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THE NEVER WRITTEN HISTORY OF A MOSCOW EXISTENCE OF 1919. THE WARSAW SCHOOL OF THE HISTORY OF IDEAS IN THE LIGHT OF MARINA TSVETAEVA'S NOTES

BY **DOROTA JEWDOKIMOW**

What characterises Marina Tsvetaeva's notes of 1919 the most is them being anchored within a material reality, in 'existence' and everyday life. The main topic, the dominant point of existence in Moscow in 1919, is that of hunger and its impact on the decisions, actions and emotions of the poet. Hunger becomes the central nexus in her personal description of the revolution. The second attribute of her notes is their strong personalisation, indicating the uniqueness of her individual experience and the lack of a possibility for generalisation. These two main features in Tsvetaeva's description of the revolution move her to some extent beyond the area of interest of the historians of ideas from the so-called Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, rather making her notes a marginal text. However, the main premises of the Warsaw School in their general frame, envisage the possibility of development in the output of particular authors, enabling analysts to extend the scope of the phenomena researched.

Key words: revolution, bodiliness, history of ideas, historical anthropology, historicism

The main subject of this text is that particular excerpt on historical reality which was the October Revolution of 1917, as well as the effectiveness of the tools created by the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, regarding the text analysis dedicated to this. I shall verify the effectiveness of these tools in relation to the particular source material which are private memories and notes of Marina Tsvetaeva, written during the initial years following the events of October 1917. This material is special in many respects. Firstly, we are dealing with autobiographical and intimate notes, whose author was one of the most distinguished Russian poets of the 20th century. It presents an individual perspective on viewing the revolutionary reality. The description of this perspective as well as a reconstruction of the notes' content forms the first part of my reflections. In the second part, I shall reconstruct the main premises of the most influential school of the Polish history of ideas. While presenting the main methodological premises of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, I take into consideration the wider European context of its development, as well as areas which are the source of its limitations. The fundamental question formulated within the frames of this text is, whether the perspective of viewing the reality inherent in the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas is apt in respect to the highly personalised notes on the realia of the day as made by the poet. Can a text of this

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kind constitute primary material for analysis made by a historian of ideas, or can it only serve as an auxiliary text?

‘NOT A REVOLUTION, NOT BOLSHEVISM, NOT – THE YEAR [19]19’

Marina Tsvetaeva’s notes assembled from early childhood, only 15 notebooks, comprising the years 1913-1939, have remained until now. The other notebooks were irretrievably lost during Tsvetaeva’s numerous journeys and relocations. Those notes were highly valued by the poet because, as she put it, her real self was manifested in them.² Despite their biographical, historic and cultural value, for decades they were kept in a closed archive and were not accessible. For the first time they were published between 2000 and 2001. According to the editors of their first edition, they contain ‘at most an accurately written bare existential experience, one not rendered by any artistic objectives.’³ A large part describes revolutionary events. The author gives a detailed account of Moscow daily life in the first years after the outburst of the 1917 revolution. The notes made during the first years of the revolution are characterised by their variety; on the one hand they are an account of the special emotional and intellectual relationship between Marina Tsvetaeva and her daughter Ariadna Efron, while on the other, the author describes the material environment, the conditions of life and the prices of specific groceries. In Tsvetaeva’s notes, the year 1919 is crucial for understanding the nature of the revolution. In her perception, this was the year that fully expressed the nature and consequences of the upheaval which took place in Russia.

‘Oh, one day I’m going to write a history of the Moscow existence in 1919. I don’t know any other revolution;’⁴ Marina Tsvetaeva was to write. On the one hand, such a history will never be written, on the other the detailed description of the ‘Moscow existence of 1919’ written by Marina Tsvetaeva and saved in her notes of this period is just such a history. That ‘existence’, in the light of Tsvetaeva’s words, becomes the quintessence of the revolution and its substance, as well as the centre of her individual experience. Writing about ‘existence’, the poet obviously indicates all that composed the conditions

¹ Marina Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 1, (Moskva: Ellis Lak, 2000), p. 409.

² ‘From the spiritual things, I tremble the most for the notebooks of Ala, my books of notes, the next dramas and the poems far behind. In Ala’s notebooks and in my books of notes and the dramas there is me, more me: the first two – my everyday life, dramas – my feast, and the poems – my incomplete confession, less accurately, less me’ (Marina Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, (Moskva: Ellis Lak, 2001), p. 42.

³ E. B. Korkina, M. G. Krutikova, ‘Predislovie’, in Marina Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 1, (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2000), p. 6.

⁴ Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 15.

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of everyday life in Moscow, the material environment determining the functioning of a subject. In making that 'existence' (in Russian быт) the centre of her experience of the revolution, she clearly and frequently separates it from what she calls 'existing' (in Russian бытие), thus situating the material order somehow beyond the ontological order; 'the life of the body' becomes separated from 'the life of the soul', although when read thoroughly that relationship becomes complicated.

Tsvetaeva meticulously describes the conditions of her life in Moscow:

I am writing in my attic – probably on the 10th November 1919 – since everybody has started to live in the new way, I have known no dates. Since March I haven't heard from Seyroga,⁵ I last saw him on the 18th January 1918 [...]. I live with Ala and Irina (Ala is 6, Irina is 2 years and 7 months old). [...] There's no flour and no bread, under the writing table I have 12 pounds of potatoes 'borrowed' from the neighbours – the full stock. [...] I live on gifted dinners (for the kids). [...] My day: I get up – sawdust – buckets – jugs – clothes – kids' dresses and tops everywhere. I saw. I heat. I wash potatoes in icy water and boil them in the samovar.⁶

I have to add potatoes to the flour; 2/3 of potatoes and 1/3 of flour. This way you make perfect bread. – Really? I have to tell my mother. I have no mother, no husband, no flour. [...] To whom shall I give the soup from the canteen: Ala or Irina? Irina is smaller and weaker but I love Ala more. Besides Irina is already in a bad shape anyway and Ala is still coping, I feel pity for her.⁷

The poet and her daughters' days are filled mainly by attempts to get food. However, the detailed descriptions of everyday life is in Tsvetaeva's opinion incomplete, as it lacks the essence of the inner life: 'The life of the soul – Ala's and mine – stems from my notes, poems, dramas and her notebook. I wanted to write only a day.'⁸ The actual 'existing' is situated beyond all that defines the everyday existence: 'The poems are the existence – it cannot be different.'⁹ Tsvetaeva definitely separates 'the life of the soul' from daily life and besides, a day is only a day, whereas actual life takes place in the soul and is expressed within the lyrical output. The existence of the revolution does not affect her to some extent as the poet separates her consciousness from existence. That dissociation may be a way of self-defence against a dominant material reality. The poet makes that part of her experience which actually becomes the dominant part of her everyday life,

⁵ Sergey Efron, the poet's husband.

⁶ Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 7-8.

⁷ Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 1, p. 309.

⁸ Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 11.

⁹ Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 1, p. 311.

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one unreal and marginal. She applies a similar defence mechanism towards the existence and the death of her younger daughter Irina. In the notes regarding Irina, there repeatedly appears information about her retarded intellectual development, which should probably be verified considering the conditions of her development. Her early childhood passed in extreme deprivation. When Tsvetaeva would leave the flat with her elder daughter, the younger daughter was left alone, tied to an armchair for reasons of safety. Eventually she died in a shelter near Moscow.¹⁰ The poet makes the very life and death of Irina unreal: 'Irina was never a reality for me, I never knew or understood her. [...] The death of Irina is as unreal for me as her life. – I don't know the illness, I didn't see her ill, I was not present at her death, I didn't see her dead and I don't know where her grave is.'¹¹ Thus, the area of the poet's experience is divided into two separate spheres, the real and the unreal, where the unreal is usually related to difficult and even traumatic experiences. This may indicate that the mechanism of obscuring reality was actually a defence mechanism for the poet, who spent the first years of the revolution in extreme conditions.

However, in the notes, we find numerous parts which contradict the binary division of the area of experience and express the feeling of a strong connection between 'the life of the body' and 'the life of the soul', which made the poet extremely vulnerable to the external conditions of her life. This connection is explicitly expressed in the statement of Konstantin Bal'mont, quoted by Tsvetaeva:¹²

Oh, this is going to be a shameful page in the history of Moscow! I do not say it about myself as a poet but about the one who works. [...] Since I was nineteen I have been sitting over dictionaries instead of having fun and falling in love. I am literally starving. What is further ahead is only death by starvation. Fools think that hunger is the body but they do not know that in our vulnerable organisms hunger is the soul and now all the burdens lay on the soul. I am crushed, I am grieving, I cannot write.¹³

The connection of cognitive and emotional activity with the physiological is present also in the Tsvetaeva's descriptions. In April 1919 Tsvetaeva records a 'tragic incident': 'I lost (the ground swallowed) 500 roubles. [...] Oh, it's a real disaster, real grief! But misery is blunt, hitting the head like a hammer. For a second I looked at the hook in the kitchen with serious hope. How easy it is. I was really tempted.'¹⁴ Within the context of this occurrence,

¹⁰ Marina Tsvetaeva placed both her daughters in a shelter. Motivated by the advice of people from her closest environment, she assumed that this would be the best way to save her daughters from the hunger which the inhabitants of Moscow were suffering from.

¹¹ M. Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 85.

¹² A Russian symbolist poet.

¹³ M. Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 16.

¹⁴ Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 1, p. 317.

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Tsvetaeva indicates the sensitive connection between 'the life of the soul' and 'the life of the body', which is created, according to her, by 'nerves'. 'Nerves', strong emotions, manifest themselves at the moment when the life of the soul is expressed in the life of the body. A detailed record of this sensation can be found in the letter which was written by the poet to her husband Sergey Efron on the 2nd November 1917. She was on a train from the Crimea to Moscow when she learnt about the expanding wave of the revolution which entailed more and more victims. Fearing for the life of her husband, she wrote: 'The throat clenched as if with fingers...'¹⁵ her emotional reaction becomes at the same time a strong bodily sensation. Emotions, called 'nerves' by Tsvetaeva, become the element connecting the body and the soul. Tsvetaeva's descriptions fully correspond with the statements of contemporary psychology, where affective phenomena are defined as conditions composed of the assessment of the situation, a physiological reaction, readiness to act and the sensation described as an affect.¹⁶ Thus, what the poet, a vigilant observer of her own inner conditions, calls 'nerves', is defined by the contemporary emotion psychology as phenomena affectively involving both cognitive and physiological functions.

In Tsvetaeva's description of the revolution, strongly personalised bodily sensations related to felt emotions, which the poet calls 'nerves', start to play an important role. In Tsvetaeva's notes this connection is ambiguous; for on the one hand, the poet separates both kinds of experience and on the other demonstrates their inseparability. The attempts to separate both areas of experience may be considered a defence mechanism helping her to survive in an extreme situation. The poet considers everyday life and existential conditions as the background to her experience of reality and later describes her complete immersion in existence and her absolute dependence on that existence.

In Tsvetaeva's notes, the ultimate moment of the 'existence's' dominance is the year 1919, when the material consequences of the revolution were most noticeable in the lives of the inhabitants of Moscow. This year is defined by Tsvetaeva as the moment of the actual experience of the revolution. At the same time she indicates that her experience of the post-revolution reality is not a sensation that fits into the framework of 'good taste', not being a subject to aestheticisation.

I perceived the year 1919 in a slightly exaggerated way, the way people will perceive it in one hundred years time: not a single grain of flour, not a single piece of soap, I clean the pipes myself, I wear shoes twice the size of my feet – in this way some hurting good taste novelist is going to describe the year 1919.¹⁷

¹⁵ M. Tsvetaeva, *Sochineniia*, (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), vol. 1-2, vol. 2, p. 468.

¹⁶ Nico H. Frijda, 'Różnorodność afektu: emocje i zdarzenia, nastroje i sentymenty', in *Natura emocji*, eds. Richard Davidson, Paul Ekman (Sopot: GWP, 2012), p. 56.

¹⁷ Tsvetaeva, *Zapisnye knizhki*, (Moskva: Zakharov, 2002), p. 164.

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Such a perception of the revolution in the poet's opinion cannot be the content of a book. Personally, she is not able to write a book about the revolution.

Is there now in Russia – Rozanov is dead – a really discerning observer, who could write a book about the Hunger – a human who wants to eat, who wants to smoke, who feels cold, about a human who has got much and who does not give, about a human who has little and who gives, about the old generous – greedy ones, about the old skimpy – generous ones and finally about me: a Poet and a Woman – alone, alone, alone – like an oak, like a wolf, like God, amidst all the plague of Moscow in 1919. [...] I would write it myself if not for the soul of a woman in me, if not for my short-sightedness, my individuality, which do not allow me to see things as they are. [...] I will never write a work of genius, not because I lack the talent [...] but because of my individuality, some – I would say – the peculiarity of my nature. [...] It is not that I cannot become separated from myself and what is mine, that I cannot see anything else; I can see and I know what is different.¹⁸

However, this 'different' was less attractive for Tsvetaeva than what the essence of herself was. In her statement the poet deeply individualises her experience giving it an individual and unique character which cannot be subject to generalisation. Individuality, peculiarity, individualism and femininity, in the view of Tsvetaeva, become an obstacle making her unable to create a work dedicated to the revolution's realities, showing things as they were. Thus, the statement of the poet implies that the actual value of a work is its ability to create generalisations, universalising its content. At the same time what appeals to her are specific and individual things.

What characterises Marina Tsvetaeva's notes of 1919 most is being anchored in the material reality, in 'existence' and everyday life. The main topic, the dominant point of the existence in Moscow in 1919, is hunger and its impact on the decisions, actions and the emotions of the poet. Hunger becomes the central nexus in her personal description of the revolution. The second attribute of her notes is their strong personalisation, indicating the uniqueness of her individual experience and the lack of a possibility for generalisation. These two main features of her description of the revolution move her, to some extent, beyond the area of interest of the historians of ideas from the so-called Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, or they make a marginal text of her notes. However, the main premises of the Warsaw School in their general frame, envisage the possibility of development, which occurred in the output of particular authors, enabling analysts to extend the scope of the researched phenomena. In its development, the history of ideas becomes closer to the history of culture and in this form provides the right tools for researching the personal notes of the poet.

¹⁸ Tsvetaeva, *Neizdannoe. Zapisnye knizhki*, vol. 2, p. 38-39.

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HISTORY IS CREATED BY PEOPLE, NOT BY DWARFS¹⁹

Demarcating the boundaries of the output of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, which I define as the starting point for my reflections on the research methods applicable to the revolution notes of Marina Tsvetaeva, will always imply some arbitrariness of selection regarding both the time boundaries of the phenomenon, as clearly defined as they may seem, and defining the main postulates formulated within the frames of the school. The term Warsaw School of the History of Ideas was used at the very moment when the phenomenon of the school expired. The occurrence of this term is significant as to some extent it is the acknowledgement of the Warsaw School's existence as a separate, internally coherent phenomenon. Besides acknowledging the existence of the separate school of the history of ideas, after its expiration, its achievements were recapitulated. The best known and, in my opinion, the most valuable summary of the work of the Warsaw historians of ideas is a text written by Andrzej Walicki,²⁰ who describes the school both from the internal perspective as its creator and participator and from the outside as a historian of ideas. The main premises of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas listed by Walicki are duplicated in subsequent studies. When analysing the premises he reconstructed within the wider perspective of the development of the European humanities, particularly historiography, it turns out that they expressed a general way of thinking which emerged in post-war Europe. In my opinion, we should understand the postulates formulated by the intellectual entourage formed around Bronisław Baczko within this wider context. Jerzy Szacki pinpoints this course of interpretation of the Warsaw School, when he writes:

The authors contemporary to us were the representatives of the most influential schools of intellectual history, who started to publish their first (or their most important) works at roughly the same time: Gadamer and Koselleck, Skinner and Pocock, historians of mentality from the next generation of the Annales School, Foucault and other post-structuralists, Ricoeur, de Certeau etc. The sixties and seventies are the years of an extraordinary abundance in this regard.²¹

¹⁹ The discussion *Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje*, organised by the editors of *Przegląd Humanistyczny* on 17th October 2011 at the premises of the Faculty of Polish Philology of Warsaw University, in *Wokół dorobku warszawskiej szkoły historii idei*, ed. A. Kołakowski, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2013), p. 27.

²⁰ Andrzej Walicki, 'On Writing Intellectual History: Leszek Kołakowski and the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas', *Critical Philosophy*, 2/1984.

²¹ The discussion 'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje', p. 52.

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Szacki situates the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas in the wider context of the development of humanities, exceeding its interpretation within the narrow frames of contemporaneity of the Polish People's Republic. Situating it in this way does not marginalise its achievements by putting it in the shadow of other European intellectuals' output, but allows us to fully appraise its achievements. The accomplishments of particular representatives of the school, who originated from the Warsaw School and created their output after 1968, therein contributing to the European humanities, are especially significant in this regard. 'In this context Kołakowski, Baczko, Walicki and Pomian are especially important, although this is the case not because for a moment did they belong to the same school.²² From this point of view, the history of ideas was only a phase in the development of the humanities and a phase in the creative development of its particular authors. Although it was a short period of time, the importance of this phase is undeniable. Most of the methodological premises formulated at those times lost their validity under the influence of various 'turns', schools and studies which emerged in subsequent years. However, we have to admit that the tendencies which emerged during that time were necessary from the point of view of the process of forming the contemporary humanities. Additionally, most of the methodological premises shared by the Warsaw historians of ideas, being at the same time dominant points within the European humanities of the 1960s, were developed in subsequent decades, projecting the main directions and subject areas of contemporary humanities.

Among the premises shared by the Warsaw historians of ideas Walicki lists among others the turn to historicism, placing at the centre of interest a human and their problems, acknowledging the outlook on life as the main subject of analysis and interdisciplinarity. Adopting the particular approach towards the analysed reality, defined as 'the approach of an understanding observer of a historical process', the non-involvement approach is also significant. Reproducing those premises regarding the wider context of the European humanities along with the presentation of their development in subsequent decades is absolutely impossible here. Thus, I shall limit my presentation to some particular elements which were arbitrarily and subjectively considered important within the context of the issues I am dealing with.²³

The first of the characteristics of the Warsaw historians of ideas listed by Walicki was the turn towards historicism, the choice of which was justified by Walicki within the categories of the reaction to the political situation of the Polish People's Republic:

²² The discussion 'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje', p. 52.

²³ Andrzej Leder presents a significant and interesting comparison of the Warsaw School of Historian of Ideas with the output of the 'moderate post-structuralism'. The course of reflection he presents is an important complement to this text. Cf. Andrzej Leder, 'Droga powrotu. Warszawska szkoła historii idei z perspektywy umiarkowanie poststrukturalistycznej', in *Warszawska szkoła historii idei. Tożsamość, tradycja, obecność*, ed. P. Grad, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2014), p. 43.

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The historical approach, with its inevitable element of historical relativity, seemed to us a more reliable weapon against any form of dogmatism than replacing one dogmatic ideology with another. In other words, historicity has become for us an antidote to rigid, reified forms of dogmatic thinking, both Marxist and non-Marxist.²⁴

However, historicism, the choice of which was explained by Walicki as the reaction to the dominant political system, was to become something more in the work of historians of ideas. It was to become the source of what we can call contextualism, acknowledging the influence of all elements which defined the specificity of the times in which there were created, on the structures of the thinking of individuals and groups, and the tight connection between a thought and its historical, including material, context.²⁵ The historicism of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas postulated acknowledging the fact that problems and issues which human thought deals with were permanently rooted in real existential and historic experience. Jerzy Szacki in his retrospective view of the Warsaw School's tradition pinpoints the discrepancy between its premises and the European thought developing at the same time. Szacki underlines the fact that 'at the same time somewhere else in intellectual history was occurring the turn towards contextualism, which was analogical in some aspects, because it was then when the *Begriffsgeschichte* of Koselleck and the Cambridge School started, not to mention the history of mentality in the spirit of the *Annales*'²⁶ School. At the same time also the representatives of the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School turned towards history (in the 1960s the first 'summer schools' were organised and in the 1964 the first of 25 issues of *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* published). The turn towards historicism led the Soviet semioticians of culture towards acknowledging that all cultural research is historical research; something that was expressed in the subject of the last, the 25th, issue of *Trudy* edited by Iurii Lotman of 1992, entitled *Semiotics and Culture*. A significant result of Soviet semioticians' historical reflections was acknowledging the influence of the historical-cultural context of the very researcher on their understanding of texts written in the past. From their perspective analysing history

²⁴ Andrzej Walicki, 'Leszek Kołakowski i warszawska szkoła historii idei', in *Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki*, 3-4/2007, p. 37.

²⁵ Some analysts of the tradition of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas consider its references to the historical context of ideas' development ostensible and declarative. Marcin Poręba, during a discussion, compares the works of particular representatives of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas to '*Ideengeschichte*, which [...] was created as an opposition to *Geistesgeschichte* by distinguishing the factor of thoughts and ideas and regarding it as autonomous to the maximum extent, separately from the historical and cultural context as much as it is possible' (Discussion: 'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje', p. 29-30.)

²⁶ Jerzy Szacki, *Marksizm po bardzo wielu latach, in Warszawska szkoła historii idei. Tożsamość, tradycja, obecność*, ed. P. Grad, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2014), p. 40.

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becomes actually a dialogue between the past and the present. A historical text becomes dynamic under the influence of the questions formulated from the point of view of the researcher's times: it comes back to life and generates new meanings.

The correspondence of the thought of the Warsaw historians of ideas with the European thought of that time was expressed also in the anthropological turn, shifting the researchers' area of interest towards the human; something Walicki regards as one of the main premises of the school. By the end of the 1960s the development of research into the category of mentalité had accelerated rapidly in France, where 'historians felt the need to stop the expansion of positivistically run humanities into history, they wanted to inhibit the process of the appropriation of the area of history by 'beyond-human' or 'over-human' history.'²⁷ The 1960s are the beginning of the process of radical change within studies into history, ones that took place under the influence of deep historiographical reflection. The most important consequence of those changes was making the content of human consciousness the subject of historical research. It was the human and their problems, who were placed at the centre of historical reflection in the second half of the 20th century. The anthropological turn was the most significant achievement of post-Second-World-War European historiography. Among the participants and initiators of the change which led to the emergence of 'the new image of history as historical anthropology, as a human science',²⁸ were also Polish intellectuals. The method of work of a historian of ideas is the method of 'translating theoretical problems of philosophy into the language of human moral problems.'²⁹ Andrzej Walicki formulates the so-called 'anthropocentric hypothesis', according to which 'the core of every outlook is always a particular human and social philosophy. Of course, it is not always conscious: often – or even usually – the central problems relating to a view of the world have a mystified form, they are 'crypto-problems', disguised in an ostensibly 'purely metaphysical,' 'purely scientific' or 'purely artistic' subject area.³⁰ What underlies this way of thinking is the belief that all kinds of history are created by humans. This results from the special nature of the very subject of history which is a social human living within a changing world. This is not a new idea. Mikhail Bakhtin claimed that 'a text is the primary fact (reality) and the starting point of every discipline of the humanities.'³¹ A text is the point of focus of both historians and representatives of other disciplines of humanities, but it is not a text which is the actual subject of the research but, according to Bakhtin, 'the real object is a human in their social essence, expressing

²⁷ Wojciech Wrzosek, *Historia – kultura – metafora*, (Wrocław: FNP, 1995), p. 145.

²⁸ Aron Guriewicz, 'Historia i antropologia historyczna', trans. B. Żyłko, in *Konteksty. Sztuka Ludowa*, 1-2/1997, p. 13.

²⁹ Walicki, 'Leszek Kołakowski i warszawska szkoła historii idei', p. 40.

³⁰ Andrzej Walicki, *W kręgu konserwatywnej utopii*, (Warszawa: PWN, 1964), p. 10.

³¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Estetyka twórczości słownej*, trans. D. Ulicka, ed. and foreword E. Czaplejewicz, (Warszawa: PIW, 1986), p. 418.

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themselves through speech or other means.³² Marc Bloch, one of the founders of the Annales School, wrote: 'the subject of history is naturally a human, or rather humans.'³³ Małgorzata Szpakowska refers to the opinion on this key issue, as formulated by Baczeko – the leader of the Warsaw historians of idea, saying: 'I remember Baczeko repeating that history is created by people, not by dwarfs. I think that he made us learn this opinion very well.'³⁴ According to Szpakowska its consequence was the movement on the part of the next generations of historians of ideas towards cultural anthropology. In this context, because of the strongly individualised nature of Marica Tsvetaeva's notes, the question as to whether the centre of interest of historians of ideas was a human or humans, an individual or a group, becomes significant.

In the 1960s historians of ideas focused in their research on particular authors, thinkers, philosophers and social activists, yet in starting their analysis from an individual they aimed at a reconstruction of specific structures of thinking, something that is analysed below. At the same time, in dealing mostly with philosophy, what they reconstructed was mainly a part of the cultural reality in which only a few people participated. It was the time of the turn in the reflection on the relations between individual and collective issues within the French Annales School. This turn was definitely constituted in 1969, when Jacques Le Goff and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie replaced Fernand Braudel as the editors of Annales. Then the transition from the dominant trend of macrohistory, which was focused on the history of medium continuity, on social time, collective movements, the history of economic conjunctures and social processes, which was being formed under the influence of Fernand Braudel, to that of microhistory, took place. It was a shift from 'history without people' to an anthropology-oriented history: the history of society and the history of culture. In western Europe this turn de facto took place after the formal expiration of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas. The most significant works which were to become the classics of microhistory, were written in the 1970s: Montaillou. The promised Land of Error by Le Roy Ladurie (1975), The Cheese and the Worms by Carl Ginzburg (1976), The Great Cat Massacre by Robert Darnton (1984). All those authors let particular people, the actors of the described events, speak. The created historical anthropology was a kind of historical literature, using such anthropological inspirations like approaching the past in the 'micro' scale, from the point of view of 'ordinary people' and their daily life, using historical sources such as photographs, diaries, letters, artefacts etc. and applying anthropological methods in historical research.

Historical anthropology defined in this way, focusing on 'ordinary people', is opposite to the history of ideas. This opposition was verbalised by Darnton, who wrote:

³² Bakhtin, *Estetyka twórczości słownej*, p. 418.

³³ Marc Bloch, *Pochwała historii, czyli o zawodzie historyka*, trans. W. Jedlicka, (Kęty: Wydawnictwo Marek Derewecki, 2007), p. 49.

³⁴ Discussion 'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje', p. 27.

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Where the historian of ideas traces the filiation of formal thought from philosopher to philosopher, the ethnographic historian studies the way ordinary people made sense of the world. He attempts to uncover their cosmology, to show how they organized reality in their minds and expressed it in their behavior.³⁵

This opposition was formulated probably with regard to the history of philosophy defined rather traditionally, representing the purely analytical, ahistorical approach, which the Warsaw historians of ideas radically resigned from. Within the frames of the history of ideas applied by the Warsaw School, one which was anthropology-oriented, this opposition was reduced and softened. This was especially so regarding the subject of research which for them was outlook on the world:

the cultural entirety analysed by them was the very view of the world. And according to Walicki, it was not a common view of the world, which is incoherent, fragmentary, actually not possible to reconstruct but a view of the world as an ideal model which additionally is different from an ideology because a view of the world understood like this is not a tool serving the interests of some class or a group but a kind of an expression [...] of life attitudes, individual and collective ones, organised around an idea; an expression manifesting itself in various areas of life and various layers of ideas; from theological to philosophical ones, in artistic activities and even some economic opinions. Views of the world defined as entireties are inapprehensible for traditional academic disciplines.³⁶

In this point historical anthropology and the history of ideas become closer because of the subject of their research. Both of them analyse a specific model of the reality which underlies individual activities and is expressed in cultural texts.

What is situated at the centre of the experience of the revolution described by Marina Tsvetaeva is the experience of hunger, which is a bodily experience. The poet's thoughts, activities, intentions and emotions are connected with everything that forms her everyday life, her material environment. This experience becomes highly individual and cannot be generalised. Those main characteristics of Tsvetaeva's notes make them a marginal text both in the analysis performed by historians of ideas and cultural anthropologists. The text is either completely invisible for them or its nature is secondary, serving only as a reconstruction of the essential context of forming the content of the consciousness of the inhabitants of Moscow in the times of the revolution.

³⁵ Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 3.

³⁶ Jacek Migasiński: Discussion 'Warszawska Szkoła Historii Idei. Powstanie, przekształcenia, kontynuacje', p. 28.

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CONCLUSION

Shifting Tsvetaeva's notes, along with their essential content, which is the bodily, subjective and unique experience of the revolution, towards the centre of interest of historians of culture took place under the influence of the transformations of the European humanities which occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as in the first decade of the 21st century. We can regard those transformations as the consequence of 'the anthropological turn', which took place in post-war historiography formulating the postulate of defining a human in a holistic way along with their relations to their environment, but at the same time contradicting this definition by rejecting the central role of the content of human consciousness, expressed in language, as the subject of the research. The radical change occurred in the 1990s mainly within the reflection related to the experience of the Holocaust, or Shoah. Then the shift towards non-discursive experience which regained the value omitted in the research on the language representation of reality, which is a form of its transformation and construction, took place.

In today's humanistic and philosophical reflection, the path of confronting experience with language and discursiveness is very significant. It seems that the problem of non-discursive, liminal experience has dominated other voices [...]. Unavailable, absent and impossible experience is a form of a liminal experience which became apparent along with the Holocaust and is seeking its space for expression, visibly transforming the area of humanistic reflection.³⁷

It is the very subject area of the Shoah, where the issue of the cognitive possibility and adequacy, not only the lack of the representation of its experience, as well as the problem of testifying those dramatic events, became especially clear. The substantial closeness of experience and testimony is reflected in their common etymology in the Polish language.³⁸

The humanities of the beginning of the 21st century, undergoing the next phase of its development, focused on bodiliness and materiality, 'turned towards things', moved in a direction opposite to the one determined by the historians of ideas of the 1960s. The trends of the new humanities stemming from 'this affective turn', 'the turn towards things' or neomaterialism open up an important perspective for research.³⁹ All these trends, on

³⁷ Dorota Wolska, 'Doświadczenie – ponownie rzeczywista kwestia humanistyki', in *Nowoczesność jako doświadczenie*, eds. Ryszard Nycz, Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, (Kraków: Universitas, 2006), p. 44.

³⁸ Wolska, 'Doświadczenie – ponownie rzeczywista kwestia humanistyki', p. 50.

³⁹ See: Athena Athanasiou, Pothiti Hantzaroula, Kostas Yannakopoulos, 'Towards a New Epistemology: The «Affective Turn»', in *Historein*, 8/2008; Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern*, trans. C. Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); *Rzeczy i ludzie. Humanistyka wobec materialności*, eds. J. Kowalewski, W. Piasek, M. Śliwa, (Olsztyn: Instytut Filozofii Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie, 2008).

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the one hand, radically contradict the premises of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, but on the other constitute its extension, make it possible to extend the scope of phenomena being the subject of historical, or wider humanistic research. They restore a significant part of the experience of reality, make visible what was earlier unavailable for the eyes and make audible the voices which were marginalised and considered as merely background in the research of historians of ideas. However, analysing the complex relations between the new courses of the humanities and the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas, which would take into consideration the important role of its intellectual background which is Marxism, from which researchers were resigning or to which they were returning, would require a separate study.