

Chapter Six

DO 'PROFESSIONAL' AND 'NON-PROFESSIONAL' DIMENSIONS OF BIOGRAPHY REALLY EXIST?

DELIBERATIONS BASED UPON *THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL*
BY MICHAŁ GŁOWIŃSKI
A REFLECTION WRITTEN FOR TWO VOICES

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Introduction

The issues addressed in this book suggest that we should be dealing with 'professional' and 'non-professional' ways of practicing the humanities, that is—in short—how, for example, a pedagogue or a philosopher go in for humanities and how it is done by e.g. a physicist. The subtitle (clarifying the subject) proposed by the originator of the project, on the other hand, refers mainly to the question of whether the elements of a private biography of a researcher condition his/her professional biography, and if so, in what way.¹ From the outlined alternative, we have chosen the second subject area. The first one is less interesting for us, and apart from that, it would require a detailed empirical research, which could not be effectively carried out in the time frame envisaged for the preparation of the publication. The second subject area seems more interesting as it requires

¹ The Authors refer to the input topic of considerations, namely *Biographies: Between the 'Professional' and 'Non-Professional' Dimensions of the Humanities* (footnote of the editor).

taking a stand on such intriguing matters as the way of understanding the research process in the humanities, or what a biography is, and how it can be comprehended and described.

In our opinion, juxtaposing **the private biography** with **the professional biography** is artificial. A man experiences his or her own existence as **a continuum**, in which the private and the professional sphere are closely related, and often indistinguishable from each other. We mean here the act of 'experiencing,' because in principle, a man does not consciously reflect on his or her existence. The reflection is made only in certain moments—either in **landmark situations** or in situations in which the autobiographical narration serves the **achievement of particular purposes**, for example, applying for a job or a higher degree. Landmark situations result in **comprehensive autobiographical stories**, in which a man makes an auto-interpretation of himself or herself and his/her story. The situations of the second type lead to **fragmentary autobiographical stories** that comprise the elements selected according to the aim which the author wants to achieve, for example life histories or *curriculum vitae*, i.e. something that can be called *a professional biography*, in contrast to *a personal biography*.

From our point of view, the question whether personal and professional biographies condition each other is a consequence of unjustified hypostatizing relating the dimensions, which are instrumentally singled out of the history of a person that forms a uniform whole. If we accepted this juxtaposition, we would, of course, try to show that personal aspects condition professional aspects and *vice versa*. Therefore, the relation would be circular. From the perspective we have decided to choose, the history of a person is a connection of diverse heterogenic elements that make a relational continuum. At the same time, the network of (dynamic, changeable) relations not only binds together the different elements of the history of a person, but it also affects the 'identity' of these elements. Speaking of the 'elements,' we mean, among other things, values, pursued goals, accepted beliefs and norms, remembered experiences and interactions with other people, i.e. the context in which a person is **situated**.

From our perspective, situatedness of a person is relevant and is connected with **the factuality** of his/her life. The relational and interactional character of the life of a person, and his/her historicity, are also essential. Therefore, it is obvious that in the continuum of a person's history, heterogenic elements (that can be placed, for example, in the 'professional' and 'non-professional' sphere) determine one another. The thesis of irreducible narrative character of the (auto)biography (understood as an attempt of a reflective understanding of one's own history, connecting its elements and putting them in order) of a person is also a component of our perspective.

We are going to justify and elaborate on these views analyzing an “autobiographical novel”² of Michał Głowiński entitled *Rings of Alienation* (quotes from this book are marked only by a page number). The interpretation will be written for two relatively autonomous voices—one oriented more philosophically, the other—more pedagogically. We hope that, in this way, the topic we have chosen will be clarified in a more thorough way, and also that the complementary character of these otherwise different perspectives will allow to formulate heuristically inspiring conclusions.

1. Głowiński and His Autobiography in the Philosophical Perspective—the Outline of Argumentation³

The philosophical tradition that constitutes my frame of reference is socio-hermeneutic ontology. It originates in the hermeneutic philosophy of Martin Heidegger and Hans-George Gadamer, whose assumptions were, however, revised by Barbara Tuchańska and James McGuire (these corrections concern—to put it simply—departing from the individualistic and existential approach of hermeneutic philosophy and moving towards the relational and interactionistic, i.e. the social conception). I am not going to refer directly to Heidegger and Gadamer in my argument, though. A conceptual network established by Jean-Paul Sartre seems to be much more adequate for my purpose. Sartre has a lot in common with the perspective of socio-hermeneutic ontology. From Sartre’s standpoint it is possible, for example, to reflect within **the ontic-ontological circle**. A reflection at the ontic level is a reflection on the *status quo*, which is realized namely on what is factually functioning. In my story, it will be a sketch reflection on the fragments of autobiographical findings of Głowiński. A reflection at the ontological level is, in turn, a reflection on the structures which allow for the emergence of what is factual, and thus they are ‘conditions of possibility’ of what is going on at the ontic level. A presentation (again quite brief) of these structures will be the fundamental aim of my argument. Choosing Sartre to be the patron of the present comments results not only from his close relations to the tradition of hermeneutic philosophy and socio-hermeneutic ontology. There are two more reasons which have influenced such choice of the framework of reference. The first one is that Sartre—as opposed to Heidegger or Gadamer—devoted a large part of his philosophical activity to ontological-ontic biographical research which he called existential psychoanalysis. He elaborated its ontological part

² This term is used as the subtitle of Głowiński’s book.

³ This part of the chapter has been prepared by Marcin M. Bogusławski.

mostly in *Being and Nothingness* but also in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, and he developed its ontic part in many biographies, such as *The Family Idiot*, *Saint Genet*, or, finally, in the autobiography—*The Words*. The second reason is that Głowiński and Sartre belong to the generation joint by the common experience of the war and they operate in a similar political-intellectual context (dominated by Marxism and structuralism). Therefore, it will be interesting to show how—despite their differences—the way of Głowiński's views on history and biography of a person can be expressed in the language of Sartre's ontology.



For Głowiński, the history of a person is not an organized structure, it is rather a chaotic stream of connected elements, which are retrospectively arranged in an ordered structure. Therefore, *The Autobiographical Novel* is "organizing one's life and a sense of self" (Głowiński, 2010, p. 535; cf. also, p. 34), it is creation of (a picture of) one's own identity by comprehensive referring to both introspective experiences and those heard from other people. It is particularly important to base on other people's experience while concentrating on one's own prehistory. "What's heard becomes [then] the subject of personal experience," says Głowiński (p. 5). However, the references to other people's experience as an element of living one's own history accompany a man throughout all stages of his/her life. It is one of the tools enabling to chronologically link all elements considered as fundamental for one's own biography/identity. As an example, it is worth mentioning Głowiński's reference to Marian Skwara's book, thanks to which he could confirm his own memories of Jews' deportation from Pruszków (cf. p. 50), or the reference to the work of Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leonciak, which made it possible for him to determine the time of a violent storm that afflicted Warsaw in 1942. For Głowiński, the storm is one of the best remembered experiences from his childhood, which, in the context of September 1942 (advanced liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto) and other Głowiński's readings, is regarded as a factor strengthening the memory of how the mechanism that binds the executioner and the victim works (cf. pp. 64-65). In the second case, the reference to the knowledge and experience of other people is used by Głowiński not only to organize his life and himself, but also to make the remembered experiences meaningful. Autobiographical reflection of Głowiński is used to build a linear wholeness from the components creating his history or to make particular elements meaningful, as well as to expose the experience which will be the fundament and mortar for his future fate, in a way the primal experience. Such experience, for Głowiński, is being a Jew, this fact conditioned every-

thing that happened to him and his family. For Głowiński (and his relatives) being a Jew leads to everything—from alienation that influenced his further life to his interests and career (cf. p. 533, 7). On the one hand, the necessity of hiding during the war resulting from being a Jew was the cause of Głowiński's constant solitude. It was also the reason for his discovering the strangeness in relation to other people that posed a threat (for example, a discovery that circumcision constitutes the element identifying him as strange, undesirable). It resulted in permanent neuroticism and considering life as "the highest value, unmatched" (p. 533). On the other hand, "staying in an apartment in complete isolation from peers, and the lack of what fills the life of a child at this age, somewhat doomed" Głowiński "to this kinds of interest, or even pushed him toward them" (p. 70). Such interests are "intellectual interests" which, in those times, found an outlet in reading books, playing chess or studying a geographical atlas (cf. pp. 70-72). It is worth pointing out that being a Jew is not something Głowiński was just sentenced to. Admittedly, the interiorization of the determinants of 'Jewishness' functioning during the war occurred to a large measure unconsciously in Głowiński's psyche, nevertheless, he constantly was making a conscious decision of accepting or rejecting those elements which were the determinants of his Jewish identity (cf. p. 118). Thus, we witness here a dialectical act of self-selection, projecting one's life on the basis of the category regarded by Głowiński as the fundamental one.

Certainly, it is easy to say that this primal experience influenced Głowiński's career. The question is whether this relation may be presented more precisely. I think it is possible. The relation between extraprofessional experiences and professional interests of Głowiński can be presented at least on two planes.

The first plane concerns the choice of such a method and field of research which allowed him to function relatively autonomously, i.e. on the one hand without exposing himself to fear due to acting inconsistent with the prevailing system, and on the other hand, without the necessity of giving up his own preferences. The method was structuralism, used by Głowiński in his studies on Young Poland's novels or the works of Bolesław Leśmian (Głowiński owes the fascination with Leśmian to historical-biographical circumstances; he discovered his works thanks to a Polish language teacher from an ephemeral, existing only several years, secondary school to which he was sent). One more personal element is connected to structuralism. It is oppositional thinking of himself, characteristic for Głowiński (in his autobiography this is, for example, the opposition of familiarity and strangeness, home and school). This is close to the structuralist methodology, one of the determinants of which is organizing the material with binary oppositions.

The second plane is connected with the unabated feeling of alienation and the reflection on it. This reflection was expressed by Głowiński's studies on the language of the Polish People's Republic which were initially begun for his own pleasure and now are continued during seminars on the analysis of anti-Semitic discourses or in publications about the language characteristic for, *inter alia*, the newspaper *Nasz Dziennik* (*Our Daily Paper*).

An opposite relation is also visible in the autobiographical perspective of Głowiński—i.e. the use of the professional instruments to construct his own history and his own identity (we should remember that such equalization is made by Głowiński himself by identifying the construction of the autobiographical narration with organizing his identity and his life (cf. p. 535)). One of the most characteristic elements visible here is the use of the above-mentioned binary oppositions, and resignation from describing himself in the psychological and idiosyncratic categories, in favor of perceiving himself as *an actant*. Let us note here that 'actant' is a term coined by Algirdas Greimas and it means 'an acting subject,' a figure characterized by specified activities taken up by him/her rather than by his/her inner thoughts (cf. Burzyńska & Markowski, 2007, pp. 291-292). What surprised me during the first reading of *Rings of Alienation* was that the story told by Głowiński-the-author did not give me the insight into the psychological sphere of Głowiński-the-hero. Głowiński-the-author looks at Głowiński-the-hero somewhat from the outside. The story of Głowiński-the-hero is often presented in a cold and neutral manner, the descriptions of emotional states of Głowiński-the-hero are concise and dry. The hero of *Rings of Alienation* is shown as an actant playing the specified roles on the stage of history rather than the subject of his own inner conflicts, experiences, emotions—he plays the role of a Jew battling against the Shoah, a scientist dealing with his own fears and the reality of the time of the Polish People's Republic, a gay dealing with the inner alienation (a description of Głowiński's escape from the entrance of a gay club in the Netherlands) or emerging sexual needs. In this context, it is interesting and worth noting that the reader hardly presumes the emotional needs of Głowiński; it is one more element of the characters' psychology which is completely absent in *Rings of Alienation*. I have to sincerely admit that during the first reading of this book, the 'structuralist' approach of Głowiński to his own history was a bit disappointing to me. Maybe because the reviews of the book emphasized its tragic nature, which I was not able to see enough in the deprived-of-emotions world of Głowiński-the-actant. The first impressions were, however, misleading—the neutrally described world of exclusion is the twice fearsome world. The tragic element is that even in his

autobiography, Głowiński protects his strangeness using specified techniques of narration. A close relation between the 'professional' and 'non-professional' components of the history of Głowiński can be noticed here very clearly. In other words, at this point, it can be noted that structuralism was, and still is, a "personal experience" for him (p. 494).⁴



It is time to change the plane of reflections from ontic to ontological. Due to the length limit, also in this case my argument will be just a sketch or a preliminary diagnosis.

Ontological explanation of the ontic characteristics outlined above needs to have a reference to the following categories of Sartre's ontology: *human-reality*, *being-in-the-situation*, *project*, *comprehension*, *history* and *body*.

Human-reality replaces the category of a subject in my dictionary. The category of a subject is entangled in the context of modern epistemology and, above all, means substantial consciousness opposed to the subject of cognition. The subject understood in the sense presented above is closed in its own inside, i.e.—in short—it is separated "from the flesh, both as the other sphere of human existence (from the body), and from the non-human world (Nature)" (Pobojewska, 2011, p. 12). Talking about the human-reality (the equivalent of *Dasein* in Heidegger's language) allows us to avoid this complication, since this expression leads us simultaneously to individual existence of a person ("being of each one of us is always his/her own being and not being in general" (Folkierska, 2008, p. 143)) and to the fact that an individual always exists in the world, i.e. an individual is an openness inseparably connected with the world. In such perspective, the human-reality cannot be isolated from the network of connections linking it with elements that create the world in which it exists. Therefore, it is impossible to describe the human-reality as an independent, completely sovereign and disembodied subject that follows only the inner dynamics.

I am going to talk mainly about being-in-the-situation instead of being-in-the-world, i.e. in the horizon of "the overall structure of the handy (tool) references" (cf. *ibid.*, p. 143) and the relations to other human-realities (Heidegger's notion of 'being-with'). Because being-in-the-situation is directly connected with the factuality issues (factual situatedness of human-reality), it also makes it possible to talk about various situations,

⁴ In 2008, Głowiński gave a lecture at the University of Silesia *Strukturalizm jako doświadczenie osobiste* (*Structuralism as a Personal Experience*). This issue is also a keyword in his book *Rings of Alienation*. Unfortunately, I did not have a chance to read the text of the paper, however, I think that it could be a confirmation of the thesis of the correlation between the 'professional' and 'non-professional' elements in the history (biography) of Głowiński.

which create either a pluralized image of a world or various worlds (this issue should be examined separately and I am not going to settle it right now). In such perspective, the category 'world' seems to be too universal to me, i.e. too holistic and homogeneous to present the multiplicity of situations and the multiplicity of the worlds connected with it (or the diversity of the world). What is the situation in which the human-reality exists? Following Sartre, I understand 'situation' as the network of relations among variable, heterogenic elements such as climate and earth, race and social class, language, history of the community, habits, whims (cf. Sartre, 2007, p. 586), values, inevitability of death, resistance of things, necessity of work, practical-inertial sphere [*pratico-inerte*] (the matter processed by the human work), social institutions, non-human beings etc. This network constitutes a context which enables the human-reality to self-realize-as-a-project (cf. Cabestan & Tomes, 2001, pp. 56-57). Thus, it is a premise of human-reality freedom.

Being a project means for Sartre "revealing to ourselves, through the possibilities and under some value, of what one is" (Sartre, 2007, p. 693). This "desire of being" (ibid., p. 693) is the aspiration for presenting all the events creating the history of human-reality as a unity. It means that human-reality does not have a given identity, but chooses a sense of who it is (wants to be) and refers everything which constitutes its history to this sense (metaphorically speaking, the projecting sense is a light which allows both to understand the human-reality and to be self-understood by the human-reality). In this sense, the human-reality is absolutely free—its choices are the unfettered self-creation of its own condition. On the other hand, however, the human-reality is never free, contrariwise, it is "enslaved, subjected to necessities, fed to the rights, over which it has no power" and is an easy prey for other human-realities (Kowalska, 2005, p. 91). It just means that the human-reality always self-projects, existing in the situation. Thus, it cannot be who it wants to be—it projects itself while existing in the tangle of relational connections, and this project concerns transforming these connections i.e. transforming the situation, better: co-transforming it along with other self-projecting human-realities. The final effect of these projections depends not only on the human-reality itself, but on all the elements creating the situation in which the human-reality exists. These elements establish an essential context for all actions taken by the human-reality. On the one hand, "man always exists contextually, connected to the outside world through the network of dependencies," and on the other, "man may [...] practically process the exterior, and thus realize himself/herself as a spontaneously established project" (Bogusławski, 2008, p. 216) and it helps us to understand the paradox of the

'primal choice,' which—according to Sartre—is the basis of every project. The primal choice is nothing else than a choice of who a person is, the choice of the sense in the light of which a person will interpret himself/herself and his/her history. Such choice is always a sovereign decision. On the other hand, the primal choice is (happens to be?) an interiorization of the features of the human-reality ascribed to it by its companions; at the same time, it is an assimilation of these features and it transforms them "into the abstract form of subjectivity," into the identity considered by the human-reality as its own (Sartre, 2010, p. 58). The further history of the human-reality is, in some sense, an effect of the clash between the dialectics of the sovereign decision gesture and the passive interiorization gesture.

The condition for the existence-in-the-situation and projecting is comprehension. For Sartre—similarly as for Heidegger—comprehension is not a speculative activity or any form of a methodical interpretation, but the way of being, and as such, a fundamentally practical activity (cf. Cabestan & Tomes, 2001, p. 12). Generally speaking, comprehension is a reference to the situations which—following Tuchańska and McGuire—I would like to perceive as "cross-referral to each other of different ways of being" (McGuire & Tuchańska, 1997, p. 157), i.e. as "an aspect of co-being of humans and other beings, connected through relationships and interactions" (Tuchańska, 2007, p. 93). Comprehension understood in this way "is the basis of any human project, and it also makes it possible to grasp the importance of this project." It is so because comprehension, being a specific dialectical movement, enables finding sense of individual actions taken up by a human-reality by pointing to its aim and the initial conditions projecting this aim (Cabestan & Tomes, 2001, p. 11).

Therefore, comprehension "has an ontological source not only in human beings' openness and exposure of the beings, but also in the relational nature of all beings." It is not "the relationship between [...] two opposition beings. It is an aspect of being of (many) entities that interact with one another, their creations and their tools, as well as social institutions making a framework for this interaction, and also that what is the subject of cognition." Comprehension understood as a way of being "obviously has historical character" (Tuchańska, 2007, p. 94). The situatedness of being has similarly historical character. Thus, it is time to ask a question about Sartre's understanding of history. For Sartre, history is not "only a collection of events unfolding in time and constituted by the human past. First of all, it is a process whole-making and unifying, pointing toward the goal (*une fin*) and understanding" (Cabestan & Tomes, 2001, p. 28). The holization process has various dimensions. Sartre elaborates on holization of particular products of the human-reality (e.g. a symphony is holization),

on the history as the holization process of human experiences (a project is a process of holization), and on holization as a creation of a situation, i.e. joining various heterogenic elements. In Sartre's opinion, according to the Marxist tradition, the process of holization does not occur on the basis of any inner laws, but it is connected with a human *praxis*, both the individual and the collective one (cf. *ibid.*, p. 58). The source of such understanding of history is, in Sartre's ontology, temporality. There is no room for the detailed lecture on the Sartre's concept of temporality, it is enough to notice that temporality consists of three dimensions—the past, the present and the future. The past is understood by Sartre as an ontological structure which forces the human-reality to be what it is "behind-itself." In other words, the past obliges the human-reality to "follow its being," to catch and project itself on the basis of who/what it was (Sartre, 2007, p. 165). As far as the past means for the human-reality its fulfilled and past identity, the future, for the human-reality, is "what it is to be as something that it cannot be" (cf. *ibid.*, p. 173). Therefore, the future is the plane for the realization of possibilities which could, but do not have to, become the reality.

Very Brief Recapitulation

I think that the transfer of Sartre's category of ontology into the ontic analysis of Głowiński's autobiography is not difficult at all for a thoughtful reader. What is more, I suppose that this transfer is relatively natural, i.e. the act of putting the ontological categories into the ontic analysis does not require any additional 'strained' interpretational procedures. In the perspective presented by me, the human-reality 'exists-in-its-body' in a specified situation, and the situation is a *sine qua non* condition of the understanding of the human-reality and the world by the human-reality itself, including especially the projection of its own sense on the basis of the primal choice. All these elements can be found in Głowiński's autobiography. In principle, he exists in three situations—the war and Shoa, communist Poland and democratic Poland. The war reality—hiding, which was favorable to reading, solitude, traumatization, and, above all, self-defining as a Jew were the primal conditions of the further history of Głowiński, and the starting point of his project. The essential element of the primal choice (project) of Głowiński was also his body: namely circumcision which was considered as an identification factor that determines the form and the course of the process of subjectification. Next, getting aware of the homosexual tendencies strengthened his self-perception as a person opposed to the world, alienated, frightened, worse etc., which was characteristic for Głowiński. Being-in-the-situation was also a starting point

for his career, from the choice of the topics of his works (Leśmian, the language of the regime, the language of anti-Semitism), to the choice of the structuralist methodology. In my perspective, the distinction between the private biography of the humanist and his career biography has no sense. The professional activity is one of the elements of the history of the researcher determined (and co-determining!) by the remaining elements of the historical continuum.

2. Głowiński and His Autobiography in the Pedagogical Perspective⁵

My basic reference perspective is pedagogy, social pedagogy, to be more precise (as an academic discipline, not as an everyday educational practice) as well as pedagogy of creativity. In addition, I refer to the fundamental theses of narrative psychology, in order to take a stand on the issues that I have a special interest in, namely, I seek an answer to the question—what a biography is and how it can be understood.

In the first part of my reflections, I will present selected premises of pedagogical disciplines that have been mentioned above, to give a picture—on the example of Michał Głowiński's autobiography—of the perspective which I adopt of understanding the history of a person as a continuum of relationally connected heterogeneous elements, which condition one another. In the second part, I will take a stance on the thesis of the narrative character of an (auto)biography.

The anthropological dimension of social pedagogy is visible in the fact that the center of its interests is **an autonomous individual** that is **independent** but, at the same time, stays in close relation to its **environment** (natural, social, cultural) (see Radlińska, 1961; Cyrański, 1995).⁶ Helena Radlińska, the precursor of the discipline, writes about the "diversity of intersecting influences." The process of education is understood as a social phenomenon and as a social activity, and for that reason, answers to questions concerning the factors (belonging to the broadly understood life environment) that influence shaping man's personality are sought. In the traditional concept of social pedagogy, the process of education is described in three basic and interdependent categories of **growth** (natural sphere, somewhat 'spontaneous'), **rooting in** (social sphere, socializing) and **introduction** (cultural sphere, symbolical-communicative). These elements were complemented with the fourth category—**creativity** (sphere of indi-

⁵ This part of the chapter has been prepared by Monika Modrzejewska-Świgulska.

⁶ Cf. the philosophical categories: 'situation' and 'being-in-the-situation' (the actual location of 'human-reality').

vidual and collective cultural creation) (Piekarski, 2007, pp. 43-57; see also, Szmidt, 2001).

The above-mentioned assumptions result in the necessity (for practitioners as well as academics) of making attempts for the sake of understanding another human being (a ward) and interpreting his/her life with due consideration of the following dimensions: objective (associated with socio-cultural factors) and individual (ontogenetic) (cf. Cyrański, 1995). Therefore, the academic social pedagogy investigates the dependences and interactions between the individual and his/her environment, because the "category of social participation is treated as essential for the understanding of social pedagogy" (Piekarski, 2007, p. 43). Consequently, a social pedagogue will 'observe' how a person reacts to the world, in other words, how he/she co-creates the social and cultural reality through his/her own activity. This interest implies the content of domain problems and, in consequence, the choice of research methods. For example, while analyzing life stories reconstructed on the basis of (auto)biographical materials, either existing (e.g. Głowiński's autobiography) or elicited by a researcher (e.g. narrations from uncategorized interviews), one should, according to the mentioned academic background, treat these narratives as a fragment of a given socio-historical reality that co-determines the shape of peoples' biographies. At the same time, one should take into consideration subjective qualities of the narrators (*inter alia* personal predispositions, experiences, values, undertaken actions, dreams, interests) (cf. Skibińska, 2006; Lalak, 2010).⁷

The discourse of social pedagogy also emphasizes the importance of changeability (situationality) for the course of socialization-educational processes, i.e. the impossibility of separation of the subject from the entire complex context of his/her milieu (Skibińska, 2006; Piekarski, 2007; Marynowicz-Hetka, 2006). This view is followed by other beliefs concerning the education/training process. Not only should it prepare a ward/student to deal with specific situations, but also support their successful development, i.e. shape active (creative) attitude, which is characterized by the independence of actions and thoughts as well as active participation in the dynamic socio-cultural world. Such understanding of education derives from the conviction that human identity is not given but, in a way, constructed, "constantly forming itself" (Walczak, 2010, pp. 255-277). Consequently, the emphasis is put on the processual nature of becoming,

⁷ A quotation from Głowiński (2010, p. 25) can serve as an example: "My mother, mentally fragile and prone to isolationism would have possibly become a completely different personality, if she had grown up in more favorable circumstances, not leading to marginalization and the inferiority complex."

which requires the 'teacher—student' relation to inspire the subjects⁸ of the educational process to attempt to understand (interpret) themselves and others as individuals being under the same historical influences, and, at the same time, to recognize and respect their individual ways of existence (individuality).

Therefore, choosing social pedagogy as the main conceptual frame of my analysis of selected fragments of Głowiński's *The Autobiographical Novel*, I will try to show the relational and interactionistic nature of the dependencies between the main character of the narrative and different contexts of the story of his life (existential, cultural, social). They might have influenced the process of shaping his attitude towards himself and the world, crystallizing his scientific interests and, as a consequence, his choice of research topics and methodology. Thus, it will be interesting to read *Rings of Alienation* as an attempt to observe his own individuality and uniqueness developing through the interaction with the changing socio-historical reality, which can be defined as the "biographical process of becoming" (Urbaniak-Zajac, 2005, pp. 115-127).

For the sake of this analysis, I am also introducing the concept of 'self-creation,' in order to confirm the assumptions mentioned in the introduction. And thus, I refer to the selected premises of pedagogy of creativity, which are connected with the theories of creative (active) attitudes, formulated mainly by social pedagogues, humanistic psychologists and psychologists of abilities (cf. the above reference to the concept of creative, active attitude) (Szmidt, 2001). At present, justifications of the theories of creative attitudes are sought in the research of positive psychology, in which the following psychological attributes: ability to forgive, gratitude, spirituality, wisdom, hope, sense of purpose, humility, self-esteem and creativity, are treated as cardinal virtues that facilitate the feeling of happiness, autonomy and fulfillment (see Trzebińska, 2008; Modrzejewska & Szmidt, 2013). By contrast, according to the social pedagogy tradition, human resources are defined as individual and social forces that make individual and collective activities dynamic. The term 'self-creation' means intentional and deliberate activities undertaken in order to shape one's own identity (self-formation), i.e. constructing a coherent image of oneself, especially through organizing biographical experiences and adding meanings to them. It becomes possible due to the insight into one's own needs, motivations and emotions, that is self-reflection and self-cognition.

⁸ In pedagogical tradition, the term 'subject' is used, *inter alia*, to describe a non-subjectified way of existence in educational relations and "the ordinary meaning to determine man as the subject of action, such as education, learning, etc." (Męczkowska-Christiansen, 2006, p. 15).

I assume that self-creation processes can enable projecting⁹ one's life through the reflection in the past and present, and anticipation of the future, i.e. through constant addressing the issue—'who am I in the changing and dynamic world?' The process of developing one's own identity is, in other words, an attempt at self-understanding, mainly through the confrontation and connection with other people and the milieu (cf. Schulz, 1900; Pietrasiński, 1990; Uszyńska-Jarmoc, 2007). I believe that the term 'self-creation' should be, first and foremost, associated with positive ways of realizing one's biography, i.e. creative transformation of the found reality with the use of one's potential (resources, strengths), so as to lead a life more satisfying in its various dimensions (cf. Smolińska-Theiss & Theiss, 2010). To put it differently, the uniqueness and fruitfulness of the life of a person depends not only on the socio-historical context and structural features of his/her personality, but also, to a great extent, on the decisions taken and their realization through (extra)ordinary actions (*praxis*).



Through the reference to Głowiński's (narrator) autobiography, I will attempt to increase the plausibility of the adopted assumptions concerning the history of a person and support the pedagogical dimension of this interpretation. Generally speaking, the pedagogical perspective is expressed in the following questions: in what way does the narrator 'learn the life,' or how does he 'deal' with the unpredictability of his fortune? How does he react to the world? And finally—in what way does a given social order shape his identity and individuality? Therefore, I will address the issue of **historic and social contexts of the learning processes** in an 'autobiographical novel' of the abovementioned author.

The narrator had come to live and grow up in four different **socio-historical contexts**, which forced upon him the necessity of adjusting to different living conditions—Poland just before World War II, wartime, communistic Poland and, later on, democratic Poland. For this reason, Głowiński, reconstructing his own fate, refers to the specific socio-cultural contexts that he has witnessed and experienced. Thanks to that, his autobiographical recollections can be read as a story of the Holocaust, times of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) or the birth of the Polish democracy, as well as his interpretation of politics, culture or the society of these times (cf. Głowiński, 2010, p. 88, 95). His own experiences give the narrator the right to comment on the public affairs, especially on difficult Polish-Jewish relations, which he states straightforwardly: "[...] based on my

⁹ Cf. earlier philosophical findings.

own experience, I have the right to write about this kind of terrible approach to Jewish matters during the occupation" (p. 89).

Treating an autobiography as memories of the person who, throughout the whole life, has been accompanied by feelings of alienation and otherness is much more interesting for a pedagogue, though. This acknowledged scientist and writer felt alienated in Poland as a Jew, especially during the war. He also experienced lack of understanding and separation as an atheist, homosexual, member of the Jewish community and as a person suffering from claustrophobia, which hindered him from, among other things, the participation in mass meetings and strikes against the communistic regime, and limited his integration with the striking academic community. The socio-historical context and Głowiński's subjective conditioning caused his inability to be fully himself in relations with others. He was forced to live in constant hiding, wearing 'masks,' experiencing loneliness, hence the title 'rings of alienation'—anti-Semitism, homosexuality, claustrophobia. The fundamental experience, constitutive for his existence in consecutive 'rings of alienation,' is the narrator's Jewish descent, which among other things, determined his being in permanent danger during the war, and the necessity to hide both physically and symbolically (concealing his Jewish identity). The narrator describes that experiences in the following way: "[...] this situation triggered in me the attitude that I refer to as the snail syndrome. At any time, I wanted to stick to the belief that I can close myself inside the shell and not expose out anything that belongs to me. This could, if not eliminate, at least mitigate the sense of danger" (p. 79).

Since the Holocaust, Głowiński had to get by with a secret, learnt how to live with it, and this gave rise to the awareness of alienation, strengthened by further life experiences: times of Stalinism (anti-Semitic propaganda), discovering his homosexual inclinations, claustrophobia. He is still aware that the war, occupation, the Holocaust did not "end in him," what is more, they have "lasted for many years, taking a variety of shapes, they are lasting and will continue to last until my last day" (pp. 106-107). This constant necessity of hiding the true 'I,' especially in the periods of childhood and adolescence, shaped the narrator's identity, the identity of a 'snail,' and influenced his further life decisions that were the continuation of the war experiences. One example of such decisions could be the choice of Polish studies and his profession that favored working in solitude, with no need for "coming out of one's shell." Although he admits that even in his childhood he was displaying introvert tendencies, they were still strengthened during the war: "In childhood and youth, I did not like and I could not be among my peers, I felt

bad among them, bothered from the beginning by alienation" (p. 55). The narrator copes with alienation, fear or the feeling of otherness, by going in for activities associated with areas that, first of all, allow him to function independently, and, secondly, are ruled by relatively clear principles, help him to discover the hidden meanings and, what is more, favor the creative transformation of those meanings. The "treasures" that helped him to survive "the vegetation of unusual daily life" of the war, include: a chess set, a German atlas of the world and Grimms' fairy tales, and after the war: reading encyclopedias and books "about dying and suffering," and listening to music, which was an antidote to the feelings of "futility" and "apathy." Later on, he was mainly engaged in literary theory, journalism as well as writing reminiscent prose and autobiography. Reminiscent prose may function as a self-therapy, it brings relief and helps to understand one's history, which cannot be acquired through psychological therapy, however, I think that it is due to this therapy that the writer 'opens' to the therapeutic qualities of literature.

The wartime experience, in Głowiński's biography, certainly includes 'nuclear episodes' i.e. crucial events that substantially influence the transformational processes and life history. In autobiographical narrations, these are usually some turning points which very often play the main part in a life story (Tokarska, 1999). Głowiński writes, "the experiences of those times will continue to come back to this story, it is impossible, for various reasons, not to refer to them" (p. 107).

In Głowiński's narration, **the social context** of learning processes is obviously connected with the socialization-educational processes, i.e. with the functioning within social groups, such as: family, school, orphanage run by nuns during the war, college, career and, to a lesser extent, with the presence of other people.

Głowiński is aware that, as Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967, p. 129) notice, "The individual [...] is not born a member of society. He is born with a predisposition toward sociality, and he becomes a member of society," and the personality- and identity-creating processes are closely linked to being assigned to a specific place in the world. At the beginning of the tale of his fate, the author of *Rings of Alienation* roots it in the history of the members of his family: "When we speak of short prehistory (about the social and professional origin [of ancestors—M.M.-T.]), social history becomes particularly important, because knowing to which social, national, local group the ancestors belonged, one can indirectly learn this and that about them" (p. 6). "How [...] could I describe my family in the most general outline? First, I would say that it is Jewish—this is obviously

the most significant feature, because it determines the rest and it defines my family at the highest level" (p. 7), he adds.

People that could be perceived as important for Głowiński's biography, practically do not appear. Only his parents, in other words the 'significant others,' are portrayed there in a more detailed way. During the primary socialization, the social world reaches the individual through the parents, i.e. the first world of an individual is created. "To disintegrate the massive reality internalized in early childhood" of this world, "severe biographical shocks" are needed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 142), which the narrator (Głowiński) attempts to accurately reconstruct in the chapters devoted to his war memories.

Coming back to the issue of the presence of people important for the writer's biography, it is necessary to mention that the descriptions of teachers are laconic, except for the one concerning the priest who had strongly anti-Semitic views. The appearance of these people is sanctioned rather by the chronology of Głowiński's life story than by their significance for his choices. The influence of these people can be defined as incidental, except for the Polish teacher from high school. Reading the autobiography, one has the impression that the independent choices, next to the socio-historical background, are the main catalysts for decision-making; and so we learn about the agent of the action (*actant*) and not about the psychological individual. We have no insight into the psychological sphere of the main character of the narration, into his emotions and inner conflicts, as their descriptions are terse and unemotional. This can be connected with the linguistic research of Głowiński-structuralist, because, as Roland Barthes (1975, p. 256) states, "From the very first, structural analysis showed the utmost reluctance to treat the character as an essence, even for classification purposes." It appears that the author wants to recreate the 'syntax' of his behaviors presented in the autobiography, to draw the path of his choices. Therefore, we observe him as a person functioning in specific social contexts, realizing subsequent social roles—of a child raised in a Jewish family, and further, of a linguist, writer, publicist and gay, hiding due to his descent, because "singleness of life line is in sharp contrast to the multiplicity of selves one finds in the individual in looking at him from the perspective of social role" (Goffman, 1986, p. 63). At the same time, we see him as a lonely individual, aware of his stigma, and, as a result, having difficulties with establishing close relations with others, and protecting the hidden, sometimes embarrassing information on him from being used by wrong persons. The minimization of the psychological sphere in the biography seems obvious. However, the author can return to traumatic events, which are still

'alive' in his memory, and describe what is 'indescribable.' Distancing himself, he speaks of the world which distorted human fate. In this way, the reader is, in a sense, given the 'freedom' of interpretation, undisturbed by excessive sentimentalism and emotionality, so that he/she can adopt a specific attitude towards the depicted world, and especially towards the topics that are difficult to express (associated with Polish-Jewish history and narrator's homosexuality).

To sum up, one may venture a pedagogical conclusion that Głowiński's *The Autobiographical Novel* depicts the process of self-education, i.e. gaining the abilities of self-understanding and self-realization. Therefore, through an autobiography we learn about the main character, who is involved in historical events and whose individual growth evolves from the involuntary adjustment to the existing circumstances (e.g. conditions during the war, which actually took away the possibility of successful development and forced Głowiński to exist in a new, terrifying reality), through internalization of social norms and cultural values, towards a more and more reflective and conscious participation in his own life and the socio-cultural world, and, as a consequence, creative transformation of both spheres due to his own activities (cf. Piekarski, 2007), because "man earns the personality with his own effort, thanks to his creative attitude" (Radlińska, 1947, p. 21).

For pedagogues, the analyzed autobiography may be interesting, as we 'meet' the narration's main character, who experiences difficulties and suffering, adjusts to new living conditions and sets goals (cf. Urbaniak-Zajac, 2005). He takes the reader through the process of becoming a mature and self-aware person, the process depending on, among other things, overcoming life perturbations and alienation, which leads the main character from existing in the title 'rings of alienation,' to active and open communicating of himself to others. It can be observed on the two layers of the novel, intertwining each other throughout the whole narration: **reporting reality** (through the description of episodes, experiences, people, choices and social relations, which make up Głowiński's life story and are clearly visible in the activities taken up for the practiced scientific field, cooperation with the academic community, running a PhD seminar, establishing friendly or partnership relations) and also **constructing his own image for the purpose of the story**, i.e. in descriptions of painful war experiences, views expressed on historical and social topics, commentaries on certain people's behaviors, recalling preferences of cultural texts or revealing his homosexuality ("I have decided to unveil this realm of my life for this reason only that I care for this story of myself to be free from gaps and falsehoods, from inauthenticity and pretending" (p. 147)).



It is time to show more precise relations between *the experiences of an individual* and *the sphere of professional activity*, in accordance with the view that "science is not practiced by beings abstracted from the world, but living persona—people situated culturally and socially" (see Kafar, *Around 'Biographical Perspectives'* in this book).

Głowiński lives in a permanent sense of danger and fear that others may discover his well-kept 'secrets'—Jewish descent, homosexual tendencies, claustrophobia. He makes choices connected with both the sphere of 'non-professional' and 'professional' activities, which not only secure his quite independent, inconspicuous existence, but also give him a possibility of realizing his own cognitive interests. The relation between 'non-professional' and 'professional' experiences is visible in three spheres: the choice of studies, and thus the field of interests, and then, within its framework, in the choice of specified topics and research methodology—*inter alia* structuralism and narratology. A question appears: 'To what extent could the knowledge of structuralism have influenced Głowiński's own history reconstruction?' or, in other words, 'Which elements of the autobiography are connected with structuralism or narratology?' It is essential to remember that "each creator is a specific personality in terms of both the psychological and sociological dimension, he bears the individual predisposition to shaping a language in a particular way" (Głowiński, Okopień-Sławińska & Sławiński, 1986, p. 142). Admittedly, Głowiński clearly emphasizes that the cognitive goals have always been more important to him than the uncritical and orthodox use of the specified theoretical literary doctrines (he writes in his autobiography: "I did not specify that [...] I did not think of myself (and I do not think!) in this way, all self-characteristics of this type seemed to me, and still seem, funny indeed" (p. 242)), however, it is worth to consider whether, in *The Autobiographical Novel*, it is possible to nail a workshop of a structuralist and a 'narratologist,' which may concern, *inter alia*, the category of "a virtual receiver,"¹⁰ oppositional thinking,¹¹ resignation from the psychological description of himself or a linear construction of the time layout in the text (cf. the fragment prepared by M.M. Bogusławski; see also, Głowiński, 2004).

Polish structuralists, including Głowiński, have been interested in the social functioning of a literary work, so the theories of literary communication have been the most important in their reflections. Thus, they have

¹⁰ See Głowiński (1977).

¹¹ Apart from the already noticed oppositions, we can point to those accompanying the ghetto descriptions: 'crowd—space,' 'heat—cold,' 'dirt—cleanness' (the description of German soldiers and ghetto dwellers) and the construction of the autobiography itself in which we can distinguish the times before and after war.

intended to conduct "precise examination of the set of relations inscribed in the literary message and functioning between the sender and the recipient" (Burzyńska & Markowski, 2009, p. 293). There have been attempts to define the general conditions of the possibility of literary communication e.g. the author's comments, a theoretical figure of the recipient written into the literary piece ("the assumed recipient"). We read in *Rings of Alienation*: "[...] the issue of the recipient of a literary piece as an element of its structure was dealt by me a little later, in the second half of the sixties" (p. 243). Głowiński on a number of occasions emphasizes the purposefulness of the used composition of the presented events, for example: "I return to taking about [...]," "I am writing about this to emphasize that [...]," „before I talk about [...], I would like to devote some place to something else [...]," "I wrote about it so extensively [...], because [...]," „as I have mentioned above [...]." Thanks to such means, the reader has an impression of taking part *in statu nascendi* in the process of creating the autobiography. Therefore, one can say that the author wanted the reader to understand his intentions and the interpretation of his life history, and to properly interpret his scale of values and the hierarchy of importance. The above-presented 'devices' connected with the communicative situation of the literary piece and the discussion of difficult topics (such as 'the nightmare' of the ghetto, discovering the sexual identity, acute claustrophobia, fear concerning his own fate in the Polish People's Republic) assume that the work is addressed to a sensitive recipient, who does not generalize and is open for an individualized message. The author resigns from colorful stylistics in favor of a specific, referring language. He cares for word precision, to be well understood. The subsequent chapters of the autobiography are not only built according to the rule of a simple chronology in life, but also reveal new dependencies between various elements of the author's life history.

The extraprofessional experiences of Głowiński might have influenced the choice of a field and methodology; they also might have had an impact on the subject matter in his research works. The researcher has written essays on the language of the Polish People's Republic (e.g. *Mowa w stanie oblężenia* (*Speech Under Siege*)) and was the originator of seminars and articles demystifying anti-Semitic discourses. The issue of war has been an object of Głowiński's interest since his childhood, and, as an adult, he has chosen to make it one of the topics of his reminiscent prose (e.g. in *Czarne sezony* (*The Black Seasons*)).

On the one hand, all the things we experience influence our professional choices, including the choice of the field of science, the issues and methodology, on the other hand, at the same time, they become a continuum

of extraprofessional experience. In case of Głowiński-structuralist, it influenced the way of the autobiographical experience reconstruction.



Below, I will refer to the thesis concerning the narrative character of a(n) (auto)biography of a person, perceived as an attempt of reflexive understanding and ordering one's own life history by linking its elements since, as Erving Goffmann (1986, p. 62) reminds, "biographies are very subject to retrospective construction."

The title of Głowiński's autobiography informs us that it will be a story about life. What could it mean? **Narrative psychology** assumes that "life is a story" ("it is structured like a story"), and "if life is a story, it expresses the personal interpretation of events, and also the motives, feelings and aspirations" (Oleś, 2008, p. 37; cf. also, Trzebiński, 2002). Reading *Rings of Alienation*, we find out that the author wanted to "control" his life rather than "present it" ("reflect" it); he wished to show both "the main routes" and go deep into the "nooks and crannies" of his life, trying to, in this way understand and order his own history ("I know that an autobiography is a result of a compromise between what is important and what is remembered" (pp. 532-533)). Głowiński orders his life according to his own key, he selects pieces of information which are important to him, and therefore, he gives the chosen events and experiences a subjective meaning. Thus, the autobiography is a narration, which pours the sense to life, explains it subjectively but, at the same time, creatively. It allows the writer to construct his own narrative subjectivity and identity. In Głowiński's novel, there are categories ordering his biographical experience; they are described in a more detailed way by Jacek Piekarski (2007): "**continuity**" (linking personal past and present and, on the basis of this, projecting the future, constructing a life history which guarantees the sense of continuity and coherence, merging various experiences occurring at the same time); "**complexity**" (visualization and summoning experiences in various social groups); "**originality**" (noticing his own individuality in decision making, especially in the context of a social position); "**realization**" (creating his own portrait as a competent person dealing with difficult situations, realizing his own goals and values) (see also, Oleś, 2009).

I understand narrative construction of an identity as self-creation activities bringing new and positive images of one's own life, i.e. a reinterpretation of one's own life history, which helps to understand and tame the aspects that are painful, accidental and remote in time. In Głowiński's narration, self-creation involves referring to personal experiences as the source of the knowledge of oneself, the world around, and the relations between

these two entities (cf. Dziemianowicz & Kurantowicz, 2005). The author experiences suffering, but 'turns' it to something beneficial to him, i.e. he uses it to develop. He answers his own questions: 'Who am I?' and 'What can I connect with the general goal of describing my life?' It appears that, because of the above, *The Autobiographical Novel* is an example of "successful biographization," "that allows to protect a positive self-image" (Urbaniak-Zajac, 2005, p. 122). In narration studies, it is an example of a pedagogical perspective which analyses the possibility of an intentional creation of one's own biography (of life) (cf. Urbaniak-Zajac, 2005; Lalak, 2010).



To sum up, it can be stated that referring to the categories of social pedagogy and creativity pedagogy for the purpose of analyzing Głowiński's autobiography is rather obvious, and—I hope—convincingly outlined. From the perspective of the mentioned pedagogical disciplines, the subject exists in a specified socio-historical context (situation). To be able to understand another person (also through the texts written by him/her), especially according to the principles of hermeneutically oriented social pedagogy, it is essential to ask about a historical location of the subject and individualized dimension of his/her existence (see Cyrański, 1995; Walczak, 2010). In my perspective, a human being, despite his/her strict dependence on the environment, time, and influences of social groups, activates his/her development potential (individual strengths), thanks to his/her own creative actions (active attitude, independence, self-reflection) he/she becomes more and more autonomic, i.e. creates his/her own life (self-creation), gives it a subjective meaning, communicates it to the others in order to, among other things, make these meanings common and build fruitful interpersonal relations, and, what is more, he/she takes actions which go beyond the individual goals (cf. Radlińska, 1961; Szmidt, 2001; Piekarski, 2007).

Conclusion

In our narration, we concentrated on the question what a biography is and how it could be understood. We were especially interested in the issue of its 'professional' and 'non-professional' dimension. We do not agree to artificial contrasting *a personal biography* with *a professional biography*, so we tried to show, each of in line with his/her own traditions and the perspective of his/her own field of studies, that a human being experiences his/her life as **a specific continuum**, in which *the personal* and *professional* elements are often impossible to be distinguished, because we experience heterogenic elements that build our life in a simultaneous manner. The professional issues do not

exist only when we enter a laboratory, a school class, or an office. A strict division into the personal and professional biography may be questionable, because it is based on the assumption that a person is someone else in his/her personal and professional life. We distinguish these two spheres only thanks to self-reflection, writing autobiographies or telling other people about our life, so as to order and understand things we have experienced.

At the end of our considerations, we present a short summary of the ideas discussed above, in the form of the most important theses:

- the proposed perspectives—philosophical and pedagogical—perceive a person as a human-reality/acting subject (*actant*) introducing conscious changes, being in relations with others, communicating;
- to understand the uniqueness of a life of a person, one should not only concentrate on the inner features and mental processes dynamics of the subject in the analyses of a(n) (auto)biography, but should treat a person as a whole, i.e. as a 'traveler,' existing in a specified socio-cultural context (network), interacting with other 'travelers' (being-in-the-situation/an individual in his/her milieu);
- we do not equate an (auto)biography with the subsequence of events or a linear causality only, but we perceive it correlatively, as a narration, i.e. a reflective understanding of one's own history;
- we understand the identity/personality in dynamic, processual, relational and linguistic dimensions;
- the identity is constructed (chosen), thus we can realize ourselves-as-the-project (to be a project)/take auto-creative actions, but always in a specified situation, which both limits and allows self-projecting/a creative (active) attitude; the experiencing human-reality/subject shapes and is shaped simultaneously, refers to himself/herself and to others;
- the understanding (referring) to ourselves and to others is a life-style/self-realization which is a practical activity and depends on what is happening to our body;
- philosophers and pedagogues "very often talk about the same human issues," although they speak different languages (cf. Jastrzębski, 2005).



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