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## Collective Memory, Social Time and Culture: The Polish Tradition in Memory Studies\*

*Abstract:* The research studies on collective memory in Poland have long tradition and clear cultural perspective. The aim of the text is to show this research tradition, which is deeply associated with Durkheimian School legacy, very strong in Poland, both in prewar as well as in postwar period, especially in the work of Stefan Czarnowski, the only Polish member of this School. In this perspective the social memory is closely connected with culture and time. These two categories: culture and social time as important factors in collective memory studies conducted in Poland are object of the present paper.

The paper is composed of three parts. In the first one author explains why relations between social memory, culture and social time are important for evaluation of the Polish research tradition. The second part concerns its cultural perspective and is dedicated to the works of Stefan Czarnowski, who started many years ago the cultural stream in Polish memory studies. The third part presents the idea of social time and relations between sociology of time and memory studies in Polish sociology.

This specificity of the Polish research studies on collective memory is unknown today, especially for foreign researchers. This tradition is worthy to be recollected.

*Keywords:* collective memory, social time, culture, Durkheimian School, Stefan Czarnowski

“Time is to memory culture, what space is to *ars memoriae*”  
(Jan Assmann, *Memory Culture*)

### Introduction

This paper concerns research studies on collective memory in Poland. These studies have two characteristic features: a long research tradition and a clear cultural perspective. The research tradition is much longer than polls on collective memory, which go back to the 1960s and are identified with sociologists like Barbara Szacka, Andrzej Szpociński and Piotr Kwiatkowski as successors of Nina Assorodobraj-Kula’s ideas. It is a tradition deeply associated with a Durkheimian legacy, which is very strong in Poland both in the pre-war as well as in post-war period. The well known book by Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1969/1925), and works of other Durkheimians, among them, Stefan Czarnowski, were for many decades the main source of inspiration and ideas concerning social memory and its functioning. In

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this perspective, social memory (collective constructions and representations of the past) was closely connected with culture (i.e. with culturally and socially differentiated ways of thinking and ways of acting with patterns, meanings, values and rituals) and with social time (qualitative, concrete, value-oriented ways of representing change, duration, succession and simultaneity). Social memory was approached as a cultural phenomenon and dimension of social time. These two categories, culture and social time, which are seen as important factors in collective memory studies conducted in Poland, are the object of this paper.

This paper is composed of three parts. In the first one I explain why relations between social memory, culture and social time are important in order to evaluate the Polish research tradition. The second part concerns cultural perspective and is dedicated to the works of Stefan Czarnowski, who started the cultural stream in Polish memory studies many years ago. The third part presents the idea of social time and relations between sociology of time and memory studies, or between social time and collective memory in Polish research studies. The aim of the paper in its entirety is to show the long and rich cultural stream in Polish memory studies.

### Memory, Culture and Time

In the foreword to the collection of essays, *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa. Współczesna perspektywa niemiecka* [Collective and Cultural Memory. A Contemporary German Perspective], Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska compared the German memory discourse, dominated by the aspect of cultural memory, to the Polish tradition of collective memory research, in which, according to her, little attention is paid to the cultural aspects of memory. She identified the following three streams of collective memory research in Poland: (1) collective memory in the context of politics and with reference to contemporary history, (2) issues surrounding the relationship and differences between history and collective memory, as well as (3) sociological research surveys of collective memory, unique to Poland, dating back to the 1960s and 1970s, in which the following individuals played key roles: Nina Assorodobraj-Kula, Barbara Szacka, Andrzej Szpociński, Piotr Kwiatkowski and others. According to Saryusz-Wolska, contrary to the historical and political contexts of research and debate led in Poland, the discourse of collective memory in present-day Germany concentrates on “cultural texts in a broad sense;” their fresh reading is made possible by the broad understanding of the cultural memory concept (Saryusz-Wolska 2009, p. 17–18). I would like to add to Saryusz-Wolska’s perspective, as far as Polish research studies are concerned, the fourth sociological stream, which goes beyond the above-mentioned three streams of research: (1) of politicizing memory, (2) of memory versus history as an academic discipline, and (3) collective memory surveys. This fourth stream is the cultural perspective, connected with Durkheimian, Halbwachsian and Czarnowski’s legacy.

For this generation of Polish sociologists, who was educated in sociology practiced and preached in the 1960s at the University of Warsaw, which was largely influenced by Émile Durkheim, Stefan Czarnowski, Maurice Halbwachs, Marcel Mauss, and in

later generations by Claude Lévi-Strauss, the cultural character of collective memory was obvious. Lectures and seminars by Nina Assorodobraj-Kula and Jerzy Szacki on the history of social thought or on the idea of tradition; lectures, seminars and books by Maria Ossowska on sociology of morality and customs, and Stanisław Ossowski's works on sociology of culture, were both a direct and an indirect transfer of the Durkheimian School ideas. Also for attendees of Zygmunt Bauman's lectures about semiotic culture theory, which encouraged reading that in those days was considered cutting edge—the still left untranslated works of Claude Lévi-Strauss—culture was the obvious context for tradition, myth, social perception of time, and social constructions of the past. Jerzy Szacki's book *Tradycja* [Tradition] (1971), Barbara Szacka's studies of myth (1985) and the past as a dimension of time (2006, see also 1983), Andrzej Szpociński's work on so called images of the past, ways of remembering the past, places of memory and the role of the past in so-called cultural canon (1989, 1991, 1999, 2000), Tadeusz Banaszczyk's analyses of social representations of time (1981, 1989), as well as my own work on social time as a social and cultural phenomenon (Tarkowska 1987) and on the temporal orientations of Polish society (Tarkowska 1992, 1999, 2004, 2012), to mention only a few, effectively showcase the wide, cultural context of collective memory issues and research studies not limited to sociological surveys. For those familiar with the aforementioned literary output, the German cultural studies on memory, or the Assmanns' ideas concerning cultural dimension of collective memory, are rather an enrichment, clarification, continuation or improvement of the topic of culture than something groundbreaking in collective memory research. The German researchers admittedly deserve credit in differentiating and naming a certain kind of memory as “cultural” (not everybody knows they “speak in prose”). It is worth pointing out something which may not be obvious to some researchers, that in the Durkheimian or Halbwachsian tradition *les représentations collectives* do not so much refer to social psychology and its mechanisms (as *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* is sometimes interpreted), or to the context of philosophical discussion on categories of thought, as much as they are an equivalent of today's idea of culture (Bohannon 1960; Tarkowska 1990). The cultural interpretation of the Durkheimian perspective popularized by the work of Jeffrey Alexander (1990), has been present also in Polish sociological discourse.

Jan Assmann admits that he discovered Halbwachs for himself as an “all but forgotten” theorist of collective memory in 1986 (Assmann 2008, p. 61). From the Polish sociological perspective, which—similarly to the French perspective—has known of the Halbwachsian and Durkheimian legacy for ages, cultural memory theory can be viewed as a continuation, an improvement, or a repetition of familiar ideas in a different, new, more current and more precise language. The matter of rituals, rites and ceremonies as constituent elements of time and memory, legitimizing functions of the past, the influence of authority on the character of collective memory or the present on its shape, interdisciplinary memory research—the list is endless—are ideas well established in French humanities which arose from Durkheimian thought, as well as in Polish sociology (Durkheim 1990/1912; Durkheim and Mauss 1973/1901–1902; Czarnowski 1956/1936; 1956/1937; Halbwachs 1969/1925; Lévi-Strauss 1970). Not refuting the value of the many original and novel elements of Assmanns' theories

(such as differentiating types of memory: mimetic and functional, communicative and cultural, the memory of things, the idea of collective memory as operating in two directions—retrospectively and prospectively—and a variety of other interesting and important ideas), it is worth underlining that the issue of culture in memory studies in Poland has its own, much longer, albeit at times forgotten and later rediscovered, tradition.

The work of Stefan Czarnowski and his contribution to the study of collective memory is a good example of the old, partially forgotten and underestimated cultural stream in Polish memory studies. Due to different reasons, reception of his work was limited to Poland. Robert Traba (2008) quite recently wrote about Czarnowski's noticeable absence in contemporary theoretical discussions on collective memory, and I wrote on his absence in contemporary sociology of time (Tarkowska 2008).

Stefan Czarnowski's work, seen as an example of the cultural approach in early memory studies, deserves our attention, as well as his contemporary reception. The next part of this paper is dedicated to him and his contribution to memory studies.

### **Stefan Czarnowski and the Temporal Dimension of Social Life**

Stefan Zygmunt Czarnowski (1879–1937), one of the most prominent Polish sociologists of the interwar period, an original scholar and the only Polish member of the Durkheimian School, was born in Kroczewo in the Płońsk district to a family of landed gentry. Between 1898 and 1902 he studied economy, philosophy, history and sociology in Leipzig and Berlin. He was expelled from Berlin for his activity in the circle of patriotic Polish youth, thus, between 1902 and 1911 he moved and stayed in Paris where he studied painting, sociology, and finally, he devoted his time to the study of religions. It was there where he found himself under the influence of Émile Durkheim's sociological school and he became the student and collaborator of the two eminent Durkheimians: Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss.

After his return to Poland in 1911, Czarnowski postponed his academic career for over 10 years, limiting it only to newspaper commentaries. In 1916 he entered the Polish Legions of World War I, and after Poland regained its independence, he joined the army where he reached the rank of Captain. He was the front line officer, and took part in the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1920 during which he was awarded the Cross of Valor. After the war, Czarnowski lectured in the Higher Military Academy in Warsaw. Upon leaving the army in 1923, he became a chair of the Religious Science Faculty at the Free Polish University and then in 1925 he began working at the University of Warsaw. There, in 1930, Czarnowski became the Chair of the History of Culture, which, as a result of his insistence, and against the will of the University establishment, he changed the name to the Chair of the Sociology and History of Culture in 1934. Furthermore, Czarnowski lectured at the State Pedagogical Institute where he helped teachers supplement their education. He was equally active, giving lectures to the Printers' Trade Union and the Workers' University Association. He shared his knowledge not only in Poland, but also with others at *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in

Paris. In 1924 he became a founding member of the Institut Français de Sociologie, and in 1929 he became a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAU).

Stefan Czarnowski was very much engaged in the political life of his times—originally he supported national democrats, then the Polish Socialist Party and in the 1930s the radical left; he acted in various workers' organizations. According to Jerzy Szacki, Czarnowski's political affiliations did not reveal any ideological swings: "through his search for ways to defend some basic patriotic and democratic values, Czarnowski became successively disillusioned towards various political factions" (Szacki 1995b, p. 457). He died in his prime on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, 1937 as a result of a heart attack. Czarnowski vehemently opposed the anti-Semitic incidents which took place at that time at the University of Warsaw; shortly before his death he signed a protest letter concerning that problem. One of his younger colleagues, Stanisław Ossowski, later also an eminent sociologist, wrote soon afterwards: "A few hours before his death he was ready to further defend human dignity" (1956 [1938], p. 180).

Czarnowski left an important and significant legacy in sociology, in the history of culture, in the sociology of knowledge and religion, in Celtic studies as well as in other fields. The core of his research focused on sociology, history of culture and historical sociology. Like other academics from Durkheim's circle, Czarnowski linked several competences: he was a sociologist and a historian of culture, methodologist of social research, theoretician of culture and religion and an expert on Celtic culture. Similarly to his mentor from the Durkheimian School, Henri Hubert, he was interested in medieval religiosity, but was equally proficient in the antiquity period. With his historical sociology and Durkheimian background he occupied a separate niche in the pantheon of eminent sociologists of the interwar period in Poland. Due to different reasons, such as his historical and theoretical orientation, his predilection for personal communication rather than written word, his publications scattered through journals, etc., reception of Czarnowski's work was limited and his work not adequately appreciated by contemporaries.

Due to his sudden death, Czarnowski did not manage to accomplish many of his plans—among them several intended or already started books concerning the theory of culture and sociological methodology. Still, Czarnowski left us a significant legacy, according to Jerzy Szacki, as we would not find among his works "any trivial publications, his texts were usually revealing, by definition concise and excellently written" (1995a, p. 95–96). The collected volumes of Czarnowski's works, published by Nina Assorodobraj and Stanisław Ossowski in 1956—almost 20 years after his death—uncover many planned or even started articles that he did not finish, and many wonderful ideas that he did not manage to develop.

All of most the prominent Durkheimians, such as Marcel Mauss, Henri Hubert, Robert Hertz, Maurice Halbwachs, Marcel Granet, and also Stefan Czarnowski, practiced sociological analyses of categories of thought. Many of Czarnowski's texts—to give a few examples, *Podłoże ruchu chłopskiego* [Foundations of the Peasant Movement], *Podział przestrzeni i jej rozgraniczanie w magii i religii* [Division of Space and its Delimitation in Magic and in Religion], *Dawność a terażniejszość w kulturze* [The Past and the Present in Culture], *Powstanie i społeczne funkcje historii* [The Emer-



gence and Social Functions of History], *Założenia metodologiczne w badaniu rozwoju społeczeństw* [Methodological Assumptions in the Study of Human Societies]—reveal an interest in differentiated and variable categories of time, space, memory, remembering and history understood as social and cultural phenomena, full of social and cultural content. He wrote, “There is no single concept of time or space, but there are sacred times and secular times, good times and bad times, they follow one another according to a rhythm defined by social experience. It varies from one «cultural milieu» to another” (1956 [1931], p. 221). In a very spiritually Durkheimian text, *Le Morcellement de l'étendue et sa limitation dans la religion et la magie* [Division of Space and its Delimitation in Religion and in Magic] (1956 [1925]), Czarnowski presented a qualitative, socially diversified character of space, and the process of filling it with values and social contents. Stanisław Ossowski championed Czarnowski's originality in this field, and often remarked on the presence of “sociological relativism with regard to categories of thought” in his work (Ossowski 1956 [1938]). He also—according to Ossowski—“felt the depth of the past,” and the “fourth dimension of social world;” he remained sensitive to the temporal dimension of social life—to past and posterity in particular. Czarnowski wrote in his *Dawność a terażniejszość w kulturze* [The Past and the Present in Culture], “the human society consists of a handful of the living and a countless crowd of the dead” (1956 [1936], p. 108). We can find similar ideas in his theory of culture, where culture is understood as “collective good and collective output, the result of creative and transforming endeavor of countless generations” (1956 [1938], p. 13).

Particularly valuable, from a social time and collective memory research perspective, is Czarnowski's relatively short text titled, *Powstanie i społeczne funkcje historii* [The Emergence and Social Functions of History] (1937). Czarnowski pointed to the social relativism of time and relationship with the past. He raised Henri Hubert's notion of qualitative time to a new area, specifically in the manner of socially and culturally differentiated and variable ways of looking at the past. Referencing empirical data gathered by cultural historians, folklorists, anthropologists, and religion scholars, he showed that interest in the past does not have to be defined as “history,” or “understanding the past as a succession of facts collected within an irreversible and unrepeatable passage of time” (Czarnowski 1956 [1937], p. 101). He led a subtle analysis of differentiated time structures responsible for different constructions of the past, drawing attention to the fact that a major significance of the past, of antiquity and tradition in primitive cultures, is linked to an a-historical perspective of time, an absence of a profound contemplation of the past, and a lack of concern for the order of events, as well as an interest only in “beginnings.” Besides history as an academic discipline, he differentiated history in a larger sense, i.e. different ways of representing the collective experience of social groups and its fundamental values, accumulated by generations (Czarnowski 1956 [1937], p. 99).

Stefan Czarnowski's second text, which is very important from collective memory perspective, is his essay, *Dawność a terażniejszość w kulturze* [The Past and the Present in Culture]. His concept of the “past in the present” is a kind of equivalent to today's collective memory idea. For example he wrote, “We constantly change our attitude

to posterity, working all the time to alter it so that it could become the present time. It is so because the posterity lasts only as the present while the present is an altered and updated posterity and a nascent future” (Czarnowski 1956 [1936], p. 121).

Studies in the sociology of knowledge, initiated by Durkheim and representatives of his school (Henri Hubert, Marcel Mauss, Maurice Halbwachs, Marcel Granet and also Stefan Czarnowski) opened new areas of inquiry and became a foundation of today’s fast developing sociology and anthropology of time (chronosociology) and space or memory studies. Though Durkheim’s, as well as his school’s pioneering contributions to the development of these new subdisciplines is noted by our contemporaries (see for example Tarkowska 1987; Hassard 1990; Gell 1992), and even today is considered a veritable “Copernican breakthrough” in time study (Gadéa and Lallement 2002), the precursory ideas of Czarnowski were not transmitted to researchers of social time and collective memory beyond Poland, and the author himself is not recognized as one of the originators of a sociological approach to time or memory (Traba 2008; Tarkowska 2008). However, Czarnowski’s ideas played a key role in forming a sociological reflection on time, tradition and attitudes towards the past, and bonds with the past, in Polish sociology. They were continued by many Polish sociologists: Nina Assorodobraj, the author of a seminal text, *Living history* (Assorodobraj 1963), later by her students, notably by Barbara Szacka who did research and wrote on historical consciousness of Polish intelligentsia (Szacka 1983, 2006), by Jerzy Szacki, author of an important book on tradition (Szacki 1971), Andrzej Szpociński (1989), and others as well.

Czarnowski’s most important work is *Kultura* [Culture]—proof of his great erudition and immense culturological knowledge, grounded in tremendous factual material (Czarnowski 1956/1938). It anticipated the coming synthesis in the theory of culture, which remained unfinished due to the author’s sudden death. This volume, which Jerzy Szacki calls “a masterpiece of conciseness and popularization” (1995b, p. 457), is a collection of brief sketches devoted to key issues in the theory of culture, firstly, the mechanisms of continuation and the change of culture.

It was typical for Czarnowski to see culture as a legacy of a collectivity. While it is individuals who create inventions and make discoveries, they become parts of culture only when they are incorporated in the permanent output of a collectivity—when they become common good. Czarnowski’s famous (in Poland) definition of culture reads: “culture is all objectified elements of social output shared by many groups which due to their objective nature are set and capable of spreading territorially” (1956/1938, p. 20). In the same text he identifies culture with an output of generations. The role of the past, of past generations and their endeavor, is very important in Czarnowski’s work. The phrase “culture as memory” expresses the main idea of Czarnowski’s theory of culture very well.

Due to different reasons, Czarnowski was not fully appreciated by his contemporaries in Poland. In spite of his popularity among Warsaw intelligentsia, students and workers, his work was not fully known and valued by academia. At the same time, his publishing in French and participation in French academic life assisted in



his work being influential outside of Poland. The question remains however, what is Czarnowski's reception in Poland and abroad, today?

Czarnowski's *Collected Works* were published in Poland twenty years after the author's death and selections of his works were published at later dates. Recently, Jerzy Szacki included several of Czarnowski's most interesting texts in the monumental collective volume *Sto lat socjologii polskiej* [Hundred Years of Polish Sociology] (Szacki 1995c). In 1975, Arno Press in New York reprinted *Le culte des héros*. Still, there are very few works written about Czarnowski. In over fifty years since his death only one small monograph about his life and research was published in Poland. Its author, Małgorzata Legiędź-Gałużka, prepared a bibliography of works devoted almost entirely to Czarnowski and his writings. Even a quick glance at this list is very meaningful. It appears that in the years 1938 to 1987 only 22 works on Czarnowski were published: articles, short descriptions, or introductions (Legiędź-Gałużka 1989). In recent years one can see important changes in this regard; Kornelia Kończal and Joanna Wawrzyniak write about Czarnowski's rediscovery in last years (2011). The collective volume, *Stefan Czarnowski z perspektywy siedemdziesięciolecia* [Stefan Czarnowski after Seventy Years], edited by Marek Jabłonowski and published in 2008 (Jabłonowski 2008), constituted an important change in Czarnowski's reception in Poland. This collection of essays presented his works as multifaceted and very close to contemporary research studies in many areas, also in memory studies (Traba 2008). It is worthy to note that we can also see important signs of increasing interests in Czarnowski's work abroad, for example in a dissertation prepared by a young German researcher, Max Spohn (2011), or a planned translation of Czarnowski's texts on the past and memory by Russian specialist in cultural studies, Alexey Vasilyev.

There are several areas of study where Czarnowski's name appears and where his works prove current, useful and inspiring: Celtic studies, studies on national heroes, sociology of religion (Isambert 1983), and especially Czarnowski's studies on Polish religiosity and Polish Catholicism. In Immanuel Wallerstein's, *The Modern World-System*, he makes references to Czarnowski's *La réaction catholique en Pologne à la fin du XVI-e et au début du XVII-e siècle* [Catholic Reactionaries in Poland in the Turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century]. Next to Weberian suppositions regarding the relations between Protestantism and capitalism, Wallerstein presents Czarnowski's interpretation of Polish Catholicism as a peculiar emanation of nobility and discusses his analysis of Polish Counterreformation being tied very closely to the interests of this group (Wallerstein 1974, p. 151 ff). Czarnowski's study, *Kultura religijna wiejskiego ludu polskiego* [Religious Culture of Polish Peasant Folk], invites interest from students of Polish religiosity, including the New Age (Hall 2003).

Czarnowski's famous text, *Ludzie zbędni w służbie przemocy* [Dispensable People in the Service of Violence], written in 1935, has immediate relevance today. In it, the author showed how unemployment and marginalization of broad masses can be a fertile ground for fascism. He also described "loose people," people from social margins in a broad historical perspective (Czarnowski 1956/1935). Nina Asorodobraj's study of "loose people" from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, prepared under supervision of Stefan Czarnowski and dedicated to his memory, written before World

War II but published just after it, was a continuation of his ideas in this field (Asorodobraj 1966/1946). His arguments in that short article have proven inspiring for the students of social and cultural margin (Neyman 1966), as well as social marginality and marginalization (Frieske 1999, p. 8). Current transformation in Poland and the unemployment which it brings, particularly among young people, show the relevance of Czarnowski's concepts as evidenced in many editorials as well as in the article by Andrzej Koraszewski, meaningfully entitled, *Ludzie zbędni na swoim* [Dispensable People on Their Own] (1996)<sup>1</sup>. According to Marcin Kula, Czarnowski's category of "dispensable people" describes the Latin American poor very well (Kula 1996). Zygmunt Bauman referred to Czarnowski's idea in his brilliant analysis of "wasted lives" (Bauman 2004, p. 40–41) and also in a public lecture at the University of Wrocław in May 2013, interpreting a brute attack on him by young nationalist hooligans.<sup>2</sup>

It is worth noting that Czarnowski's *Kultura* [Culture] has been placed among the books aspiring to the title of a "Book of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century" by the International Sociological Association, as one out of only ten books by Polish sociologists. Czarnowski's theory of culture is his most popular contribution to sociology. It is discussed in manuals of sociology of culture (Kłoskowska 1981; Nowicka 1991; Golka 2007). His definition of culture became part of classical sociology taught at universities. In recent years it even found its way into more ambitious texts meant for high schools.

As far as memory studies in Poland are concerned, we can see multiple references to Czarnowski's works, especially to his article, *Dawność a terażniejszość w kulturze* [The Past and the Present in Culture], in many books and articles dedicated to the collective memory issues (see for example: Kwiatkowski 2008; Golka 2009; Wawrzyniak 2009; Korzeniewski 2010; Skórzyńska 2010). On the other side, there are important books by eminent Polish specialists in the collective memory area without any reference to Czarnowski's legacy (Kaźmierska 2008; Nowak 2011), as well as young researcher's studies without such affiliations (Karkowska 2011, Bogumił 2012). This means that for some of today's researchers, Czarnowski's work is important. We can conclude that the role of Stefan Czarnowski's works in contemporary memory studies is increasing in recent years.

Without any doubt, Czarnowski has his place within the history of sociology and sociology of culture and also within different sub-disciplines: sociology of knowledge, sociology of culture, sociology of a nation, sociology of time and collective memory studies. He was rediscovered recently in the frame of the sociology of things (research on "biography of things") (Żakowski 2007). Czarnowski's work could prove relevant and current in studying processes of marginalization, social movements, religiosity and in many other studies. In some areas his works still remain a potential inspiration.

<sup>1</sup> Phrases such as "dispensable people" or "dispensable people in the service of violence" entered into the public and political language and appeared in electoral programs of some politicians (for example in Aldona Kamela-Sowińska's program, the former minister of finances).

<sup>2</sup> It is worth to note that Czarnowski's text on dispensable people was recently republished in everyday newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* (31.VIII–1.IX.2013).

### The Sociology of Time and Memory Studies, or Social Time and Collective Memory

The last part of this paper is dedicated to the issue of social time as a fundamental element of culture and a crucial dimension of memory. Discussion on social time is a way of presenting both social time, as well as collective memory, as parts of culture. It is also a way of bringing us to the cultural stream in Polish memory studies.

The question of social time and the findings of the sociology of time constitute a central and crucial context for collective memory issues. Time today is one of the fundamental categories in the interdisciplinary discourse on society and culture, their current condition and latest changes. The most distinguished researchers of contemporary culture, of modernity, late or liquid modernity or postmodernity, such as David Harvey, Zygmunt Bauman, Anthony Giddens, John Urry, Helga Nowotny, or Manuel Castells (to name a few), indicate that time plays a unique, previously obscure, role in contemporary culture, and describe its social consequences.

The advantage of a sociology of time perspective for memory studies ought to be seen in a variety of ways: (1) in conceptualizing time as a social and cultural phenomenon; (2) in approaching social time as qualitative, characterized by its own peculiarities; (3) in assertion of the multitude of social times; (4) in analyses of relationships between eras of profound change, instability and discontinuity, and an interest in the past; (5) in analyses of the role of the present in contemporary culture and its influence on phenomena tied to individual and collective memory. Let us briefly discuss these.

Émile Durkheim was the first to use the term “social time,” referring to a collective, not an individual character of time that is a social construct, a product of collective living, communal, imposing itself on its members as something extrinsic, serving essential integration, regulation, and communication functions in social life. Time is an element of social life and culture; social and cultural changes and differentiations find expression in categories of time, their multitude and fluctuations. This also pertains to memory as a fragment of this issue. Collective memory is also a social phenomenon and a part of culture. One can find presentations and discussions of these problems in works dedicated to the Durheimian School in sociology (Tarkowska 1974;<sup>3</sup> Banaszczyk 1989) or directly to the issue of sociological studies on time (Banaszcyk 1981; Tarkowska 1987).

Pitirim A. Sorokin developed the idea of social time as qualitative time that is “not a pure quantity,” and in which segments quantitatively equal are not qualitatively equal, which has a specific character, is multifaceted, irregular and reversible. He emphasized that the practice of daily life employs qualitative, specific, multifaceted time, not absolute, homogenous, astronomical time (Sorokin, Merton 1937; Sorokin 1943). Considering sociological data, social time is not quantitative, but qualitative, uneven, multifaceted, and its respective segments are evaluated differently. It

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<sup>3</sup> My first work on social time, the Durkheimian School and Czarnowski's ideas on the past, was my M.A. dissertation, “The concept of time in traditional societies” (1967), prepared later as an article for publication in *Studia Socjologiczne* 1968, 1(28): 107–138. Due to censorship after March of 1968, as well as political repressions, the publication was blocked. For more details see: Tarkowska 2005.

is irregular, fitting, and contains qualitatively different critical dates and periods filled with important events, as well as empty periods; its tempo is variable, it could “stop” or “speed up;” it does not flow in one direction, but is reversible; it does not have to be linear, it could be cyclical, like a pendulum (Tarkowska 1987). We find the same mechanisms, traits, and principles in the functioning of collective memory: attitudes towards the past of societies and social groups share traits of qualitative, irregular, sometimes cyclical, recurring, invaluable, mythically rich, emotional, action inspiring time. As examples of dealing with these problems, it is worth mentioning works by Barbara Szacka (1985, 2006), Elżbieta Tarkowska (1974, 1987), and Piotr Sztompka (1993, 2012). It is necessary to add Krzysztof Pomian’s book, *L’Ordre du temps* (1984), a very inspiring clarification of relations between social time (although the author does not use this term exactly) and other types of time.

Social time as common time in a group—joint expectations, mindset and symbolizing phenomena of change and duration, of succession and simultaneity, common notions of the past, present and future—serve essential functions of order, communication and integration. It is a means for building social ties, the basis of group identification, and of integrating an individual into a collective. Social time unites, but also divides, distinguishing one’s own time from the other. This also applies to memory.

An outright consequence of conceiving time as a social phenomenon that is socially determined and associated with a specific social and cultural context is Georges Gurvitch’s idea of the multiplicity of social times. He claimed that each social class, each group, every level of social reality, and even every type of activity (legal, political, cognitive, economical, etc.), proceeds in a time appropriate for itself (Gurvitch 1969). Furthermore, as there is not a single social time, there is also not one single collective memory; similar mechanisms are at work here, which Maurice Halbwachs wrote about considerably earlier in his classic work, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1969 [1925]). A multiplicity of memory means a variety of values, attitudes, stereotypes, and interpretations of the same or similar events. It also means there are many actors, whose memories meet, complement each other, or collide.

The contribution of Polish sociologists to this area is quite rich. First of all, surveys on attitudes of Poles towards the past, made by Barbara Szacka, Andrzej Szpociński, Piotr T. Kwiatkowski and others,<sup>4</sup> but also analyses of so called temporal orientations present the social differentiation of the role of the past and bonds with the past in different groups, social strata and societies. In my book, *Czas w współczesności* [Time in Society], the general concept and typology of temporal orientations were presented (Tarkowska 1987). In the book, *Czas w życiu Polaków* [Time in Polish People’s Life], this idea was applied to the Polish reality of the 1970s and 1980s (Tarkowska 1992).

The fourth assertion about the sociology of time considers how periods of profound change, instability and unsteadiness, perceived as groundbreaking, as an end or beginning of an era, cause individuals and groups to look to the past and search

<sup>4</sup> See the collection of studies within the series *Contemporary Polish Society towards the Past* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2006–2009).

there for their shaken, uncertain, new identities (Davis 1979, p. 49). This is particularly topical to countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where in the period of post-communist change, we observe a genuine return to the past, which is expressed not only in seeking support for unclear identities, but also in the attempt to fill in numerous “blank spots”—areas of ignorance, silence and taboo, imposed by the previous political system, censorship, propaganda and ideology—in a search of regaining a mythologized and manipulated past, as well as in restoring historical continuity. We seek the future through the past, “back to the future,” as an American commentator once labeled the beginnings of Polish change, referring to the title of a once popular film (Simons 1989). In all the countries of this region we observe a “return to the source,” a mass interest in the past, which is expressed in the proliferation of biographical initiatives, such as in publishing private memoirs, accounts and journals (Humphrey, Miller, Zdravomyslova 2003; Tarkowska 2004).

Another important argument of the sociology of time pertains to memory in the context of the “now,” the culture of the present. Contemporary culture is characterized by the growing role of the present, into which past and future are plugged in, with their time horizon likewise so far reduced. It is focused on what is now, and dominated by novelty, fluctuation and acceleration. These processes are on the one hand derivative of new information and communication technology, and on the other, an expansion of the market and consumption. New media, and new means of information and communication that assess change, novelty, discontinuity, and fragmentation as simple, obvious dimensions of reality in a positive light, cause the present time to dominate. Another source and symptom of culture of the present is consumption and a consumptive lifestyle, which rejects continuity and permanence, and prefers endless change, flow, and the exchange of the new for the newer. These processes also pertain to memory, wherein the horizon of the past is shortened and brought closer to the present (Tarkowska 2010). There are many research studies in this field. I would like to refer to a few only in Polish sociology: Andrzej Szpociński’s analyses on authenticity of the past (2005), Piotr T. Kwiatkowski’s on the experience of time in so called historical reconstructions (2008), Bartosz Korzeniewski’s reflections on medialization of memory (2010), Zygmunt Bauman’s study on time in consumer culture (2007) and my own research on ways of experiencing the past within popular and consumer culture (Tarkowska 2012). The role of the past in popular culture is another important and very interesting research subject, taken into account within the cultural stream of Polish memory studies.

### Concluding Remarks

The aim of this paper was to complete the image of Polish memory studies, reduced to three areas: political phenomena, a discussion on differences between history as science and social constructions of the past, and surveys concerning attitudes towards the past. Polemic with this view was a point of departure of my paper. A return to Stefan Czarnowski’s legacy and to the Polish studies on social time are ways of



discussing with the statement, neglecting the fourth area: the cultural part of memory studies. The final image of Polish tradition in memory studies without any doubt remains still fragmentary, but I hope that the role of the cultural approach in Polish memory studies, (hidden under different names: the past in the present, attitudes towards the past, social time, temporal orientations, images of the past, social memory etc.), was clearly presented and sufficiently underlined.

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