

The aim of the project is to study how the conceptual clichés (topoi, stereotypes), established in the Middle Ages and present in the mutual opinions of Poles and Germans and in autostereotypes, influenced the narratives, emerging since the end of the 18th century and especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, of the history of both nations and ideas about their mutual relationships.

Even the initial examination of the question allows us to say that in the case of many modern 19th- and 20th-century not only popular, journalistic but also political statements and unusually frequent scientific commentaries, especially those included in historical texts, we are dealing with repetitions of old narrative structures embedded in the tradition of both nations rather than with objective descriptions of reality, past and present in relation to the authors of the comments. The objective of the project will be to select and analyze examples which best and fully illustrate the phenomenon of the unusual power of old literary-topical tradition and to consider its sense and influence on German and Polish historiography in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The significance and originality of these studies consist in that they will show not only the influence of old narrative patterns on modern and intentionally critical and objective historical writing emerging in the 19th century but will also demonstrate its dialectic relationship with popular, literary-journalistic opinions or with current political outlooks and declarations. At the same time the applicant thinks that the above mentioned influences of the circles of non-professionals on historiography were unconscious borrowings of some ideas and not, for example, a conscious satisfaction of political demands.

The results of the project should give a strong impulse to the development and improvement of modern history.

The suggested studies will be constructed as follows. First, the foundation of stereotypical Polish opinions on Germans and German opinions about Poles (which originated in the Middle Ages) will be chosen. The traces of autostereotypes will also be collected. Then the research attention of the project executors will shift to the times of the birth of modern nationalisms i.e. to the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, and they will cover the period until the end of the strong presence of nationalistic ideas in historiography i.e. more or less until the 1980s. This activity will involve seeking the presence of stereotypes - created in the early literature of both nations - in the texts of historians and politicians, in journalistic materials and also in belles-lettres,

In his studies carried out so far, the applicant notices the existence of the phenomenon of a characteristic dialogue and also rivalry conducted by some part of Polish and German elites, which consisted, much simplified, in describing their own ethnic group as civilized and humanitarian people while Germans and Poles respectively were believed, in some way, to be blemished people i.e. simply barbarians.

However, the central idea behind the assumptions of the project will be not only to gather a certain collection of appropriate narratives documenting the above mentioned phenomenon, but also to show mutual structural-logical relationships between communications dispersed in time, reach their medieval archetypes, and finally show their lines of development. The applicant will also strive to distinguish the factors which influenced the changes of the outer shape of the studied comments/statements i.e. which adjusted the meaning of a specific narrative to the then current political or social situation as well as the willingness to discuss the arguments of the other side of the observable dialogue or maybe even a game whose character and causes were outlined above. At every stage of the conducted exploration its course will undergo methodological reflection that goes far beyond the strict methodology of history and extends to literary studies, science of information flow, and game theory.

The author of the project is aware of limitations of his scientific competences: he is therefore going to compare his own observations with the views of Polish and foreign specialists: medievalists, historians of the 19th and 20th centuries, sociologists, and specialists in culture and literature.