Jews in Eastern Europe

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Ways of Assimilation

Edited by

Waldemar Szczerbiński
and Katarzyna Kornacka-Sareło

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PREFACE

WALDEMAR SZCZERBIŃSKI
AND KATARZYNA KORNACKA-SAREŁO

"Being a Jew" can be called a multi-faceted and complex phenomenon, for the Jewish identity is not a homogenous one: the self-consciousness of the Jews who live all over the world is constantly fluctuating and changing in itself. Judaism itself, understood and perceived as a monotheistic religion, is no longer a criterion of what is really or truly "Jewish". After the second *churban*, "the Jewish nation started to run in different directions all over the world. The people of ancient Israel took on dozens of faces, skin and hair colours, nose and eye shapes, learnt various languages, signed themselves in with Polish, German, Spanish or Serbian names, and they even started to appreciate the strangest tastes in food. In such a way their *Diaspora* appeared".[1] Thus, in the lands of central and eastern Europe, the Jewish Dispersion (*Galut*) came into existence. It had its own, very concrete, forms endowed with its specific content, which, definitely, strongly influenced Jewish identity in general. Sometimes, one can even find statements to the effect that it is Poland and its traditions which are the most important and significant constituent of the national identity of contemporary American Jews and of many other Jews worldwide.[2] Hence, while reflecting on the Jewish identity, it has to be assumed that the Jews from central and eastern Europe played a very important part in the process of creating both individual and social self-consciousness of the Jews living in different parts of the world.[3]

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[1] Paweł Smoleński, *Izrael już nie frunie* [*Israel is not flying any more*] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2011), 19. All the quotations from Polish texts occurring in this Preface have been translated into English by K. Kornacka-Sareło.

[2] See, for example: Byron L. Sherwin, *Sparks Amidst the Ashes: The Spiritual Legacy of Polish Jewry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[3] An individual identity can be determined as a set of some inborn features and characteristics, which an individual develops independently of the environment, during the process of his or her life. On the other hand, a social identity is developed by an individual being in contact with a given society and being

Mutual references within a single community are always dynamic and rarely easy to foresee. A typical coexistence is not a constant and stable situation, but it is rather a constant and permutable process, in which both the stages of tranquillity and struggling can be distinguished, like periods of security and threat, of power and of fall, of happiness and of mourning, or of goodness and of evil, which do exist interchangeably. Also, there is usually a dilemma connected with this phenomenon: a typical desire by a stranger is to differ from the local (autochthonic) society, but almost all strangers want to become integrated, to a lesser or greater extent, with the dominant culture. This dilemma was present when the Jews were building their relations with others. The problem of recognizing these relations demands a previous reflection on a wider issue associated with the possibility of social references in general.

Therefore, according to a commonly widespread conviction, a man has two approaches to reality: feelings of alienation or acceptance. Then, in this case, we are dealing unavoidably with an alternative discourse, which demands making unambiguous choices of the type "either / or", or "this one or that one". In such circumstances, one does not take into consideration a partial, at least, conjunction, when the lack of acceptance of one of the realms of a given social activity does not necessarily imply a total alienation. It may sound trivial, but, at the same time, it is quite obvious that different people do not have to agree in everything, and they do not always go together. However, if they do not, it is not evidence of their mutual hostility: the differences between individuals or nations are something natural and unavoidable. They always provoke some tensions, or even conflicts. This is especially evident when one examines the research process concerning the phenomenon of Jewish assimilation in eastern Europe.

The problem of strangeness (in the sense of being regarded and perceived as a stranger, and one's feeling of being a stranger) is known to every human being and to every society. We can feel strange in our interpersonal, international or inter-religious relations. Things, phenomena and people—all of them can be felt as strange and alien to us. In the case of a man, everything which is not himself or which is not his own seems to be strange. However, the most important feature of the position of a stranger is an unpleasant feeling of not existing as an original member of a certain group (familiar, tribal, national, social, religious or cultural). For, at the same time, the stranger seems to transcend the confines of this group,

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influenced by this society. See: Robert Szwed, *Tożsamość a obcość kulturowa* [*National Identity and Cultural Strangeness*] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2003), 34.

endowing it with values, costumes or norms that are not determinants of the sense of self-identification and self-consciousness of an individual or a collectiveness. Hence, a completely new entity is arising at the moment: it is an interrelation between what has been "own" (and old) and what is "strange" (new). The unity of closeness and distance, which are intrinsically present in all human relations, is constantly being modified, and a specific tension, resulting from the opposition of the type "close–far", must arise in such circumstances. Thus, a stranger can become "close", "kin", and the one who—previously—seemed to be "ours" begins to be perceived as someone strange, alien and being situated far away from ourselves. Nevertheless, we usually deal with an increase or decrease of the space-distance dividing those who are "kin–our own" from those who are "strange and unknown", which is accompanied with a change of modes of social interethnic coexistence.

The concept of strangeness is not an unambiguous one. On the contrary, it seems to be rather cut-and-dried. Normally, being a stranger means someone coming from abroad or someone completely unknown. "Strange" to us is everything that is not our own, that does not belong to us, or that differs from our costumes, norms, rules, conventions, traditions and from our culture in general. A stranger is someone whom we do not know, or the one who does not belong to a certain social circle, not being a member of our family, community or religious group. If some things or phenomena are strange to us, we usually do not know them at all, although this statement can be regarded as a trivial one. If some people are unknown to each other, nothing, in fact, connects them, and they feel neutral and unconcerned about each other. On the other hand, however, if something is strange to someone, it remains as being felt as something incompatible with his or her system of values, nature, costumes and habits, as well as the religion he or she confesses. The problem of being a stranger can be found in every culture. In this context, "the Jewish question" is commonly discussed, since the Jews have been present among other nations for centuries, constituting the social and cultural minority and being almost always perceived just as strangers. But writing this monograph it was not our aim to show to the readers the attitude of central and eastern European nations towards their Jewish neighbours, but rather to present a deepened analysis of the Jewish—own—attitude, sometimes a very complex and complicated one, towards other societies, communities and nations living—together with the Jews—in the same lands.

However, looking at the phenomenon from a wider historical perspective, one notes an ambivalent attitude of autochthonous nations towards the Jews in eastern Europe: on the one hand, these nations were

involved with Jews in different ways, mainly regarding business matters, and on the other hand, there was a widespread fear of Jews which sometimes led to some vehement anti-Semitic movements and behaviours.

In general, the Jews and other nations tried to live in isolation from each other. The basis for such a state was a primordial and deep ignorance (in the meaning of the lack of knowledge) about the Jews and their everyday customs and religion. Thus, the following statement seems to be quite justified: the historical coexistence of eastern European nations and the Jews was marked with lots of difficulties and tensions, although there were also periods of peace aside from the tragedies, pogroms and adversity. The Jews and other nations in eastern Europe were sometimes reluctant to coexist peacefully, but they also lived together with, or next to, each other. Although any kind of serious dialogue was not the subject of dispute or consideration, the representatives of different nations were able to fall into place, because—regardless of their true convictions—they had to coexist relatively peacefully. Certainly, the aforementioned tensions were always present, for, truly speaking, they could not disappear. Despite various factors—financial, economical, political, social, national and religious—all of them had the same foundation and explanation: it was the very high price the Jews were forced to pay for building, protecting and developing their own identity in a strange and sometimes hostile environment.

At this point, however, some important questions have to be asked, in the context of Jewish assimilation problems. What was the attitude of east European Jewry towards the reality they came across? Did they become similar to other nations of eastern Europe? To what *extent* did they become similar? What were the reasons for becoming assimilated and integrated with other nations, and what were the results of the assimilations of the Jews living in central and eastern Europe? How did they become assimilated, and to what *extent* did they become assimilated? These questions are, of course, not new ones, although they are being asked all the time: the answers are not unambiguous or comprehensive, which is verified by the many books which have so far been published in Poland. Nowadays, special attention should be devoted to the works of such scholars as Artur Eisenbach, Anna Michałowska-Mycielska, Agnieszka Jagodzińska, Alina Cała, Marcin Wodziński, Konrad Zieliński or Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska.[4] Certainly, the problem of assimilation also

[4] As far as the assimilation problem in Polish literature is concerned, see, for example: Artur Eisenbach, *Kwestia równouprawnienia Żydów w Królestwie Polskim* [*The Problem of Equal Rights for the Jews in the Kingdom of Poland*] (Warszawa: PIW, 1988); Agnieszka Jagodzińska, Pomiędzy. Akulturacja Żydów

constitutes a subject for research all over the world, and there are numerous scholars who have written excellent works on this subject, trying to define the phenomenon and describe the existence of east European Jews, in its different realms and times.[5]

Thus, the monograph that we would like to present to our readers is designed to be only one**,** very small**,** step in the process of revealing the truth concerning the life of east European Jews. It is certainly not the first

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Warszawy w drugiej połowie XIX wieku [*Between. Acculturation of the Warsaw Jews in the second half of the 19th* Century] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2008); Alina Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie Polskim (1864–1897)* [*Assimilation of the Jews in the Kingdom of Poland 1864–1897)*] (Warszawa: PIW, 1989); Konrad Zieliński and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, eds., *Ortodoksja—Emancypacja—Asymilacja: Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich w okresie rozbiorów* [*Orthodoxy-Emancipation-Assimilation: on the History of the Jewish Population in the Period of Partitions*] (Lublin: UMCS, 2003); Konrad Zieliński (ed.), *Wokół akulturacji i asymilacji Żydów na ziemiach polskich* [*Around Acculturation and Assimilation of Jews on the Polish Lands*] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2010); Marcin Wodziński and Anna Michałowska–Mycielska, eds., *Małżeństwo z rozsądku? Żydzi w społeczeństwie dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* [*Marriage of Convenience? The Jews in the Society of the Kingdom of Poland*] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2007); Anna Michałowska-Mycielska, *The Jewish Community. Authority and Social Control in Poznań and Swarzędz* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2008).

[5] See, for example: Leo Pinsker, *Auto-Emancipation. A call to his people by a Russian Jew, etc.* (London: Rita Searl, 1947); Jacob Katz, *Jewish Emancipation and Self-Emancipation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986); Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia, Vol. 2: 1881–1914* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010); Heiko Haumann, *A History of East European Jews* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002); Iwo Cyprian Pogonowsky, *Jews in Poland: a documentary history: the rise of Jews as a nation from Congressus in Poland to the Knesset in Israel* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1993); David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe 1789–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russian and Poland: from the earliest times until the present day (1915), trans. from the Russian by Israel Freidlander* (Bergenfield: Avotaynu, 2000); William O. McCagg, Jr, *A History of Habsburg Jews, 1670–1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Shaul Stampfer, *Families, Rabbis, and Education: Traditional Jewish Society in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010): Shaul Stampfer, *Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century: Creating a Tradition of Learning* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012).

attempt of this kind, and it will surely not be the last: no research reflection will ever try to establish absolute statements or definite solutions. Therefore, the "full" truth—the truth in its wholeness—cannot be gained, known or taken for sure. Nevertheless, such a reflection is able to move us closer to this truth, which will consequently give us a deeper self-understanding and help us to recognize and understand others, and which seems to be a sufficient reason for studying and doing research on the question of Jewish assimilation, in its widest sense.

The analysis of the Jewish assimilation phenomenon therefore clearly reveals causes, changes and results of the coexistence of the Jews of eastern Europe with other nations. The various chapters of this book present, in their different aspects, the long-lasting discussions both between the supporters and adversaries of assimilation within the Jewish environment and also between the assimilated Jews and non-Jews, which makes the problem rather complicated. But it is the concept of assimilation itself which can be regarded as very controversial and complex. As Anna Landau-Czajka writes, for example, "In order to write about assimilation one has to define, first of all, how we understand this term. And here the real problem starts".[6] And as Agnieszka Jagodzińska also says: "The ambiguity of definitions and the lack of precise findings result in confusion and lively disputes".[7] Eventually, the scholar goes along with Todd Endelman, who claims that "the term *assimilation,* without modification or qualification, lacks critical rigour. Conceptually, it can encompass—and is often confused and conflated with—four analytically distinct changes in Jewish behaviour and status in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: acculturation (the acquisition of the cultural and social habits of the dominant non-Jewish group), integration (the entry of Jews into non-Jewish social circles and spheres of activity), emancipation (the acquisition of rights and privileges enjoyed by non-Jewish citizens/subjects of similar socioeconomic rank), and secularization (the rejection of religious beliefs and the obligations and practices that flow from these beliefs)".[8]

Regardless of some vivid disputes concerning the concept of assimilation, a special group of "the eastern European Jews" can be easily

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[6] Anna Landau-Czajka, *Syn będzie Lech. Asymilacja Żydów w Polsce międzywojennej* [*The Son's name will be Lech. The Assimilation of the Jews in Poland of the Inter-war Period*] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2006), p. 23.
[7] Jagodzińska, *Pomiędzy* [*Between*], 11.
[8] Tod M. Endelman, "Assimilation", *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe,* Accessed June 2, 2014. http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/default.aspx. See also: Jagodzińska, *Pomiędzy* [*Between*]*,* 11.

distinguished. For in these territories, traditional Jewish culture was much stronger and much more vital than in western Europe. Besides, the eastern European Jews had to deal with completely different problems from the obstacles and difficulties with which, for example, the Jews in Germany contended. For centuries, eastern Europe, and especially Poland, was a safe haven for many Jewish communities. In Volhynia and Podolia, as well as in East Galicia, Jewish mystical thought was unexpectedly reborn, thanks to the founders of the Hasidic movement. Poland was also where the most pre-eminent rabbis used to work, disseminate their teachings, write and publish their works. What is more, in Poland alone, numerous and very famous rabbinical schools and academies were established, without any political and social limitations or constraints. Therefore, the spiritual heritage of the thought of the Polish Jewry is constantly present in almost every stream of contemporary Judaism. Thus, lots of Israeli Jews, American Jews and many other Jews living contemporarily in different countries across the world have their common roots in Poland, and so, perhaps, are not able to become true and complete émigrés who have totally forgotten about the deeply religious atmosphere of Polish cities and *shtetls* (small towns situated in eastern Europe), where generations of their ancestors were born and died, where synagogues were built, *zemirot* sung, *Shabbat* candles lit on Friday evenings, and where *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, dwelt in exile together with Her exiled people.

However, it is not so easy to define this special category of "eastern European Jews", or of "the Polish Jews". Despite many appearances**,** these categories are not that clearly determinable. In a narrow sense, "the Polish Jews" denotes "the Jews who come from Poland". But, at the same time, it is remarkable that the Polish borders of the interwar period were different from the contemporary borders. Additionally, we still have to remember that Poland was partitioned for quite a long period, when, formally and officially, the state of Poland did not exist at all. So, when the concept of "the Polish Jews" is taken into consideration, some scholars focus on Poland, seeing it as a country of the pre-war period—the times when Poland embraced the territories which are within the borders of today's Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, while other scholars have in mind the territory of Poland of the post-war era, so they also consider behaviours and attitudes of the people living in the former Prussian lands.

In a wider sense, the same term, i.e. "the Polish Jews", refers not only to the Jews from Poland, but to all of the Ashkenazi Jews, who relocated themselves from Poland to other regions of Europe. According to some scholars, almost all of the Ashkenazi Jews, who, over the centuries, migrated to parts of the globe, in fact came from the former territories of

the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[9] This phenomenon can be very clearly seen when we consider the history of the Jews regarded as "the Russian Jews", who had initially been living in the lands of Poland before its three partitions, and also "the Romanian Jews" being, in fact, the descendants of the émigrés from Poland. The partitions of the Polish state, and the incorporation of the eastern lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth into the Russian Empire, resulted in a significant increase in the Jewish population of Russia. Consequently, it was the main reason for the emergence of the so-called "Jewish question" or "Jewish problem". Hence, as Arno Lustiger asserts, the history of the Jews in the Russian Empire should be regarded as a *sui generis* continuation of the history of the Polish Jews,[10] and so should the history of a large group of the Jews living in Israel nowadays be also regarded. Thus, in this book there are also chapters whose authors focus on the assimilation problems of the Jewish inhabitants of Irkutsk and of those who live in Israel.

Assimilation of the east European Jews constitutes a very important and unique part of the research being carried out by the scholars working in the Department of the Culture of European Judaism of the Institute of European Culture at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, who perceive the spiritual and cultural achievements of east European Jews as a valuable heritage which should be internalized and developed. As the Institute's fundamental objective is to study and analyze the manifold aspects of European culture, the departmental researchers approach and investigate the phenomenon of Jewish culture as part of European culture as such. For Judaism is—in its varied forms and realms—definitely an important and valuable constituent of the whole of Occidental civilization. Hence, the department's researchers not only analyze historical, biblical, philosophical or linguistic issues connected with the Jewish heritage, but their foremost aim is also to show the evident and complex interrelations between Jewish culture and the cultures of other European nations. Thus all of the efforts made by the scholars working in Gniezno tend to present Judaism as part of the European cultural heritage, and demonstrate how the Jews, Judaism and the Jewish culture have influenced the culture of Europe, and how the Jews and their way of perceiving the surrounding world were affected by the cultures of some other European nations. Such

[9] Bernard Dov Sucher Weinryb, "Yehudei-polin el mihuz le'polin", in *Kium va-shever. Yehudei-polin le-doroteyhen,* eds. Israel Bartal, Izrael Guttman (Jerusalem: Hevrah, 1997), 369–98.

[10] Arno Lustiger, *Czerwona Księga. Stalin i Żydzi* [*The Red Book: Stalin and the Jews*], trans. Elżbieta Kaźmierczak&Witold Leder (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2004), 24.

a research perspective will enable readers to not only understand better the events that took place in the past, but will also make it easier to estimate many contemporary problems which are constantly bothering Poland, Europe and the whole world.

All of the papers in this monograph were engendered by the passion and activity of the scholars at the Department of the Culture of European Judaism, as well as by their collaboration with other scientific research centres in Poland and abroad. The arrangement of the ten chapters follows a deductive way of reasoning—a top-down approach, with the more general issues addressed first, and then narrowing their scope to some detailed aspects. The chronological frame of the monograph spans the period from the beginning of the *Haskalah* movement to our contemporary times.

Hence the opening article, *Assimilation, Integration, Multiculturality—The Ethnolinguistic-Communicological Perspective,* written by Prof. Eliza Grzelak, is, in fact, devoted to contemporary communication problems that exist between two social groups: the Polish group, which is, *ex definitione*, a dominant one in the society of post-war Poland, and the Jewish group, which seems to be unknown, misunderstood or, sometimes, neglected by the *dominators.* As Grzelak points out, such a situation is mainly caused by inadequacies and imperfections in the Polish system of education, and also by a lack of involvement of the Jewish (dominated) group, whose members make almost no effort to enable others to get to know themselves as a culturally different entity. Additionally, some prejudices enhanced by generally falsified historical knowledge and a stereotypical perception of the Jewish minority result in an unjustified fear, and have become a source of ill-feeling towards the Jews living in Poland nowadays, on the part of their Polish neighbours. A possible solution to this problem is, according to Grzelak, not to make any attempts to form an ethnically integrated society, but, on the contrary, to create a truly multicultural society, where attitudes of a mutual acceptance should become one of the factors playing a crucial role in the social life of the country, which could evoke some new positive norms, conventions and desirable behaviours regulating a peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups living in Poland.

The second chapter, *Assimilation Problems of the Polish Jews in Israel*, also concerns the kin/stranger issue. In this case, however, Prof. Waldemar Szczerbiński, the author of the chapter, focuses on a somewhat paradoxical feeling of being a stranger, experienced by many Jews from Poland, who arrived in Israel at different periods, for various reasons, motives or necessities. As Szczerbiński states, the Polish Jews in Israel faced numerous difficulties, being simultaneously conscious of the fact

that they were, so to speak, obliged or even forced, for different reasons, to settle in a totally new and unknown reality. In other words, they were obliged to learn modern Hebrew—a completely new language for most of them—and live within the framework of the Israeli world, which is, in fact, a mixture of various cultures and customs perceived as foreign and strange to those who came from Poland. Thus, the assimilation process of the Polish Jews in Israel consisted, according to Szczerbiński, in choosing one of two polar opposites: partial alienation, or partial acceptance of the elements of Israeli life. Nevertheless, according to this author, the feelings of nostalgia, sadness, bewilderment and disappointment are the ones which can be regarded as dominant features characterizing this group of Jews finally living in their own state, but, simultaneously, remembering quite well their previous homeland and yearning for Poland: missing its language, culture, literature and the beauty of its nature.

The authors of the third and the fourth chapters focus on specific problems affecting the communities of the Jews living in two enclaves, although, while looking at the map, one can see that these enclaves are situated far away from each other. The two authors of Chapter Three (*A Jew or a Siberian? Siberian Jews as an Ethnocultural Type*), Prof. Vladimir Y. Rabinovich[11] and Liubov S. Kletnova, from Irkutsk State University, consider "the genesis and evolution of the image of a *Siberian Jew*". In their article, they write about the Jews living in a unique geographical region of Russia, consisting of almost all of northern Asia, where many representatives of other nations, mainly Poles, but also many Russian intellectuals were exiled, having been punished by the Tsarist authorities for political crimes. Thus, according to Rabinovich and Kletnova, the Jews living in Siberia at the turn of the twentieth century were generally treated much better than those who lived in some other parts of the Russian Empire, and were commonly accepted by their Christian cohabitants. Hence, Siberian Jews were perceived as rational,

[11]A monograph by Prof. Vladimir Rabinovich was recently published under the auspices of the Institute of European Culture, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. In his book, Rabinovich explores the formation of the Jewish community in Irkutsk, from the mid-nineteenth century to the revolution of 1917. The monograph is based on years of analyses of documents collected in central and local archives in Russia. The first Russian edition of the volume was published in 2002: Władimir Rabinowicz, *Żydzi w przedrewolucyjnym Irkucku: Zmieniająca się mniejszość w zmieniającym się społeczeństwie* [*Jews in the Pre-revolutionary Irkutsk: Changing Minority in Changing Society*], trans. Irena Kotwicka-Dudzińska (Poznań–Gniezno: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2014).

energetic and economically active people, being involved in different charitable and social projects. Nevertheless, this group of Jews also suffered because of the persecutions initiated by local bureaucrats influenced by the superior authorities in European Russia.

Similarly, Dr. Małgorzata Grzywacz, the author of Chapter Four (*Can a Homeland Be Chosen for the Second time? Assimilation Strategies of Greater Poland Jews in the Weimar Republic (1918-1933*), tries to define in her text another "type" of a Jew—the one living in the Polish district of Greater Poland, i.e. the very district which had earlier been part of the former territories annexed by Prussia. These Jews called themselves "Germans of Mosaic origin". As Grzywacz writes, they felt integrated with Germany and its culture. What is more, they demonstrated some strong anti-Polish tendencies and attitudes, especially at the end of World War I. Eventually, in 1918, when the Polish "Greater Poland Uprising" won independence from Germany, a massive migration of German and also Jewish people immediately began. The Jews from Greater Poland settled mainly in such conurbations as Berlin, Hamburg, and some other cities of Brandenburg. Some of them moved to Breslau (today's Wrocław). Despite the fact that this very group of the Jews initially denied their connections to the eastern territories of the German Reich to avoid being ostracized as "Ostjuden", between 1926–1933 they started to form their own compatriot associations gathering former inhabitants of Greater Poland, owing to the sense of common origin and similarities resulting from their biographical and historical experiences. Nevertheless, as Grzywacz clearly states, these groups of Jews behaved like loyal citizens of the German state (the Weimar Republic), regardless of whether they were observing, or more-or-less secularized, Jews. Therefore, the Greater Poland Jews can be called emancipated, in the sense described by Tod Endelman, although Dr. Grzywacz does not explicitly draw this conclusion.

The problem of Jewish emancipation is also touched upon by Prof. Ela Bauer in the chapter with the provocative title: "*Can We Talk about Jewish Emancipation in 'Fin de Siècle' Polish Areas Without Mentioning the Word 'Assimilation'?*" The Israeli scholar writes here about Nahum Sokolow (Nachum ben Yoseph Shmuel Soqolov), one of the pre-eminent Polish Jews and Jewish intellectuals of his epoch, and about some other Jews who became propagators of the need for Jewish emancipation both in Poland and in the whole Russian Empire. Sokolow was deeply convinced that, thanks to the emancipation process, "Eastern European Jewish society—perceived as a collective—would improve", to use Bauer's own words. Therefore, according to Sokolow, the Jews of

eastern Europe should not separate from the non-Jewish environment. On the contrary the Jews—perceived as a national group and national minority—should become "constructive members of civil society", having a dual loyalty: the one to their civil homeland, and the other to their national and religious community. Sokolow's views were shared, to some extent, by Hayim Zelig Slonimski, who claimed that Jews should not behave as foreigners in the country in which they live. Thus, as Bauer writes, both Sokolow and Slonimski represented a moderate group of people who wanted the Jews to become loyal residents of the country and contribute to the whole society. But, at the same time, they should not aim at abandoning their "religious uniqueness", i.e. at assimilating totally with the dominant culture. Nevertheless, it is striking that in the succeeding years Sokolow, although already an active Zionist, constantly claimed that the Jews had to pay taxes and benefit the state, which was not their own.

And, again, that is just one of the aspects of Zionism which is the subject of the next chapter—*Theodor Herzl: From Assimilation to Urjüde. Anthropology and Aesthetics in Zionist Argumentation at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century*, although it is not written by a historian, but by an art-historian, Dr. Artur Kamczycki. In this chapter, Kamczycki analyzes the changing appearance of Theodor Herzl, who "initiated Zionist ideology (…) as well as laid foundations for the creation of the state of Israel". The anthropological research by the Polish scholar is based on some aspects connected with the existence of the so-called Jewish race and some racial characteristics of Jews. The starting point for Kamczycki's anthropological reflection was a comparative analysis of some photographs and photomontages prepared deliberately to promote Zionist tendencies. Thus, as Kamczycki notes, prior to engaging in politics, Herzl could be regarded as an adherer of the assimilation and emancipation movement prevalent in many Jewish circles in western Europe. This phenomenon can be easily seen in some of the photographs, in which Herzl presents himself as a Germanic type as far as his clothes, facial hair and hairdo are concerned. It might even be supposed from these pictures that Herzl wanted to negate his Jewish identity at the time or, at least, his desire was to cover up his Jewishness, and integrate, physically and ethnically, with his German-speaking environment. Later, when propagating Zionism—in response to the anti-Semitism escalating in Europe—Herzl totally changed his appearance, which can be seen in the later photographs. One element to which the special attention of the viewer is drawn, is the oriental shape of Herzl's beard. In just such a way Herzl began to create a completely new image of a Jew: the one similar to a "pre-Jew" of Biblical origin, personifying Zionism national postulates, and emphasizing proudly

ethnical and anthropological differences between the Jews and the people belonging to other nations. In other words, Herzl, personally, became a propagator of an "Urjüdischer Typus"—a visual paradigm invented and promoted in order to unify all of the people of the Promised Land.

Some Zionist ideas—also seen from the art-historian's perspective—form the content of the seventh chapter, "*Martin Buber and the 'Jewish Renaissance': Towards Emancipation"*. The author, Dr. Magdalena Maciudzińska-Kamczycka, shows Martin Buber, the famous Jewish philosopher and art educator, as an initiator of the "Jüdische Renaissance" art movement. "The Jewish Renaissance" was a call for the cultural revival of Jewry living in the German-speaking area of Europe, inspired by Ahaad Haam and Nathan Birnbaum's papers", as Maciudzińska-Kamczycka writes. The manifesto was published in 1901 in *Ost und West,* a Zionist monthly magazine. According to Buber, the Jews should create their own works of art and art theory in order to express their Jewish national identity in the emancipation process. In other words, as Buber stated, Jews are able to become artists and art theorists, similar to non-Jewish citizens, despite their commonly and stereotypically supposed *aniconism* implied by the Second Commandment of the Decalogue.[12] Besides, as Buber argued, Jews are even obliged to have their own art, art theory and the history of art to legitimize both their nationality and the right to their state. Hence, the postulate of the philosopher was to form a specific union between various forms of Jewish culture: the culture expressed by the "enlightened *west*" and the one of eastern Jews "embodying vitality and mystical spirituality", which flourished in eastern Europe thanks to the Hasidic movement, especially in Volhynia, Podolia and eastern Galicia. Summing up, the author states that Buber has to be definitely regarded as a representative of "Cultural Zionism", which worked to promote national consciousness through a Jewish cultural revival. Buber, with the help of critical publications and illustrations in *Ost und West*, the *Jüdischer Almanach* and the *Jüdischer Kustler*, created the canon of Jewish art. He was also the first to have formulated a theory of Jewish art in the Jewish Renaissance context.

The last three chapters of the monograph could be termed, generally speaking, literary ones, as their authors focus on different men and women

[12] "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus XX, iv, in the King James Bible)— See, for example: Joseph Gutmann, "'The Second Commandment' and the Image in Judaism", in idem, ed., *No Graven Images: Studies in Art and the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Ktav, 1971), 3–18.

writers of Jewish origin who published their works both in the Polish and Yiddish languages. Sometimes, these writers can also be referred to as Polish-Jewish or Jewish-Polish creators, as the way of assimilation they chose was, in fact, acculturation gained by means of the acquisition of the Polish language. The phenomenon is clearly seen in the case of Julian Stryjkowski, whose novels are the subject of Chapter Eight: *Where is the World of Ours? Assimilation, Acculturation and Emancipation Process of the Galician Jews in the Prose by Julian Stryjkowski (Pesach Jakob Stark)*. Stryjkowski was born in a traditional, and rather poor, Jewish family in Stryj, a small Galician town, in 1905. He is commonly regarded as one of the pre-eminent Polish writers of the post-war era, although he is almost unknown abroad, as only a few of his works have been translated into English. Importantly, the language Stryjkowski used in writing his works was exclusively Polish, although he knew Yiddish and modern Hebrew well. The author, Dr. Katarzyna Kornacka-Sareło, a philosopher, presents the writer's views on Jewish assimilation understood here in a wide sense and expressed by Stryjkowski in some of his works, among which *Głosy w ciemności* (*Voices in Darkness*) and *Echo* are mainly cited by the scholar. The protagonists of Stryjkowski's novels try to find the best solution to adapt to the changing realities and challenges at the turn of the twentieth century. The element linking the two novels is the character of Aaron, a little Jewish boy, who starts to realize that he will not be able to understand the world around him without knowing the language of the dominant (i.e. Polish), culture of the country in which he lives. Thus**,** Aaron behaves as if he were a philosopher of language, believing that the universe is constituted linguistically. Hence, it is not possible to identify an object of the world (one of the beings constituting the whole reality), if one does not know its name. Aaron's everyday language is Yiddish, so the boy cannot give proper names to different elements of the surrounding world such as some flowers, animals or musical instruments, because such words just do not exist in this language, but they *are* present in Polish. Aaron therefore does his best to attend a Polish school and wants to become "a poet". His decision represents the choice made, in reality, by Stark/Stryjkowski, oscillating between two cultures all his life. As Kornacka-Sareło writes, both Aaron and Stryjkowski seem to share, in this context, the opinion of a German philosopher of language, Hans-Georg Gadamer, who claimed that "knowing a language" implies "having the world". At the same time, the Jewish-Polish writer refers in his works to a complex and very important question of the emancipation of Jewish women at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Stryjkowski notes, this kind of emancipation was not always easy, for some emancipated and

highly educated women happened to lose their own, Jewish, identity, and, simultaneously, were unable to successfully gain another one, which could quite often lead to deep frustration or even depression.

The above thesis is also justified by the author of Chapter Nine, Dr. Joanna Lisek, who is widely known, both in Poland and abroad as a great scholar and expert in the field of the Yiddish language and Yiddish literature. Her article is entitled *Beyond the Tsnue: Love in Yiddish Literature by Women.* The author discusses the literary output of some women writers of Jewish origin, who started to create their works in the first decade of the twentieth century. Lisek pays special attention to love, and to the erotic motifs, which are present in the Yiddish poetry and prose by such Jewish writers as Yehudis (Rokhl Bernshteyn), Fradel Shtok and Yente Serdatsky. These three female writers, and the female protagonists of their works, transcended the ideal of *tsnue*—a moral and conventional obligation to be "a virtuous, modest, religious Jewish woman". On the contrary, they started to fight for equality**,** also in the sexual sphere. Hence, in their poems and stories, in the realm of the world depicted, one can easily find elements connected with sensuality, corporeality, demonism and perversity. However, as Dr. Lisek writes, "going beyond the *tsnue* turns out to be difficult; the women write about the price of the so-called free love that they had to pay": they are treated by men as if they were mere physical objects or prostitutes. Consequently, these emancipated women were unable to gain real satisfaction or happiness, as they in fact felt themselves anxious, sinful, full of shame, remembering quite well the "*tsnue* ideal" of their mothers. Besides, they were—usually—socially ostracised and were punished for having broken norms, rules and conventions of traditional Jewish communities, which used to evoke numerous problems or tragedies in different realms of their lives, such as single motherhood, or even attempted suicide.

Such an emancipated—and even baptized—Jewish woman also became the protagonist of *Wykolejona* (*Derailed*),[13] a novel by Wilhelm Feldman, to whose prose the Tenth Chapter of the volume is devoted: *Wilhelm Feldman's Novels as a Mirror of a Complex Integration Process*. Dr. Zuzanna Kołodziejska, the author of this chapter, presents in her article a unique portrait of Wilhelm Feldman—a Polish-language writer of Jewish origin, a recognized literary critic publishing his essays mainly in

[13] As Z. Kołodziejska writes in this chapter, "The novel was published as an individual book in an unchanged form in 1988 in Warsaw under the name *Piękna Żydówka* [*A Beautiful Jewish Woman / Jewish Beauty*]".

Izraelita,[14] and one of the propagators of integrationist tendencies, which were quite strong and vivid among some circles of the Polish-Jewish intelligentsia of the nineteenth century. In the aforementioned novel, Feldman touches "the question of conversion among young Jewish women", who wanted to integrate themselves closely with the representatives of the dominant—Polish and Christian—culture. Unfortunately, their choices were not usually successful, as the Polish environment treated them as inferior members of society, regardless of the fact that they had been baptized. Thus, the author of *Derailed* postulates "the idea of a complex identity, the one that integrates elements of both Polish and Jewish cultures". In other words, Feldman points out that it is neither possible nor useful to totally negate one's own national identity and abandon one's own roots. The second novel analyzed by Kołodziejska is *Żydziak* ["The Young Kike"], the plot of which sounds even more pessimistic than the events described in *Derailed*. In fact, *Żydziak* is, paradoxically, Feldman's accusation against Jewish intellectuals in Galicia who do not help other Jews—much poorer and less educated ones—to become emancipated members of Polish society and to integrate with the dominant culture, by supporting them financially. *Żydziak* therefore seems to justify the thesis that integrationist ideas and ideals were not able to radically change the situation of the Jewish masses perceived as worse and less valuable citizens of the Polish country. A similar and a very pessimistic problem is shown by Feldman in the novel *Nasi Bohaterzy* ["Our Heroes"], although, this time, Feldman openly attacks the Poles in his texts, accusing them of having anti-Semitic tendencies and attitudes. However, the author does not postulate any solution to the urgent issue of the social conflict between the two nations sharing the same country, as if he felt completely helpless in such a situation or as if he changed his views, not believing any longer in the possibility of a peaceful coexistence of the Poles and the Jews being the members of the same society and state.

When analyzing the ten texts presented, one can easily see that the "ways of assimilation" of eastern European Jews were not straight ones, but were rather like a roller coaster, and rough. Many Jewish people were trying to find the best solution to their own, "Jewish", question, and adapt themselves reasonably to the gentile environment and to the changing realities of the changing world in which they had to exist, regardless of their will, or in which they freely chose to exist having made their

[14] *Izraelita* was a Polish-language, Jewish weekly magazine published between 1866 and 1915.

autonomic and personal decisions. Besides, it must be strongly emphasized that the aforementioned "Jewish question" used to affect not only the Jews themselves: for, as Adam Lipszyc, a contemporary Polish philosopher, writes—having been inspired by the ideas of Emil Fackenheim—"The situation of the Jews and their relation to the rest of the world—especially to Christianity—is significant for the world as such".[15]

Hence, it was our sincere wish to enable our readers to see Jewish assimilation issues from a wide perspective. Simultaneously, we wanted the Jewish assimilation phenomenon to be perceived without any retouching or any sketchy assessments. And we believe that the approach taken by the contributors has not been coloured by stereotypical notions, misinterpretations or perfunctory evaluations. We also hope that this book will become a source of knowledge and inspiration for anyone who is interested in the history of central and eastern Europe, and in the history of the large and varied community of the Jews, whose homeland it was—or still is—despite the Holocaust *tremendum*. Thus, the volume is addressed, in particular, to Slavists, cultural studies experts and theoreticians, historians, philosophers, political scientists and, very definitely, to all those whose field of research is Jewish Studies.

In addition, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the many people who aided publication of our volume. Thus, first of all, we want to thank all of the anonymous reviewers from *Cambridge Scholars Publishing,* who kindly cooperated with us, as well as to all of the editors working in this publishing house: Ms. Stephanie Cavanagh, Ms. Camilla Harding, Ms. Amanda Millar, Mr. Samuel Baker, and to the many other people involved in this project, especially our proof-reader, Mr. Peter Simon. We are also very well aware that our scientific work and research would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, were it not supported financially by Mr. Jacek Kowalski, the President of the City of Gniezno: every year he does his best to help us with organizing international conferences dedicated to different aspects of Jewish Studies**,** and we therefore thank him very much for his generosity.

Waldemar Sczerbiński and Katarzyna Kornacka-Sareło

[15] Adam Lipszyc, *Ślad judaizmu w filozofii XX wieku* [*The Trace of Judaism in the Philosophy of the Twentieth Century*] (Warszawa: Fundacja im. Profesora Mojżesza Schorra, 2009), 166.

CHAPTER ONE

ASSIMILATION, INTEGRATION, MULTICULTURALISM: AN ETHNOLINGUISTIC-COMMUNICOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

ELIZA GRZELAK
INSTITUTE OF EUROPEAN CULTURE,
ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ, POLAND

We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.
—Anaïs Nin

1. Research perspective

In the course of socialization, the contemporary human being learns to simultaneously function in more than one community of communication. First, they expand the boundaries of the family community, cross those boundaries and begin to build social relationships in a peer community, and then at school and at the place of employment. By developing their interests, a person enters various communities gathered around a hobby. Also, from the moment of birth, a person begins to function at the juncture of cultural communities. Gender is the first factor which undergoes development in the course of enculturation. Subsequently, the person learns to communicate, taking into account the age of the interlocutor. While still at home, the person initiates his participation in communication at the junctures of ethnic cultures by interpreting utterances of others, using information conveyed by the media and assimilating social memory. At first, the participation is passive, subject to upbringing and educational processes which shape intercultural attitudes. Later, when direct encounters with the *other* take place, it depends on the openness of the individual what attitude they will adopt with respect to what they perceive

and what they know. It is the communication participant who decides whether the attitude is reconstructive or critical, enabling one to become acquainted with the *stranger*. Given that one lives in a world of stereotypes with simultaneous lack of cultural knowledge and no involvement in social communication,[1] the outcome can be easily predicted. We reject that which is alien to us, as we find it easier to communicate according to the rules we know and accept, hence the occasional lack of tolerance, intensification of acculturation and assimilation processes, rejection of otherness or treatment of the latter as a threat. Without adequate cultural and communicative competence, it escapes our notice that from the moment of birth we live in an internally diversified, more-or-less open communicative community. We do not accept communities to which we do not belong or those which are surrounded by barriers we fail to neutralise due to our own limitations.

Communication at the boundaries of cultures becomes impossible when one forgets that culture means not only religion, history, economic and geographic circumstances but also the way in which the world is perceived, interpreted and construed.

The research I have been conducting for a number of years, encompassing Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Roma relationships within Poland, as well as recently initiated studies concerning social communication between Poles and Jews, permits me to advance a thesis that the answers to many questions may be found not only by learning about a culture, its history and the texts it has produced, but also by attempting to interpret the world from the standpoint of its originators. In order to grasp the sense of threat experienced by Polish Roma, one has to appear in their company in a public place, or go to a restaurant and participate in their everyday life. Only after a number of years of being in touch with the Ukrainian minority, watching their struggle to protect their cultural identity and having entered their private sphere, with prior factual knowledge, can the barriers resulting from adverse historical experience be neutralised.

The relationships at the juncture of ethnic cultures in a global world have become a widespread issue. Each such communicative situation has to be relativized with respect to culture and context, though at a certain level the knowledge concerning inter-community relationships may be brought down to certain universals. In particular, this applies to the social

[1] According to the theory of reciprocity, the degree of commitment of interlocutors in building interpersonal relationships favours felicitousness. See Gary Stanley Becker, *Ekonomiczna teoria zachowań ludzkich*. (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990).

attitude that the dominant ethnic or national group chooses to adopt towards a minority.

The conclusions presented below are theoretical. They have been drawn following several years of studies on internal and external interpersonal relationships of communicative communities, including ethnic communities. The adoption of an ethnolignuistic-communicological approach was dictated by the nature of the research problem. Such a viewpoint implied the array of research methods. In order to obtain information, I have employed questionnaires, interviews, textological analysis and participant observation of one community, i.e. the Polish community.[2] Bearing in mind the earlier remarks concerning the necessity of understanding the culturally different viewpoint, I have to emphasize that the examples of Polish-Jewish relationships will reflect one point of view, namely that of the dominant community.[3] Only an in-depth participant observation of the minority would authorise me to formulate complementary conclusions: at this point I can only venture certain preliminary conclusions as to how Poles develop Polish-Jewish relationships. The adopted direction of research, i.e. interpersonal communication, does not only cover the felicitousness or infelicitousness of communication in terms of semantics and structure: I find that for intercultural contact the technique of bond-building between people is more important, and I therefore focused my attention on the factors which weaken those bonds and the barriers which constrain their development.

In accordance with the ethnolinguistic approach, I have assumed that language uses reflect social awareness among members of a given community. They impose limitations on their thinking patterns and, by virtue of community categorisation, notional connotations and axiological system define their belonging to the community. Ethnolinguists and communicologists seek to answer the question how, given those three distinctive aspects, identifying members of a specific communicative community categorization, notional connotations and axiological system, generate culturally diversified, tolerant societies.

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[2] Research was conducted among young people aged 16–19, and the findings were verified in the third age group. Studies concerning Polish-Jewish relationships were preliminary, and permitted me to develop a methodology of in-depth complementary research in all groups in various parts of Poland.

[3] I have taken the point-of-view theory into consideration according to the methodology of the linguistic-cultural image of the world; see Jerzy Bartmiński, (ed.) *Językowy obraz świata* (Lublin: "Czerwona Seria" IFPUMCS, 1990).

2. Pole-Jew: categorisation kin/stranger

According to one of the many definitions of nation, it may be assumed that Poland as a state is an open, internally diversified community, made up of various national communities. The fact is attested to by the use of such denominations as *Polish Jews,* and *Polish followers of Judaism,* whereby the phrases make the Jewish community a part of the open Polish community on the one hand, while identifying their dissimilarity on the other. However, such combinations as *Jews and Poles in Poland,* in the context that highlights cultural or historical differences resulting from the community's shared experience—the Holocaust, discrimination before WWII and after 1945, less often due to religion—constitute alienating expressions. The Jewish minority is also isolated by the cultural connotations of the word *Jew*, both those triggered by the dominant Polish community and those common to both groups. The analysed texts did not contain the expression *Poles of Mosaic denomination*, *Poles–followers of Judaism*,[4] not even in the role of a synonym appearing due to requirements of style: the notion of a Polish follower of Judaism is not reflected in language usage. The surveys I have conducted among students of secondary schools confirm a unilateral perception: *every Jew is a follower of Judaism, every follower of Judaism is a Jew*. According to the fundamental rule of communication—the principle of reciprocity[5]—the conviction that *a Pole is not a Jew* implies in colloquial communication that *a Jew is not a Pole,* which represents a significant barrier in communication between those national communities. The notion that Polish followers of Judaism are non-Polish may have its source in the wide knowledge of the history of Holocaust. In school textbooks, victims of the Nazi system are clearly divided: Jews, Poles and other nationalities. The young people I have asked knew that Jews were murdered at concentration camps because of their Jewish identity, not as Poles. At the same time, none of the young persons surveyed asked themselves the question how many of the murdered millions of Jews were his or her compatriots. *We understand their pain and the need for remembrance, after all Poles were also murdered there,* says one of the female pupils in the questionnaire. Such a presentation of content makes shared experience of pain impossible, leaving only expressions of understanding. Thus the grief of wartime losses does not unite, but divides, both nations. Young

[4] Analysed material included contents from popular news and information websites, such as www.onet.pl, as well as newspapers, e.g. *Gazeta Wyborcza*. The research was concerned with texts published in 2013.

[5] See Becker, *Ekonomiczna teoria zachowań ludzkich,* 2.

Poles know much about ghettos and deportations of Jews from Polish towns to Auschwitz, but they do notice that when they activate their knowledge about death camps, they fail to think about the state identity of the Jewish victims, thinking instead of their cultural identity. In their eyes, a Jew in a death camp ceases to be Polish. This is the first indication that the presentation of historical and cultural content at schools is limited. Such perception of Jews in the context of the Holocaust enables Poles, probably without being aware of it, to distance themselves emotionally. The tragedy of the Holocaust does not concern *us*, but others, and such an approach reinforces the kin/stranger categorisation. The memory of the Holocaust is also a source of a more-or-less conscious sense of guilt on the Polish part, eliminated at first by the expulsion of the wrongs committed from social memory, then by the attempt to mitigate the guilt of some citizens by the sacrifice of others. The ethical and moral discomfort, passed on from generation to generation, often engenders aggressive attitudes. One of the female pupils could not say much about 1968, yet she repeated the notions disseminated at the time by way of exoneration: *I heard that sometimes Poles, forced by the Germans, took part in the killings of Jews, but after the war they murdered Poles as State Security people.* Another student adds: *Grandma told me that they were heads of State Security.*

According to the law, under the provisions of the National Minority Act,[6] Jews are representatives of a different nation residing in Poland, who are entitled to special rights in view of the cultural differences. The awareness of multiculturalism of Poland and Poles, despite the above legal validation, is still negligible. History textbooks provide scant information about the multicultural past of the country. Most often, such data is contained within statistical figures. There are no separate accounts concerning the Jewish minority and its influence on our culture and history. Educational programmes and curricula fail to reflect the fact that those citizens have lived here for 700 years, co-created Polish traditions, and contributed to the building of Polish social memory, participated in the most important events in our history, and have spoken Polish and actively enriched that language through Polish-speaking Jewish authors.

Given the level of knowledge about Polish-Jewish history, a question still remains: how to develop inter-community relationships between Poles and Jews nowadays, relationships that will strengthen the sense of state community, restore the Jewish minority to a high rank in Polish awareness

[6] National and Ethnic Minority and Regional Language Act of 6th January, 2005. (Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 17, item 141, No.62, item 550; Journal of Laws of 2009, No. 31, item 206, No. 157, item 1241.

and at the same time protect their cultural distinctiveness. My studies indicate that this is the question that the dominant group—Poles, in this case—should ask themselves with regard to every national minority, since it is the dominant group that bears the responsibility for consolidation processes and the protection of identity of all communities by preventing acculturation processes.

3. Consolidation processes

Assimilation

Sociologists and historians draw attention to the assimilation process as a legal and social solution which strengthens bonds between minority and dominant communities.[7] Polish society, which has a considerable sense of its monocultural nature,[8] faces the very important question whether consolidation solutions should strive for assimilation, integration or whether we should make the effort to create a multicultural society.[9]

While becoming similar to the dominant population as part of assimilation processes, ethnic minorities adopt the axiological system of the former, as well as its customs and language, thus changing into fully-fledged citizens of a given country. Assimilation policy presupposes maximum reduction of differences between members of ethnic minorities and the dominant society which, according to the authors of the concept, should prevent ethnicity-based conflicts. Usually, the process consists in one-sided adaptation and absorption. A profound, complementary social assimilation presumes that an individual or a group will be absorbed by the dominant group. In the case of ethnic minorities, this entails adoption of cultural traits of the dominant national group. Assimilation encompasses the entirety of psychological and social processes to which individuals

[7] Amos Funkenstein, "The Dialectics of Assimilation", *Jewish Social Studies* 1/2 (1995): 1–14.

[8] Most secondary school students were unable to identify persons of different nationality or ethnicity in their surroundings. Only 3 per cent reported more than 10 persons. It is probable that in other regions of Poland, e.g. in Silesia, the results would have been different. None of those asked knew any Jews personally, while only 23 per cent had contact with Polish Jews during school meetings about the Holocaust.

[9] In this context there appear expressions with an ideological charge—*true Pole, true patriotism*—which offer grounds for discussion about social relationships at the juncture of cultures.