A school notebook as the witness of experiencing of childhood

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School notebooks as a source of information about experiencing of childhood are used very rarely. The subject of the analysis embraces a few dozen school notebooks of Polish students and pupils (male and female) from different periods after the Second World War. The starting point of the discussion is the description of the school notebook as a historical source in the perspective of the methodology used in micro-history (Carlo Ginzburg, Natalie Zemon Davis, Silvina Gvirtz et al.). A school notebook (so a manuscript) as a historical document has several dimensions:

1) The material dimension refers to the visual traces of a child’s intellectual activity: the notes and drawings connected with the school subject, the notes and drawings emerging as personal comments of a child about their particular situation in the classroom or school society (so-called children’s folklore). An additional subject of the examination are the notes and marks written by the teacher.

2) The historical dimension refers to the signs (e.g. dates, some unique words), which appear at the time of using the notebook. Thanks to these signs it possible to place the pupil’s life in a wider socio-political context of his country.

3) The psychological dimension refers to the details of the unique characteristics of a child’s writing and the compulsory use of both a single page and the entire notebook.

This dimension also includes the intellectual traces and the manner of understanding school knowledge by pupils.

The school notebook from the anthropological perspective is the witness of the relationship between a child and an adult, between an individual and a school institution or school community. Each school notebook is a reflection of the unique experience of childhood in the unifying environment at school. Therefore, we should explore school notebooks in order to capture different signs of different non-school practices of pupils.

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