero is written in "the exaggeration procedures"; they are "acrobats", a new figure of master, in the sense of "the coach" of mass imagination, who is defined by Sloterdijk as "a person who wants me to want."²¹

Gifted hero and life full of thrills

Considering the most popular media heroes and terminal values attributed to them, examined by the authors with the use of the Rokeach Value Survey, in all generations until the turn of the century true friendship (close companionship) prevails. It is represented in the 1960s by *Cztery pancerni i pies* and *The Six Bullerby Children*; in the 1970s in women's choices by *The Six Bullerby Children* and *Ann of Green Gables*; in the 1980s again by *The Six Bullerby Children*, Pan Kleks, Staś and Nel; and in the 1990s in addition to *The Six Bullerby Children* by Super Mario.

Childhood heroes in the 1960s were still real people: Polish soldiers from the book by Janusz Przymanowski *Cztery pancerni i pies*, better known from the eponymous war TV series, and a clever detective, despite his shameful professional background (a member of ORM, the Volunteer Reserve Militia) friendly to children, Pan Samochodzik.

In the 1970s the Polish hero was Janosik, the robber. In the Generation '89 typically masculine heroes predominate, having above-average (but not supernatural) skills. They are not superheroes yet, whose model is Superman and the consumerist idea of linking power, the good (in the sense of virtue and values) and goods²². Janosik is even a contradiction of a superhero because he dies. His more child-type equivalent is Tolek Banan from the TV series *Stawiam na Tolka Banana* (1973), who one really does not get to know although all characters (the so-called difficult youth) are permeated with the myth of a boy who escaped from a reformatory and gave away the stolen money to the poor.

20 Krzysztof Kwaśniewski, *Spoleczne rodowody bohaterów*, Warszawa, Instytut Wydawniczy CRZZ, 1977, p. 122.

21 Peter Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life. On Anthropotechnics*, trans. W. Hoban, Cambridge & Malden, Mass., Polity Press, 2013; cited: Peter Sloterdijk, *Musisz życie swe odmienić. O antropotechnice* (original title: *Du musst dein Leben ändern. Über Anthropotechnik*), trans. J. Janiszewski, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2014, p. 404.

22 Ben Saunders, *Do The Gods Wear Capes? Spirituality, Fantasy, and Superheroes*, op. cit.

Janosik is the only hero of those selected ones who dies. But does one really talk about the death of the hero or maybe the death of the legend? The cruel death sentence by hanging on a hook is the only true element of the story of Slovak Juraj called the "Slovak Robin Hood". However, Juraj himself was not much concerned about the poor. Poor peasants were frequently robbed by him. The execution of the 25-year-old highwayman took place on 17 March 1713. His death did not decrease the activity of other robbers in the Carpathians²³.

The character of Janosik is not yet the introduction to the American phenomenon of "superheroism", which changes any value into quantitative "power" and establishes new, dangerous connections between science and religion²⁴. He is, however, a fully cinematic hero (the first film about Janosik was made in the US as early as in 1921).

Pan Kleks, popular in the 1980s (mainly due to a film version from 1983), a tutor of young boys (in this sense an equivalent of Pan Samochodzik) is more of a wizard than a hero who directly influences the reality like a soldier, detective or brigand.

Staś Tarkowski from *W pustyni i w puszczy* is a younger hero, a boy. His kind of heroism could be defined as "the involuntary heroism". It is consistent with the thesis of Witold Wrzesień that the Children of the Transformation (mainly the late 1970s and the 1980s) display a weakening sense of similar interpretation of common interests, norms and values²⁵.

At the turn of the centuries, the life full thrills (Harry Potter and Percy Jackson) supersedes the value of true friendship prevailing in all the previous generations (Winnie-the-Pooh represents it most). On the other hand, with regard to instrumental values a gifted hero supersedes an imaginative hero who was popular previously (again Harry Potter and Percy Jackson). A gifted hero is more independent and has a special (supernatural) power.

And although the decline of authorities and myths began as long ago as in the age of the Enlightenment, only the combining of this decline with "the production" of one's own time, as written by Kołakowski, causes disintegration of human solidarity. "Meetings of people are essentially based on the desire to take possession of

23 Łukasz Włodarski, *Juraj Janosik, czyli kariera złodzieja* – <http://wmrokuhistorii.blogspot.com/2013/04/juraj-janosik-czyli-kariera-zodziewa.html> (accessed 31 December 2014).

24 Ben Saunders, *Do The Gods Wear Capes? Spirituality, Fantasy, and Superheroes*, op. cit.

25 Witold Wrzesień, *Jednostka – rodzina – pokolenie. Studium relacji międzypokoleniowych w rodzinie*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2003.

another human being."²⁶ In schizophrenic mass culture, there prevail ultra-leftist ideologies, which promise "that when their followers take power everything will be planned and spontaneous at the same time."²⁷ This is mass infantilism, which is marked especially by "an increasing value attributed to safety at the expense of other values."²⁸ The world of fairy tales is an increasingly successful manifestation of these trends. Also, it corresponds with the "excessive" hero, who can be supplemented with hardly anything, and therefore the children do not usually play "Super Mario" or "Harry Potter". In the stories more about them it is shown than one is able to imagine. Therefore, when the Harry Potter series ended, his fans did not know how to fill the void.

Krzysztof Kwaśniewski notes that in the case of literary heroes the fact that they are underspecified activates imagination and can "drive imitation towards the represented values". In the case of the visual message, especially when it serves mainly as entertainment, the exposure of the personality of an artist becomes more important (e.g. the actor playing a hero) than the figure of a hero²⁹.

26 Leszek Kołakowski, *Cywilizacja na ławie oskarżonych*, op. cit., *Wież utracona*, p. 41.

27 *Ibidem*, p. 45.

28 *Ibidem*, p. 53.

29 Krzysztof Kwaśniewski, *Spółeczne rodowody bohaterów*, op. cit., p. 122.