

PREFACE

The basis for considering values is most often found in philosophy or theology whereas context for the articles presented here is the culture of the Slavs. Culture mediates human contact with reality as a synthesis of material and spiritual values; it is the depository of meanings and their signs that inform about values. The values that are the foundation of a given national culture determine the awareness of one's distinctiveness and permanent position among other cultures. Values are reflected in literature, folklore, fine arts, architecture and many other fields.

The factor essential to sustaining culture is the solidarity of an organised collective that works together to produce and preserve cultural values. Slavic cultural models reflect the values and symbols to which the cultures were attached most. However, above all, it is about culturally embedded different understandings of who is: the human being, history, freedom and the state. These are the most universal categories, and as the creator of culture, the human is a constitutive category in relation to all the others.

Recognising values as a universal medium in knowing and understanding reality is the basis of any culture. One clue is provided by A. Whitehead, who argues that there are organisms in the world, by us called cultures which realise specific values and the relations of historical events correspond to aspects of eternal objects. The scholar defines value and endurance: "An organism is the realisation of a definite shape of value. Thus an event is a [...] fact which [...] is a value for itself; but by reason of its very nature it also requires the whole universe in order to be itself. [...] Endurance is the retention through time of an achievement of value"¹.

Following the philosopher's line of thought, we can ask: Does culture create the conditions for preserving identity? Is there such a degree of identification with values within a culture that it can reveal them in history, meaning endurance? Otherwise, we would be dealing with endurance, which only manifests itself in the presence of a pattern in a given event without identity being preserved and revealed. The presence of duration in the absence of endurance implies apprehension. To resolve this, it is necessary to understand the inner essence of historical events.

¹ A.N. Whitehead, *Science and Modern World*, New York, Pelican Mentor Books, 1948, p. 193.



This issue is addressed in the book *The Metaphysics of Events* by Józef Bańka. He writes that there is a type of structure (by this term, we mean culture), having in mind a structure of duration². It turns out to be so dominant that phenomena consisting of events last only thanks to and through the structure's entrance. This is tantamount to a negation of change in the real world. This situation can also apply to the scientific interpretation of distant reality, as well as to the ability of its participants to understand the events surrounding contemporary reality.

Following the logic of the philosophical argument, Bańka identified a type of historical human being independent of the definite human, who embodies the repetition of fundamental values and forms of human life. He is accessible to scientific reflection. That is the abstract human without date – the human of culture³ who references the being and time of the present 'Me', the observer. This allows for inclusion in eternity and simultaneous participation in the present. Between the historical human and the observer there is the axis of history. Since the realised culture is associated with the historical human being, the observer's identification with the historical human takes place by reproducing the values that are the basis of culture. The present human then joins the historical one. Bańka's way of presenting the continuity of culture about the world of values is analogous to what Christian theology says. In a theological view, the human being is identified with values and acts according to them, and thus culture which is the result of this action, is one and continuous – it forms a tradition.

Moral and spiritual values, a language, common history and culture, a land inhabited by a nation foster the emergence of a collective (national) personality with a collective consciousness. They foster the strength of the inheritance of traits in its positive and negative aspects. Economic and civilisational factors must be remembered too, as these two areas also influence the life of each nation in its biological and spiritual dimensions.

In the present times, values have seen a shift in their role in culture. High culture is being subjected to the standardisation characteristic of mass culture, and the once fundamental role of high culture in transforming individual consciousness into a function of supra-individual spiritual values, actualising historical experience, is fading.

This publication focuses explicitly on the values perpetuated in Slavic literature, folklore and spiritual life.

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² J. Bańka, *Metafizyka zdarzeń* [Metaphysics of Events], Katowice, Uniwersytet Śląski, 1991, pp. 43–45.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 87.