

FREDERICK CHOPIN



UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW
THE FREDERICK CHOPIN UNIVERSITY OF MUSIC

ANNA BROŻEK & JACEK JADACKI



FREDERICK
CHOPIN

SOCIAL BACKGROUND — PERSONALITY — WORLDVIEW — ARTISTIC PRINCIPLES

Warsaw 2011

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Office and Graphic Studio:
Mariensztat Street 8
00–302 Warsaw, Poland
tel./fax: (+48 +22) 538 92 03
e-mail: redakcja@semper.pl
www.semper.pl

Sales Department:
Bednarska Street 20A
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tel./fax: (+48 +22) 828 49 73
e-mail: handlowy@semper.pl
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The present volume is a supplement to our book entitled *Fryderyk Chopin. Środowisko społeczne — osobowość — światopogląd — założenia twórcze*. It contains an abridged English translation and a full French translation of the book as well as an Introduction by Stanisław Moryto, The Rector of The Frederick Chopin University of Music in Warsaw (in English and French).

The illustrations and “References” have been omitted in this volume; however, both language versions have their own “List of names”, referring only to a given version.

In the English version, all mottoes and most references to Polish literature, including all quotations from poems, have been omitted. In the case of English texts, we quoted them in their original versions.

There are no omissions in the French version. The French quotations are generally based on the original, which we usually quoted without any changes, even if, as it was sometimes the case with Chopin’s correspondence in French, the texts contained some mistakes.

Anna Brożek and Jacek Jadacki

Warsaw, 17 October 2010.



KATARZYNA CHAŁASIŃSKA-MACUKOW
Rector of the University of Warsaw

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Żelazowa Wola is the place which is the most closely linked with Frederick Chopin in common understanding. The bi-centenary of his birth is a great op-

portunity to remind others that although the great composer was born in a small village in the area of Sochaczew, he grew up and developed his incredible talent in Warsaw. While living here for two decades, he observed the flourishing city and the birth of the Royal University of Warsaw, where he later studied.

For many years the University campus remained Chopin's home. His family lived in the right wing of the Kazimierzowski Palace for ten years. In the fall of 1826, Frederick started his study at the Central School of Music, led by Rector Józef Elsner, which was a part of the University as one of the branches of the Fine Arts Department. When the composer graduated three years later, Elsner called him "a musical genius" in his report. In 1830, Frederick left the University and left Warsaw never to return. Yet, the memories of the city and the University were always in his heart.

I am very happy about this publication, which highlights the connection of the piano genius with the University of Warsaw. The book, *Frederick Chopin: social environment — personality — convictions — artistic principles* reveals the great influence on the composer's personality and his development as an artist of the friends and teachers he met in the Warsaw period, as well as the extraordinary atmosphere of those times.

Katarzyna Chałasińska-Macukow



ANDRZEJ JASIŃSKI

A member of the jury of The International Frederick Chopin Piano Competition (since 1975)

The chairman of the jury of The International Frederick Chopin Piano Competition (since 2000)

Pianists — performers of Chopin's works all over the world — attempt to make a timeless bond with the composer with the help of their imagination, artistic sensitivity, knowledge and intuition, in order to best understand his message — as a musician and a person. Chopin's music reveals plenty in these two aspects, but what he himself and his contemporaries say about him is priceless. However, one ought to be aware of the fact that notation does not retain what is most important: the spiritual message, as the content of musical pieces is not a full reflection of the will of the composer. In consequence, many written sources concerning Chopin, which were luckily preserved, may contain various nuances of meaning, depending on their reading and understanding. Artistic truth — the content of musical pieces — is hidden under the external, rich, sound layer of a performed piece. Spoken, noted and read words are symbols which conceal the depth of human emotions. A performer of Chopin's pieces needs knowledge or commentary; a writer describing Chopin needs to comprehend the language of sounds.

Luckily, the authors of this book are philosophers, as well as educated pianists, who are able to merge general musical knowledge with artistic sensitivity and scientific skills. I was pleased to discover that we have something in common concerning their teachers of piano, whom I knew and valued. Namely: professor Rolanowska was a student of my professor, Władysława Markiewiczówna, and professor Pikul is a graduate promoted by professor Tadeusz Żmudziński, who was also a pupil of my professor.

As a pianist and a pedagogue, I support with strong conviction the authors' words that "in order to fully appreciate Chopin's MUSIC one must understand his PSYCHE first".

Their book is like an encyclopaedia, where you can find all that helps us understand Chopin: the pianist, the composer, the romantic, the Pole — a man, who experienced joy and sadness, hope and disappointment, who loved and suffered, and that with dignity — conscious of his mission — he put his trust in fate.

You can read this book from beginning to end, feeling that you are present in the times and places connected to Chopin's whole life, you can choose something which particularly interests you from the detailed table of contents, or you can even open the book on any page and... get some food for thought.

I congratulate the authors and I wish the readers a satisfying read.



STANISŁAW MORYTO

Rector of The Frederick Chopin University of Music in Warsaw

200 years have passed since that moment when Frederick Chopin was born in Żelazowa Wola, in Mazovia, Poland.

Subsequent stages of his short life are marked by two cities: Warsaw, Poland, and Paris, France, though it was also filled with residence in various other places, in his homeland as well as in Europe. These stays were connected with concerts, leisure and treatment. The places in Poland were especially dear to him and stayed in his memory until the end; they were immortalised in his works. Their narration and content written between the sounds confirm it. The content is so great, so forceful and so significant that it has continued to move, fascinate and attract the attention of musicians, music lovers and ordinary people all over the world. Where does the moving beauty of this music lie? Where does its greatness, its passion, its perfection come from? In the Polish understanding it derives from the national culture; regional culture in the geographical sense and local culture in the global sense. Yet this is not enough to draw the attention of people raised in different traditions, often separate, non-European; people whose mentality and tastes are different. Chopin's music survived all the meanders and turbulence which 19th century brought about. It also lasted throughout the tragic 20th century, the age of tremendous disappointment and dramatic changes, the age of wars in which tens of millions people lost their lives, and further tens of millions were exterminated.

It lasted "like a fundament amidst the debris and ashes of countries and ideologies". It survived and is increasingly more popular. The great civilisation progress of the last two centuries is an indisputable fact. Its basic elements are: technical progress and cultural development. However, technical

progress and cultural development are completely different concepts. One cannot link them together when talking about art. They should be treated as separate. Technological advancements are more easily spread than cultural values, which in turn are more durable and more deeply set in people's awareness. Especially art, which is the avant-garde of culture, clearly displays these tendencies.

"*Ars longa, vita brevis*", as the Latin proverb goes. Polish culture, literature, fine arts, music are mostly unknown in the world. Chopin's music is an exception. Polish culture is a local culture. It is a culture of those who live in this corner of the world, who use the same language, their native language. A language is a system of sounds. Music is also a language based on a system of sounds. Polish language, as well as Polish music, is a language with which we feel, think and communicate. Continuous rebirth of local, regional and national cultural values, despite the adversities brought by life, is a unique phenomenon in contemporary world. It is an astonishing occurrence in many cultures. Great art, architecture, literature, music did not emerge from vacuum, but from specific places in the geographical sense. The genius of artists, their mastery, their artistic level, the unique values — introduced their masterpieces into the pantheon of international art. Chopin's music is an excellent proof of that. People are interested in art also because they look for their roots in it. They cannot live without their roots. They need their own, not alien, roots. In order to understand art better, and also to interpret it better, as is the case with music, they become interested in the artist himself. They want to learn as much as possible about the creator. They ask many questions. They want to know what kind of a man he was, what his views were, where he grew up, how he lived, what his aesthetic choices were. They want to know everything or almost everything, which is impossible. A lot was written about Chopin; both important and trivial things, valuable and inconsequential, scientific and popular. Each new essay

“brings some new knowledge about Chopin’s music”. Theoretical considerations, musicologist descriptions, scientific research — are not an end in itself. They are not “art for art’s sake”. They only make sense when they reveal some knowledge about the artist and, most of all, about his works and about his musical language. They make sense when they lead to performing music. “Music is the only everlasting art.” Each performance of a piece is different. In music, best is enemy of better. Then, the constant striving for playing “even better” is the superior value in music.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' followed by a 't' and a horizontal stroke.

INTRODUCTION

1. The **WORLDVIEW** of a man comprises the collection of beliefs he holds about ethical and aesthetic values, i.e. about what is ethically and aesthetically positive (good or beautiful) or negative (bad or ugly). Thus, a worldview is seen to be composed of at least two constituent parts: the ethical and the aesthetic aspect.

2. The ethical component of a worldview — in short, the ethical worldview — comprises beliefs about what is allowed (or not) to do, and about what should (or should not) be done in regard to oneself, other people, as well as in regard to human and extra-human world, with the view to obtaining ethically valuable results of our actions.

The aesthetic component of worldview — in short, the aesthetic worldview — comprises beliefs about what is allowed (or not) and what should (or should not) be done — with the view to obtaining aesthetically valuable products of our actions.

3. The ethical and the aesthetic components, however, do not exhaust the idea of a **WORLDVIEW**, as they both rely on one's view on what the world is like or should be in general. The foundation belief constitutes the metaphysical component of worldview, i.e., the metaphysical worldview.

4. Each person has a worldview, even if it is not revealed directly, *explicite*, and even if it is not conscious on the part of the holder. The worldview can manifest itself *implicite* in the actions of a person, in what the person does and does not do. In the case of people who propagate an explicit worldview

while revealing another, implicit one through their actions, there may occur a dissonance between the worldviews if they differ considerably.

5. The only way to explicitly reveal a worldview is to express it with words, in a manner ranging from systematic presentation to occasional allusions.

What we do know for certain about Frederick Chopin's worldview belongs, for the most part, to the latter end of the spectrum, and therefore requires reconstruction.

The reconstruction can be done, on the one hand, on the basis of Chopin's own words (especially his preserved correspondence¹) as well as the words of people who have met him in person, and, on the other hand, on the basis of what various sources say about the composer's deportment in diverse situations which engaged his worldview. Chopin's utterances can be further divided into more direct and less obvious pronouncements of his opinions.

Unfortunately, any attempt at evaluation of the credibility of the sources, with correspondence at the head of them, encounters serious difficulties. As regards Chopin's — and others' — correspondence with the homeland, it was subject to Russian censorship; because of that, some issues could not be raised or were only written about in a veiled manner. As regards Chopin's letters home, they frequently lacked information sensitive issues on or contained softened accounts painful incidents, due to the composer's reluctance to further worry his parents, already much grieved by the mere fact of his emigration.

6. The question arises: whether, in the face of these obstacles, the reconstruction is worthwhile.

In our opinion, it is, and that for two reasons.

¹ To avoid lengthy and inconvenient descriptions, quotations from F. Chopin's correspondence (except his letters to D. Potocka) will only be annotated with basic data, sufficient for identification of the excerpts in available publications, i.e.: the name of the sender, and the name of the addressee, and the date.

First, Chopin was a genius of music. It is worth knowing as much as possible about a genius.

Second, in the case of musical genius at least the aesthetic worldview of the artist may be more or less strongly intertwined with creative powers. It would be interesting to examine whether that was true for Chopin.

Since the aesthetic worldview is the core of an artist's worldview, we devote a separate part of the text to Chopin's ARTISTIC PRINCIPLES.

7. Among the various factors which influence a person's worldview, personality plays a considerable role. The shape of one's personality, in turn, depends to a considerable extent on the social environment. That is why we precede the presentation of the Chopin's worldview with the description of his PERSONALITY and of the SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT which shaped the composer's personality.

8. Illustrations complete the description. The text is enriched with images of Chopin and of people associated with him, in addition to facsimiles of Chopin's texts and drawings, as well as historical and modern images of places visited by the artist in his lifetime. The images of places lived in by the composer have been added on the strength of our conviction that *genus loci* is of enormous importance for a worldview, and that the shape of one's thoughts is affected not only by WHAT one has heard others say, but also by WHERE it has been heard.

9. There are many images of Chopin that have been preserved but only two of them truly show us his soul: the portrait of the young, teenage Frederick, painted by the equally young Maria Wodzińska, and the portrait of the dying Chopin, painted by Teofil Kwiatkowski. Wodzińska succeeded in rendering the flash of penetrating intelligence in Chopin's eyes, and in making the mouth express a mild detachment from others, complemented by a touch of light irony toward his own person. In the profile he sketched, Kwiatkowski managed to capture Chopin's brave acceptance of fate. The remaining

portraits of Chopin testify to the complete artistic blindness of their authors, to say nothing about falsehoods as easy to avoid as painting the model as a dark-haired man with black eyes. The gallery of those entirely misguided portrayals is opened with the so frequently reproduced works by Ary Scheffer and Eugène Delacroix. The face of Scheffer's Chopin is thoughtless and indifferent, and that of Delacroix's likeness — grim and bitter, contorted with a grimace of disgust. In reality, how far were thoughtlessness and indifference, gloom and bitterness from Chopin's personality!

Similar objections pertain to texts written about Chopin. There is a great number of them but only select few are worth mentioning. The more valuable books include the latest Polish publications: the comprehensive and thorough monograph by Mieczysław Tomaszewski titled *Chopin. Człowiek, dzieło, rezonans* [*Chopin. Man, Work, Resonance*] (2010), the insightful study *Fryderyk Chopin. Człowiek i jego muzyka / The Man and His Music* (2010) by Irena Poniatowska, and the solid commentary on *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina* [*The Correspondence of Frederick Chopin*] by Zofia Helman, Zbigniew Skowron, and Hanna Wróblewska–Straus (2009).

It is our belief that, in spite of drawing extensively on those although we get out so much from these (and some other) publications, we still make a contribution to the knowledge of Chopin's music.

10. Our book is intended for the listeners and performers of Chopin. It will facilitate the reception of his music by both groups, and will help the performers empathize with the composer's nature, intellectual formation and intentions, which should result in a more accurate interpretation of his music.

The reader may ask what makes us believe that this book can meet such expectations.

Well, we have both been educated not only as philosophers but also as pianists. We have been playing Chopin's music since our childhoods, under the guidance of good

teachers. Our academic professors were highly accomplished specialists: the older of us graduated from Professor Natalia Hornowska's piano class at the Warsaw Conservatory, and the younger of us — Professor Andrzej Pikul's piano class at the Cracow Conservatory.

Nevertheless, while writing the book we both started to see our hero in an altogether new light, and we realized with full force that after the completion of our task our interpretation of the music would be different. It would be better.

Paraphrasing the words from the report of Chopin's last concert in Paris, published in the *Gazette Musicale* issue of February 20, 1848 (Czartkowski and Jeżewska 1957, p. 479) that "Chopin can only be understood with the help of Chopin himself", we may say in brief that in order to fully appreciate Chopin's MUSIC one must understand his PSYCHE first.

Naturally, we do recognize that Chopin's works can be played in a performer's OWN WAY — not necessarily CHOPIN's WAY, also, that we are allowed to express our own soul, and not only what Chopin may have wanted to express, «in, with, and through» the works. We know that Chopin accepted individual interpretation wholeheartedly — so long as it did not transgress the natural boundaries drawn *explicitly* by the score. Sometimes, in conversations with Marcelina Czartoryska, he said (Działyńska 1926, p. 6):

Not the way I am used to playing it, but it was good.

Chopin himself never played a piece quite the same way twice.

Thus, the choice between, to put it «wisely», acontextual and contextual interpretation is partly a matter of taste, and partly, let us be frank about it, a matter of fashion.

11. This book has two authors and, in many respects, we differ as much as possible.

First, we belong to different generations: the younger of us was born more than thirty years later than the older

one. Such a generational difference in some cases makes agreement even on trivial issues impossible.

Secondly, we come from different parts of Poland: the older of us comes from the Chopin's homeland: Mazovia; the homeland of the younger one is adjacent Little Poland. Accordingly, the younger of us has the traditional right (known also to Chopin) to call the older one a "blind Mazurian", whereas the older partner may pay back in his own coin and in accordance with his Mazovian prejudices, quoting the infamous saying about the inhabitants of the younger's region: "Two Poles — three opinions". The saying refers to times as distant as the Middle Ages — Mazovia was definitively incorporated into the Kingdom of Poland (whose backbone was constituted by Little Poland, Great Poland and Pomerania) in 1529.

That we have reached full agreement on the ultimate form of the book in spite of all the above mentioned differences can be seen, in our opinion, as evidence that its content reflects facts rather than any «whimsical notions» of the authors.

12. We have written this book in close cooperation. We have arrived at the final version by first separately taking down what we considered important for the topic, then, by meticulously disputing any dubitable issues, to finally merge all ideas which have withstood the criticism, just as one does with the layers of *mazurek*, the traditional Polish Easter cake.²

In the end, we share responsibility for each and every word of the so produced «layer cake» of a text.

We dedicate our book to the teachers from our respective secondary schools of music whose patron, through a strange twist of fate, was in both cases Frederick Chopin.

² "Mazurek" is the Little Polish (somewhat spiteful) name for the Mazovian type of layer cake.

Anna Brożek dedicates her work to the memory of professor Irena Rolanowska of the State Higher School of Music in Cracow where she made her first steps in the interpretation of Chopin's music, not entirely unrewarded, as proved by a fifteen-year-old contest diploma preserved in the family archives.

Jacek Jadacki dedicates his work to the memory of the professors of the State Higher School of Music in Olsztyn, especially to the memory of his Olsztyn mistress of piano, Iza Garglinowicz, who he inevitably reminisces about, much moved, each time he reaches for his copy of Zdzisław Jachimecki's monograph titled *Chopin. Rys życia i twórczości* [*An Outline of Life and Work*] which carries a dedication written by her own hand.

We dedicate this book to our teachers because we have personally experienced the truth that it is the teachers who have the greatest impact on the personality and worldview of their pupils, if only they happen to be naturally gifted teachers.

And we did have such teachers.

Anna Brożek and Jacek Jadacki

Warsaw, June 23, 2010.

PART I

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

CHAPTER I. HOME

The striking features of Chopin's family home were his parents' harmonious coexistence, their extraordinary commitment to children, and strong bonds between the children.

The children repaid the parents with sincere love which, in relation to their father, was colored with great respect. During Chopin's childhood and adolescence, the family home offered the boy greenhouse growth conditions, and left an imprint of family duties, including husband's duties to his wife. Chopin expressed his understanding of the responsibilities in a letter of October 30, 1848, to Wojciech Grzymała:

Living hand-to-mouth on one's own is allowed, but together it is the greatest misfortune.

Later, in his mature life, away from his homeland, Chopin could always count on extensive support from his family. During the composer's emigration years, there were two culmination points in the cultivation of family ties.

The first one was the meeting with his parents in Karlove Vary after Chopin had left Poland, forever, as it transpired later on.

Here is what Chopin wrote about the meeting in a letter of August 16, 1835, to his siblings:

I am *au comble de mon bonheur* [at the peak of my happiness]. [...] I embrace you and, please, forgive me that it is so difficult for me now to

gather my thoughts and write about anything else than our happiness at this moment, about how I always only had hope, and today I enjoy the realization of that happiness and happiness, and happiness.

The second culmination were the two visits of his older sister Ludwika which took place in the summers of 1844 and 1849, especially her second stay, in Paris in the months before Chopin's death, and her attentive care of her ailing brother.

All those who had closer contact with Chopin (including Ferenc Liszt and Mrs. George Sand) emphasized the composer's great love for his family. It manifested itself through, among other things, in hiding his life and health problems from family members to spare them grief and distress. In a letter of January 1, 1831, to Jan Matuszyński Chopin wrote:

Tell my parents that I am cheerful and do not lack anything, that I am enjoying myself, and that I am never alone.

The family's feelings for Chopin were best expressed by Ludwika in a letter of December 15, 1835, to her brother in which she wrote about his scores:

It is pleasant for us to even look at the notes, which contain thine soul, one of the most dear to thy family.

1. FATHER

Frederick Chopin's father, Mikołaj (originally Nicolas) Chopin (born on April 15, 1770, in Marainville-sur-Madon, Lorraine, and deceased on May 3, 1844, in Warsaw), was born in a peasant family from Lorraine and was brought up under the watchful eye of Adam Weydlich, an administrator of the Polish magnate Michał Jan Pac who owned the village.

It is worth noting that in the years from 1738 to 1766 the Duke of Lorraine — where Pac settled after the fall of the Bar Confederation (in 1772) formed against King

Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski and his policy of deference to Catherine the 2nd of Russia — was the dethroned Polish king Stanislaus Leszczyński.

In 1787 Mikołaj Chopin came to Warsaw with Weydlich and was employed as a clerk in a tobacco factory set up by Weydlich, which he worked in until its closure after the Second Partition of Poland in 1792. He participated in the Kościuszko Uprising as a volunteer in the National Militia of Warsaw and rose to the rank of lieutenant.

After the Third Partition of Poland he had a number of jobs, one of which was the post of a tutor to Mateusz and Ewa Łączyńskis' children in Czerniejewo in Great Poland. Among his pupils was Łączyńskis' daughter Maria, the future Countess Maria Walewska known for her intimate connection with Napoleon, and Count Fryderyk Skarbek from Żelazowa Wola, Frederick Chopin's future friend.

It was in Żelazowa Wola where Mikołaj Chopin met Tekla Justyna Krzyżanowska who later (on June 28, 1806) became his wife.

In 1810 the Chopin family moved to Warsaw, where he taught French in a number of schools: the Warsaw Lyceum (in the years from 1810 to 1832), the Elementary School of Artillery and Engineers (from 1812), then the Application School of Artillery and Engineers (between 1820 and 1836), and the Main Seminary later transformed into the Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical Academy (years 1834–1837).

He was also a member of the Committee on the Examination of Candidates for Public School Teachers (from 1835).

As a teacher of French he had an excellent command of the language, however, he only mastered it — as an autodidact — after his arrival in Poland, as is evidenced by the difference between his letter to his parents of 1790 and the letters he later wrote to his son.

He had a very good knowledge of the Polish language and literature, including the works of Ignacy Krasicki.

He enjoyed music: he was not only an eager listener but also an amateur performer (a quite good violin player).

In social situations he distinguished himself with refined manners and an apparent reserve sometimes taken for coldness. With respect to his pupils, he was strict but also understanding.

One of his charges, Count Fryderyk Skarbek, described the features in the following way in his *Pamiętniki* [*Memoirs*] (Wójcicki 1858, Vol. I, p. 457):

The gentle and friendly approach of Chopin, his careful supervision of my entire conduct, without needless curtailment of freedom, without pedantry or excessive coercion — this attitude guided my abilities and inclinations to the course they should naturally take, and from which they would stray all too easily under less auspicious leadership.

Above all, Mikołaj Chopin was an enterprising, industrious and righteous individual. It was he who was the model of the father figure in the youthful tale *Podróż Józia z Warszawy do wód śląskich* [*Joe's Journey from Warsaw to the Silesian Waters*], published in 1830 by his daughter Ludwika. (The tale is, in all probability, a reminiscence of a trip to Duszniki-Zdrój that the Chopin family had taken in the summer of 1826). In the book, «papa» lectures the eponymous character (Chopin-Jędrzejewiczowa 1830, pp. 15, 77 and 13):

A place does not distinguish a man, but a man may distinguish a place. [...] For everyone, diligence and good management are the means to earn a good living, decent education, and knowledge indispensable for the fulfillment of one's vocation. Then, the better one becomes and the better one serves others with his work, the greater respect he earns and the greater love he wins among his neighbors.

In your life, remember never to stray from the straight path. [...] To follow the straight path means to always tell the truth and to do as one says; to speak fairly of others in their presence and in their absence, and to willingly fulfill all one's duties.

Entrepreneurship, industriousness and righteousness were complemented by frugality and respect for others, coupled with a sense of self-dignity.

Almost to the end of his life the father continued to give advice on various matters to his family, including his son. In one of the letters of the beginning of 1834 to Frederick and in a letter of January 9, 1836, his father justified the persistent coaching with the following arguments:

What you have written about your principles makes me pleased. Yes, dear child, young person may easily err if he does not watch his own steps. [...]

At your age one is not always the master of one's own will; one is apt to experience sensations which will not wear off easily.

Therefore, fatherly instruction is... worth following.

Mikołaj Chopin's counseling concerned primarily the duties he himself saw as essential, in particular those which he suspected his son of neglecting to a degree. They were the obligation to save for the «rainy days», to have respect for other people and take good care of one's own reputation, and — understandably in the case of a sickly child — to always mind one's health.

As regards savings, he reprimanded Frederick in the letters of April 13, 1833, and February 9, 1835:

I will always say that until you have saved a few thousand francs I will not stop thinking of you as pitiable, in spite of your talent and the flatteries lavished on you; flatteries are but fumes, of no avail in times of need. Should, God forbid, indisposition or illness force you to stop teaching, you will be threatened with indigence abroad. The thought of it, I have to admit, often bothers me because I can see that you live hand-to-mouth and cannot even afford the shortest journey. [...] Do not think I would want you to be mean; I only wish you would consider your future with less indifference. [...]

Remember my song: penny for a rainy day.

The themes of respect for others self-dignity return in the following letters of June 28, 1832, September 1832, and in a letter of the beginning of 1834:

You may say what you want but I do not approve of your aversion to certain people; I do not know what may have caused your prejudice against them, and I do not approve of your calling someone a “stinker” at all. [...]

I am glad [...] to see you live [...] in the greatest harmony [with top artists], without awaking jealousy on their part while at the same time evoking just appreciation for your talent. [...]

Please, always be cautious and do not give occasion for gossip.

Caring for health is emphasized in a letter of the beginning of 1834:

Respect yourself, do not allow yourself to get overloaded with the work, ceremonial calls, and evening receptions.

Later he tried to influence his son through Matuszyński, who he wrote to in a letter of January 9, 1836:

I would [very much] like you to make him be rarer at the late parties, because going to sleep at 2 a.m. is good for machines, and not for those whose minds are working and who think.

Father also instilled in Frederick the belief in the great weight of friendship in life. In a letter of the beginning of 1834, already quoted, he wrote:

I truly regret that you do not have a good friend by your side because, judging from what you write, last time was not too lucky for you; after all, one cannot receive all your guests in a room filled with smoke, especially if one does not — like you do not — smoke oneself. Still, it must be very sad not to be able to speak to someone in one's place.

Interestingly, Mikołaj Chopin — just like his son later on — was far from political radicalism of any description, which was rather rare for Frenchmen at that time. In a letter of June 28, 1832, addressed to his son, he wrote:

I was very pleased with your letter of the sixth, my dear child, because I may infer from it that, fortunately, you have not been affected the public violence incited by human monsters. Some journals claim that Pol[es] took part in the riots, abusing the hospitality they had enjoyed — do they not have enough of that madness? So much of it had taken place here. I am convinced that there could not have been many Poles among the troublemakers, as who could be mad enough to share their destructive beliefs. How fortunate the fact that the healthy part of the nation prevailed and that peace has been restored.

In a letter of January 9, 1841, he added, with a pinch of salt:

As Dr. Panglos in [Voltaire's] *Candide* says, EVERYTHING in the world is for the best.

Also in the face of illness and death Mikołaj Chopin and his son behaved alike. Antoni Barciński, Frederick's brother-in-law, wrote of the father in a letter of June, 1844:

[He retained] a calm mind and a peaceful conscience, inner joy and pride that he managed to raise children capable of love and respect for their parents, the pleasant feeling of having lived not only for himself but also for the good of others, and being generally appreciated him and honored for the righteousness of his character. [...]

At the time of weakness, which manifested itself not in physical suffering but in the slow decline of strength, he did not complain of any inconveniences, and remained quiet, talkative, and even gay, which he did not need to hide.

2. MOTHER

Frederick Chopin's mother, Tekla Justyna née Krzyżanowska (born before April 15, 1770, in Długie, Kuyavia, and deceased

on October 1, 1861, in Warsaw), descended from minor Kuyavian nobility.

Her family was associated with (and perhaps even related to) the Skarbek family who owned properties in Izbica, including Justyna's family village. After the sale of the properties by Kacper and Ludwika Skarbek in 1800, Justyna moved to their estate in Żelazowa Wola. When — after her marriage to Mikołaj Chopin — she finally settled in Warsaw, Justyna brought Kuyavian niece, Zuzanna («Zuzka») Bielska, (c. 1803–1869) there. The niece played a role in shaping the personality of Frederick.

Like her husband, Justyna was a slim person of a prepossessing appearance; she also had a face with regular features and a serious expression. However, unlike her black-haired spouse with sad eyes and a straight profile, she had blond hair, cheerful blue eyes and a slightly aquiline nose, and those features were inherited by Frederick and Izabela, while Ludwika and Emilia took more after their father.

Another similarity between the husband and the wife was musical talent. Justyna sang beautifully, accompanying herself on the piano. She had great skill in the use of the Polish language, for obvious reasons, she was a far more fluent speaker than Mikołaj. She also resembled him in being a person with high social skills, self-possessed, enterprising, industrious, righteous, kind, responsible, and — perhaps more than her husband — economical, although certainly not stinting.

In *Podróż Józia* Ludwika Chopin puts the following words into Józio's mother's mouth (Chopin–Jędrzejewiczowa 1830, pp. 130–131 and 73–74):

“Every age has its griefs” — says Krasicki in his fable titled “The Son and Father”.

It is true that children do not suffer from great sorrows but, in proportion to their age and circumstances, they do experience as inordinate distress certain things which seem unimportant in more mature years.

The most effective cure for this, as you will learn yourself, is patience. Be patient and you will bear all the unpleasant things; divide your time wisely between learning and fun, then you will not be bored. [...]

You should never judge people by their appearance; it is always better to speak too well about people than to say something bad about them.

What distinguished her most in the Chopins' household — but was in fact the norm among Polish housewives — was fervent faith.

There are friends' testimonies of her religious ardor, and it is also visible in the characteristic expressions from the extant letters she wrote to her son in March, 1837, and June, 1849:

[I] will pray ask God for his Holy Protection and all kinds of blessings for you. [...]

One has to accept the will of the highest, and God in his mercy will send you friends who will replace me. [...] God bless you and give you health.

It was probably her faith that allowed her to survive with great dignity and humbleness the subsequent deaths of her daughter Emilia, her husband Mikołaj, her son Frederick, and her daughter Ludwika.

3. SIBLINGS

3.1. LUDWIKA

Frederick's eldest sister, Ludwika Chopin (born on April 6, 1807, in Warsaw, and deceased on October 29, 1855, also in Warsaw), the wife of the lawyer Józef Kalasanty Jędrzejewicz (wedding on November 22, 1832), was the composer's most beloved sister, and she reciprocated that love.

She visited her brother in France twice: first, in July, 1844, and later in August, 1849, when — because of Frederick's deteriorating health — she took care of him until his death.

She returned to Poland only in December, 1849, after dealing with inheritance and publishing issues.

Being the eldest child, she fulfilled the role of second mother, a governess, and the first teacher of Frederick. As an instructor she could combine learning with fun very well, and taught Frederick the basics of the Polish and French languages, and of piano playing (she took piano lessons from Wojciech Żywny who was to be Frederick's teacher as well). She was fully aware of the greatness of her brother's work and sometimes expressed her appreciation in a humorous way, like in a letter of February 9, 1835, to Frederick:

Your mazurka, the one whose third features the DING DONG DONG bit [...], was played at the ball of the Zamoyski family throughout the evening. [...] What do you say on being thus profaned?

She possessed great unaffectedness and delicacy of manner, and was a capable of great kindness and devotion to other people. Her virtues found their expression in diverse social engagements. In the years from 1831 to 1833 she was a member of the Patriotic Charity Association of Polish Ladies (chaired by Klementyna Hoffmanowa née Tańska, and later by Katarzyna Sowińska, the widow of General Sowiński) whose aim was providing financial support to the victims of the repressions following the November Uprising. It is worth noting that among the people with whom she was in direct contact at that time there was Professor Krystyn Lach-Szyrma whose recommendations the activists of the Association relied on. Since 1848 Ludwika worked in the Warsaw Charity Association and in the Home for Orphans and Poor Children operated by that society.

She was very well educated — first at home, then in Józefa Werbusz's school for girls — and had extensive academic interests. She was well read in La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère; in spite of the rather pessimistic tenor of these readings

and of her own family troubles (misunderstandings with her husband) she never lost her placidity of spirit.

It was no coincidence that she established cordial relations with Mrs. Sand and Jane Stirling. Mrs. Sand was simply delighted with Ludwika. She considered her to be a «progressive» woman with a salutary influence upon her brother; thanks to that influence Frederick was to get rid of his «superstitions» (Mrs. Sand's delight was probably occasioned by Ludwika's seeming acceptance of the «open» relationship of Chopin and Mrs. Sand).

At the time of her death, Ludwika's library contained about 150 books, a number of which had probably been inherited from her parents and her brother. Among the volumes there were: literary works such as La Fontaine's *Fables*, Voltaire's *Novels*, and Franciszek Karpiński's *Dzieła* [Works]; music scores, including Mikołaj Gomółka's *Śpiewy kościelne* [Melodies to Polish Psalter], Mozart's *Requiem*, and Beethoven's *Symphonies*; and scientific books, among them Stanisław Kostka Potocki's *O wymowie i stylu* [On Enunciation and Style], and Ignaz Urban's *Theorie der Musik*.

As already mentioned, Ludwika wrote *Podróż Józia*. With her sister Emilia she also co-authored the novel for children titled *Ludwik i Emilka* [Louis and Emily] (1828), which is a Polish adaptation of one of Christian Gotthilf Salzmann's didactic works. The authors' original contribution was the addition of a motto for each chapter. All the mottoes were carefully selected from Stanisław Jachowicz's poetry for children and from other classics of Polish literature: Jan Kochanowski, Andrzej Zbylitowski, Krzysztof Opaliński, Ignacy Krasicki, Stanisław Trembecki, Franciszek Karpiński, Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, and Wojciech Bogusławski. The selected excerpts are a good illustration of the value system adopted by the Chopin family. The valued virtues included: the willingness to learn (Karpiński), prudence (Krasicki), diligence (Krasicki, Karpiński), frugality (Krasicki), the capacity to

bear adversity (Kniaźnin), modesty (Opaliński), taking care of one's health (Kochanowski), and — with regard to other people — generosity (Krasicki), sincerity in friendship (Kniaźnin), respectful behavior (Niemcewicz, Bogusławski), kindness (Niemcewicz) and helpfulness (Karpiński). The vices censured in the text were, appropriately: ignorance, thoughtlessness, extravagance, despondency, a reckless approach toward health, and — with regard to other people — talking of virtues instead of doing good works, false politeness, disdain, slander, and abuse. The mottoes also touched upon «metaphysical» issues: admiration for the immensity of the universe (Krasicki), the belief that human life is a mixture of joy and sorrow (Kochanowski), awareness of the difficulty of evaluating the motives behind the conduct of other people (Trembecki), belief in God's support (Kniaźnin) and God's activity on behalf of the oppressed and the humiliated (Karpiński), a suspicion of the existence of innate evil (Karpiński), and the hope that, in the end, evil should turn against the villains (Karpiński).

Ludwika and her sister Izabela also wrote a novel for craftsmen titled *Pan Wojciech czyli wzór pracy i oszczędności* [Mr. Adalbert, or a Model of Diligence and Frugality] (1836) which depicts the life of a model — hard-working and pious — shoemaker. The novel is prefaced with by a foreword carrying a distinctive title: “To The Craftsmen, Workmen, Servants, and Day-laborers”, and each chapter is headed with (this time, anonymous) moralizing verses.

Another book published by Ludwika was a popular science book titled *Krótkie wiadomości z nauk przyrodzonych i niektóre ważniejsze wynalazki* [Notes on Natural Science and Some of The More Important Inventions] (1848) which contains a selection of basic information on physics and chemistry, together with brief descriptions of a number of recent scientific inventions. Being a deeply religious person — just like her mother — Ludwika translated from Italian a shortened version of Filippo Maria Salvatori's book about

Saint Veronica, and published her translation in 1841 under the title *Krótki zbiór życia św. Weroniki Giuliani* [*A Short Description of St. Veronica Giuliani's Life*]. A fragment of the translation was brought out already in 1840 as *Krótki zbiór ważniejszych rzeczy z życia św. Weroniki Giuliani, kapucynki* [*A Brief Collection of the More Important Events from the Life of St. Veronica Giuliani, a Capuchin Nun*], and in 1859 the book was republished under a new title, *Zbiór życia św. Weroniki Giuliani* [*The Life of St. Veronica Giuliani*].

Like Frederick, Ludwika evinced a strong inclination toward self-reflection; she also recommended introspection to others. Her essay *O pisaniu dzienników* [*On the Writing of Diaries*] contains the following apology of contemplative habits (Chopin-Jędrzejewiczowa 1838, pp. 207, 210 and 211):

We see children err, and we even see mature people err in their lives; we forgive the former because we recognize the necessity of mistakes in the process of learning, but we are not so willing to excuse the latter. We marvel at other people's faults without stopping to think of our own propensity for wrongdoing, and we do not ask ourselves the question about the sources of evil. Lack of reflection, lack of self-knowledge — these are the real sources of evil. We live, we use the gifts of nature; days and years pass quickly by, we revel in the luxury of sensations and push suffering away; and if, in our lives, we experience more sorrows than joys, we recall those happier moments, we want time to pass faster, we look forward to future times with some unspecified hope which is hard to concretize, as we do not ourselves know what our happiness ought to look like. [...]

Should the virtues of heart and mind become less alien to us; more than that, should there be a means of improving them, so that we could be raised even higher in the eyes of other people [...] — I believe that it would not be right to reject such a means; on the contrary, it should be employed to the benefit of ourselves, and be advocated, and practiced by others. Such a means, in my opinion, is constant reflection on oneself and on one's environment, i.e. — writing a diary. [...]

Thoughts fly away, but once they are transferred to paper they remain there for so long as they are not intentionally destroyed. As they are

transposed in writing, in the incessant and meticulous process, the image of our soul will unfailingly reveal itself; our inner self will surface, freed from the many layers of uncongenial coating.

In a letter of January 9, 1841, to Frederick, she justified her optimistic outlook in the following words:

Strange things happen in the world, which often deprive a man of illusions, but I am so unwilling to not deprive myself of them, so reluctant to do away with that sweetest happiness a man has here on earth! I have build for myself such a lofty, noble, great, and clean world of educated people in my imagination that everything that does not match that created image irritates me enormously; and although many things can be justified, the justifications are [not real but rather] the effect of indulgence.

After the death of Ludwika she was written about as a model of a modern woman by Ludwika Górecka née Linde in *Gazeta Codzienna* [*The Daily Gazette*] and Eleonora Ziemięcka née Gagatkiewicz in *Gazeta Warszawska* [*The Warsaw Gazette*]. Seweryna Prusakowa née Żochowska celebrated her memory with a commemorative poem in which Ludwika was depicted as the one who could “weave a golden thread into the fabric of another's life”.

3.2. IZABELA

Izabela (born on July 9, 1811, in Warsaw, and deceased on June 3, 1881, also in Warsaw), later the wife of mathematician Barciński (they married on November 8, 1834) who was a former tutor for the Chopins' children, looked very much like her brother. Frederick wrote in a letter of July 18–20, 1845, to his family:

Izabela and I are blondes...

Izabela wrote about Frederick (in a letter of September 7, 1832):

My little brother [...]. I love [him] more than life.

After ten years nothing changed; in a letter of October 16, 1842, she still called her brother:

My dear Freddie!

Like her siblings, Izabela received a good education, including piano lessons under the supervision of Żywny.

She co-authored the already mentioned novel *Pan Wojciech*.

Like her sister Ludwika, Izabela worked for charitable organizations. She was a member of the Patriotic Charity Association of Polish Ladies; worked in the Home for Orphans and Poor Children of the Warsaw Charity Association (1843), and then in the Protection Council of the Refuge House (1844), the Orphans' and Protective Rooms Board (from 1849) and in the Refuge House for Infants (1856). She helped to lead the family home, especially after her father's death, and looked after Ludwika's children after her death.

She was remembered as a generous and selfless woman.

On September 19, 1863, in revenge for the (unsuccessful) assassination attempt at the governor-general (who answered directly the Russian tsar), Moscow soldiers ransacked the Zamoyskis Palace where she lived, and among the destroyed property there were Frederick Chopin's souvenirs. That event was alluded to in the Cyprian Kamil Norwid's wonderful poem "Fortepian Chopina" ["Chopin's Piano"] (written at the turn of the years 1863 and 1864).

3.3. EMILIA

The youngest Chopins' daughter, Emilia, was born on November 9, 1812, in Warsaw, and died prematurely on April 10, 1827 (also in Warsaw). Like her brother, she bid fair to accomplish much in the arts; she was especially skilled in literature. Impressed with Hoffmanowa's writings, she

wanted to become an author herself. She was very well-read for her age; significantly, in 1825 she rewrote the text of Ignacy Humnicki's tragedy *Edyp* [*Oedipus*] (whose official publication date was 1827).

As already mentioned, Emilia cooperated with her elder sister Ludwika on the novel *Ludwik i Emilka* which was published after her death.

Earlier, in 1824, she wrote with Frederick a rhymed comedy titled *Omyłka czyli mniemany filut* [*The Error, or a Presumed Joker*]. This comedy was staged once, to the delight of the audience, by consisting of Frederick, Izabela, Emilia, and other adolescents from Mikołaj Chopin's boarding school.

Emilia's rhyming talents are also visible in the preserved name day poems which she wrote for her father.

Together, Emilia and Frederick founded a «literary and entertainment society» with Emilia as secretary, Frederick as president, and the remaining residents as members or... porters.

With her sunny disposition and subtle wit, Emilia had a beneficial influence on the people surrounding her. She preserved her serenity even in the face of approaching death.

Chopin was born in Żelazowa Wola, in a wing of a small palace belonging to the Skarbek family. Happily for the lovers of Chopin, the wing survived the burning of the palace during the First World War.

However, the main *locum* of his childhood and youth was Warsaw, the city which shaped his personality, and three subsequent places of residence of the Chopin family: the Saxon Palace, ruined during the Second World War and never rebuilt (years 1810–1817), the right annexe of the Kazimierzowski Palace (years 1817–1827), and the left wing of the Krasińskis Palace (between 1827 and 1837).

In times of Frederick's childhood and youth, Warsaw, like other centers of European civilization, was ethnically diversified. The main element of the mosaic was, naturally, Polish bourgeoisie, but Germans, Frenchmen and Russians formed an important part of it.

The influx of foreigners — initially Germans, then Frenchmen and Russians — began many centuries earlier. The newcomers appeared in Warsaw in large numbers primarily as a result of the partitions of Poland in the late eighteenth century and most of them became naturalized Polish citizens quickly.

Following the Third Partition of Poland, in the years 1795–1807 Warsaw was included within the Prussian part, and Prussian administrative staff (among them Samuel Bogumił Linde who will be repeatedly referred to below) began to settle in the city.

In the years 1807–1815 Warsaw was the capital of the Duchy of Warsaw, established by Napoleon the 1st, and thus heavily dependent on France. The influx of Frenchmen into Warsaw (and all the Polish lands) in the nineteenth century — officials, specialists in different disciplines, tutors — had three phases: the first was related to the French Revolution (then Count Alexandre Nicolas de Moriollles, one of close friends of the Chopin family, came to Poland); the second one coincided with the establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw; and the third phase was connected with the failed expedition of the French troops to Moscow in 1812. The French position was strengthened by the fact that French was the language of higher levels of society at that time, in Warsaw and in the whole of Europe.

In 1815 Warsaw became the capital of the Kingdom of Poland created at the Congress of Vienna. Until 1916 it was in a constitutional personal union with the Russian Empire; initially it retained political autonomy but after the defeat of the November Uprising (1830–1831) the state was formally incorporated into the Russian Empire. That entailed the Russification of the administration of the state. Incidentally, among the Russian officials, including the environment of Grand Duke Constantine, the commander-in-chief and *de facto* viceroy of the Kingdom of Poland, there were many Germans from the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire and from Rhineland.

Chopin's Poland, in the apt words of Liszt — was “the country of aristocratic democracy” (1852/1960, p. 36). It was aristocracy that held most of the key offices in the country, and set the tone for the intellectual and artistic culture of the capital. The tone of Warsaw was successfully imitated by the multi-ethnic bourgeoisie which was enriching itself and had increasingly refined cultural aspirations.

The architecture of Warsaw was blossoming: private palaces, public buildings, and temples were created or modernized as a result of work of such masters as Chrystian

Piotr Aigner, Jakub Kubicki, and Antonio Corazzi. They left a classicist imprint on the architecture of the city, and it is not unlikely that the architectural classicism was one of the inspirations for the classicism of Chopin's music.

In Warsaw it was possible for young Chopin to listen to famous European musicians: Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Niccoló Paganini, and Maria Szymanowska; and singers such as Angelica Catalani, Barbara Mayerowa, and Henriette Sontag.

He could also actively participate in the amateur music playing in the numerous Warsaw salons. Importantly, from his earliest age Chopin used to play for Grand Duke Constantine who, it seems, liked Frederick's childish «compositions». There is a preserved anecdote about young Chopin looking at the ceiling, as was his habit, during a performance in front of the Duke who was reported to have asked: "Why are you looking up like this? Do you have your score up there?" That the Duke was pleased with the boy's playing is proved by the fact that when Frederick dedicated a march to him, Constantine ordered it to be orchestrated for brass band and performed as the official war march of «his» Royal Polish Army.

Constantine's favor was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it constituted an entry ticket of a kind to the aristocratic salons. On the other hand, it was the source of perplexities of conscience for the maturing Chopin: after all, Constantine was the chief guardian of the interests of Moscow in Poland, and one of the direct targets of the November Uprising. The pangs of conscience must have bothered Chopin even in much later years, if Solange Clésinger, Mrs. Sand's daughter, was informed about the following scene which somewhat excused the behavior of small Frederick (Eigeldinger 1978, p. 227):

As a young boy, introduced to the salons as a child prodigy, he played for Grand Duke Constantine. The Duke put him on his knees, trying to

caress and to congratulate him. The boy turned his head away with horror and disgust and lowered the embrace of Moscow.

That is how Chopin himself described the events!

Concert halls and the salons — in short, the cultural environment of Warsaw — were not the only environment which molded Chopin's creative personality. They were complemented by intellectual atmosphere lent to the city by teachers, scholars, activists and writers who were drawn to the capital. Many of them were Chopin's peers and friends.

1. TEACHERS AND SCHOLARS

1.1. MUSICIANS

Direct and CONSCIOUS influence on Chopin was, naturally, exerted by his Warsaw teachers, especially (but not exclusively) music teachers: Żywny, Elsner, and Würfel.

1.1.1. WOJCIECH ŻYWNY

Żywny (1756–1842) was a Germanized Czech (born Vojtěch Živný, he also used the Latin equivalent of his name: Adalbert).

He was educated in his homeland; his teacher was Jan Křtitel Kuchař, a friend of Mozart, the author of first piano extracts from Mozart's operas. Żywny took lessons in violin, piano, harmony, and counterpoint. He also had musical contacts with Leipzig and Stuttgart. In 1790 Prince Kazimierz Nestor Sapieha (one of the creators of the Constitution of May 3, 1791) brought Żywny to Poland as a teacher for his children.

After 1795 Żywny moved to Warsaw where he devoted all his efforts to teaching and composing; among his works there were pieces for piano (polonaises, preludes and sonatas), violin, and orchestra. He played the violin and piano; he was also a conductor.

He taught Chopin in the years 1816–1822. Eleven-year-old Frederick dedicated him a *Polonaise in A-flat major*.

It was Żywny who instilled a high regard for the works of Bach and Mozart in young Frederick, and advised his students the repeated practice of preludes and fugues from *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* — a habit adopted by Chopin.

1.1.2. JÓZEF ELSNER

The second — and most important — Chopin's teacher was Elsner (1769–1854), a Silesian German (German form of his first name: Joseph) whose musical education — in violin and composition (basso continuo) — began at the Dominicans' School and at the Jesuit High School in Wrocław where he also studied theology and medicine.

He appeared in Warsaw in 1799 and remained very active there. He was an extremely prolific composer of dozens of masses, cantatas, operas, and of many other pieces, a director of the National Theatre Opera (1799–1824), an active worker of the music society called “Musical Club”, the founder of the Society for Religious and National Music, a member of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning, a member of Freemasonry, the owner of a sheet music publishing house, and a tireless teacher at various music and drama schools in Warsaw, most importantly, the Central School of Music.

Chopin began taking harmony and counterpoint lessons from Elsner already in 1822.

Among the textbooks Elsner recommended to Chopin there was a little bilingual Polish–German book titled *Nauka harmonii* [*Learning of harmony*] — *Anweisung zum General-Baß*, published in Poznań in 1823 by the musician, lithographer and bookseller Karol Antoni Simon (d. 1841).

Here is what young Frederick could read in the “Preface” to his first textbook of composition (Simon 1823, pp. 3–4):

While most musical instruments can only be used to play a melody, there are some in which melody and harmony become inseparable, such as piano, harp, guitar, etc. There are, however, many piano players who do

not even realize what rich harmony the instrument is capable of. Pianists need to know harmony not only for accompanying other musicians but also if they have a talent and a propensity for composing, and want to transfer their thoughts onto paper: deficiencies in the knowledge of harmony, which is fundamental for any kind of composition, will prevent the development in either of the areas. That certain compositions, written not so much for listening as according to the [rules of] music, do not find applause among the audience is due to the ignorance of the knowledge of harmony. Therefore, every music lover who wants to know the rules of music and to follow them should get acquainted with the laws of harmony, the learning of which I have made easier with possibly short and clear explanations, so I expect this booklet to be received as willingly as the author has worked on it.

More importantly, Chopin acquainted himself with Elsner's work titled *Rozprawa o rytmiczności i metryczności języka polskiego* [*Treatise on the Rhythmicity and Metrical Rhythm of the Polish Language*]. We learn about it from Elsner's letter to Chopin of November 13, 1832:

My three-volume work about *Metronomia i rytmiczność języka polskiego* [*Metronimity and Rhythmicity of the Polish Language*] (which comprises my thesis on *Melodia* [*Melody*], some parts of which you already know) has been completed; but it cannot be published now because its basic concerns are musical tendencies and nationality (which is self-understood), and the latter feature [...] must not be shown to the public, even in a veil. The third volume is about the intimate connection between poetry and music.

Chopin found in Elsner theoretic foundations for his own innate “rhythmic sensitivity” which was extremely developed and has no equal (Demska-Trębaczowa 1981, p. 302).

1.1.3. WENZEL WILHELM WÜRFEL

Chopin's second piano and organ teacher, after Żywny, was Würfel (1790–1832), a pianist, organist, and composer,

a Germanised Czech like Žywny (the Czech form of Würfel's name is: Václav Vilém Werfel).

Würfel was a professor at the Warsaw Central School of Music; from the spring of 1825 he lived in Vienna where in 1826 he became a conductor of the Vienna Opera. It was he who took good care of Chopin after his departure from Poland to Vienna, and who persuaded him to give a public concert there.

1.2. PHILOLOGISTS, HISTORIANS, AND THEORETICIANS OF LITERATURE AND ART

The second group which formed an important point of reference for Chopin's creative attitude were the representatives of arts and humanities in Warsaw: Aigner, Linde, Bentkowski, Brodziński and Tatarkiewicz.

1.2.1. CHRYSZTYAN PIOTR AIGNER

In the years 1817–1825 Aigner (1756–1841) was a professor of architecture at the University of Warsaw. In these years he designed the construction and reconstruction of a number of palaces and churches, giving Warsaw that classicist appearance which left a permanent impression in Chopin's mind.

Chopin also had at least indirect contact with Aigner's aesthetic beliefs explained, *inter alia*, in *Rozprawa o guście* [*Thesis on Taste*] (1812). In the thesis Aigner wrote that a true artist (a “workmaster”) only creates when he joins three elements: taste, common sense, and genius. Chopin exemplified the merger of the three factors making an “excellent workmaster”: he combined unusually refined taste with reason, and with extraordinary talents.

1.2.2. SAMUEL BOGUMIŁ LINDE

A true friend of the Chopin family was Linde (1771–1847), an eminent philologist and lexicographer of German origin, although born in Toruń, one of the historical Polish cities.

Both Linde and his second wife, Luiza (née Nussbaum) were very fond of Frederick. His father speaks of their favor in a letter to his son of January 9, 1836:

Mrs. Linde always speaks of you in superlatives — she is your great friend.

As Eugeniusz Skrodzki (nickname: Wielisław) mentioned in the second half of the nineteenth century, Linde spoke Polish with a strong Kashubian accent characteristic of Polonized Germans, and devoiced all the consonants, which — as might be expected — became the subject of Frederick's jokes (Skrodzki 1962, p. 321).

Linde's influence may have been huge in the development of Chopin's tremendous sense of language. In many places, the language of Chopin's letters is «opaque» in meaning, they contain numerous semantic digressions and wonderful neologisms — for example, “sniffalitis”, created to mean a «nose for business» (see a letter to Julian Fontana of October 1, 1839) or “platerizing” for behavior akin to that of Count Władysław Plater (see a letter to Grzymała of December 30/31, 1846); verbal jokes are also very frequent.

1.2.3. FELIKS BENTKOWSKI

Among the university lectures Chopin attended while studying at the Central School of Music there certainly were the Bentkowski's (1781–1852) lectures on world history. Bentkowski was a historian and bibliographer, a member of Freemasonry, as well as a close friend of the Chopin family from the time he worked in the Warsaw Lyceum (1803–1817), and later Izabela Chopin's neighbor.

He was first and foremost a literary historian and the author of the pioneering two-volume work titled *Historia literatury polskiej* [*A History of Polish Literature*] (1814), but at the University of Warsaw he was a professor of universal

history (1817–1832), and later a director of The Main Archives of the Kingdom of Poland (1837–1852).

His position in the Polish academic world was strong: he was a member of the Society of Friends of Learning who became the first *honoris causa* doctor of the Jagiellonian University; and he felt strongly about his country: he co-designed The Monument of Lublin Union in Lublin (1826).

1.2.4. KAZIMIERZ BRODZIŃSKI

Whereas Chopin's music mentor was Elsner, his greatest master of aesthetics was, in all probability, Brodziński (1791–1835), a poet and theoretician of poetry in one person, who simultaneously enjoyed high respect of his colleagues and great admiration of his students, and the Chopin family's neighbor at the time they lived in the Kazimierzowski Palace.

The influence was twofold: first, through university lectures on the history of literature, attended by Chopin; second, through Brodziński's aesthetic works, especially the thesis *O klasycyzmie i romantyzmie tudzież o duchu poezji polskiej* [*About Classicism and Romanticism, and the Spirit of Polish Poetry*] (1818). In this work Brodziński distinguished between two kinds of romanticism: French ("full of life", "emotional", "spring-like", "religious", and "idyllic") and German ("full of memories", "pensive", "autumnal", "philosophical", and "elegiac"). It seems quite possible that Brodziński's persuasive language played a role in convincing Chopin of the superiority of the «French» variety of romanticism over the «German» one, especially in the light of the following remarks made in the thesis (Brodziński 1964, Vol. I, pp. 29–30):

Music, which — to an equal degree with poetry — strives for the infinite as much as poetry striving to infinity and gives rise to vague images [...] must have an important impact on romanticism. [...] The emotional language of music also contains mysteries of human feelings, it arouses rapture and awakens yearning, like the sight of nature. [...] At

the beginning music stirred to joy and dance; the music of present time elevates our souls to a feeling of pleasurable sadness.

It is worth noting that Brodziński had a solid philosophical education which he gained at the Jagiellonian University, listening to Feliks Jaroński's lectures. Jaroński taught Brodziński to view metaphysics as an introduction to science, useful for a logical analysis of scientific concepts. Consequently, Chopin remained unenthusiastic about philosophy conceived of as mystical speculation, and had a special dislike toward Andrzej Towiański's historiosophical fantasies and Norwid's etymological divagations.

Brodziński's works were also a source of important life instructions. In Brodziński's essay *O wdzięku naturalności* [*On the Charm of Naturalness*] (1819) Chopin could read (1964, Vol. I, pp. 267, 269):

We adore beauty; wit astounds and entertains us; fertility of imagination ignites and moves us, but we only love naturalness. Beauty fades away, vividness of imagination fades, the sense of wit becomes dull, but naturalness is always one and the same. [...] We usually only like those who we can see in their true form. An impenetrable man rarely has friends; everyone is apprehensive toward him.

Throughout his adult life, openness and secretiveness continued to fight for supremacy in Chopin's attitude toward other people.

In all probability, Brodziński's influence was also responsible for the formation of Chopin's political stance. In any case, there is a striking and hardly accidental similarity between the attitudes the two men had toward the November Uprising. They were both opposed to the very idea of it, but, once began, they both wholeheartedly supported the insurrection: Brodziński in the country and Chopin abroad.

Brodziński was also among the people who aroused Chopin's interest in folklore.

After Chopin had left Poland, Brodziński published “Wyjątek z pisma pt. *Piękność i wzniosłość*” [“Excerpt from *Beauty and the Sublime*”] (1834), in which he wrote (1964, Vol. I, pp. 275–276):

Genius shows us in his magic mirror not only the beauty of his inner world, and human nature exalted, as it were, within it, but also the full scope of its dark side, made more vivid with the colors of hell: this shows the mind fight between immortality and destruction, desire and will, strength and weakness of man. [...] The sublime makes us pensive, we wonder at beauty. [...] The sublime is a complex feeling. It is a combination of a kind of sadness with joy, of conceding both our nothingness and our greatness.

Today, the words sound to us like a characteristic of Chopin...

1.2.5. JÓZEF JAKUB TATARKIEWICZ

The list of important people in Chopin's Warsaw environment would not be complete without Tatarkiewicz (1798–1854), a sculptor and theoretician of art, a good friend of Chopin's family, and the future author of a bust of Frederick (1850).

Chopin could not have read Tatarkiewicz's thesis *O rzeźbie* (*On Sculpture*) as it remained in manuscript during both men's lives, and was only published in the twentieth century; but he must have heard people discuss the author's concepts on the principles of the composition of a work of art, and of the social functions to be fulfilled by it. Tatarkiewicz expressed his notions as follows (Tatarkiewicz (ed.) 1970, pp. 450–451, 454–455):

The very first principle of a composition is a clear and precise arrangement of things. The arrangement should be such that it does not obstruct the artist's idea when the work of art is first observed; moreover, each part of the work of art be rendered with expressiveness that arouses the senses of the recipient and moves his sense of aesthetics with full force. Thus, simplicity is the first characteristic of a good composition. [...]

Fine arts, apart from appealing to the senses [...] and giving pleasure, should be useful to society — their main goal is to devote their efforts to virtue and truth, the two human goods. [...] The image of perfection offered by fine arts make ourselves better — through their good taste, selection, and order, fine arts encourage us to improve our moral being.

It is certain that Chopin deliberately strove for transparency of structure of his compositions. However, he did not intend that their formal excellence should inspire the audience with a yearning or motivation for moral perfection; in short, he did not bother to invest his pieces with the «educational» function in the sense Tatarkiewicz assigned to works of art.

1.3. BIOLOGISTS, ECONOMISTS, PHYSICIANS

Chopin liked to poke fun at the “nature explorers” of his time. In a letter of September 27, 1828, to his family, he reported on the Berlin Congress of Naturalists:

The gentlemen, especially zoologists, were mainly engaged in an investigation of the structure of meat, sauces, broth, and the like.

But there were several people also in this group who had an influence on Chopin and his social circle. They most important of them were Jarocki, Skarbek, and Dworzaczek.

1.3.1. FELIKS PAWEŁ JAROCKI

In the years 1819–1831 Jarocki (1790–1865) was a professor of zoology at the University of Warsaw. He was also a poet whose *Pisma rozmaite wierszem i prozą* [*Collected Works in Verse and Prose*] were published posthumously in 1830.

1.3.2. FRYDERYK SKARBEEK

Skarbek was a professor of political economy at the University of Warsaw in the years 1818–1831 and a member of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning.

Very likely, he exerted the greatest influence on Chopin's political orientation. In his thesis titled *O polityce* [*On Politics*] (1820) he wrote (Tatarkiewicz (ed.) 1970, pp. 352, 355):

PRIVATE INTEREST is the spring of the activity of every man; GOOD OF THE NATION is the target for the good wishes and plans of all citizens: the first one is the FORCE acting inside the country, the second one is the FORCE acting outside, in the entire human society. [...]

The main [...] principle of nations seeking political improvement is as follows: public opinion should not be teased or attacked in a violent manner, rather, it should be led slowly and gradually to become a stable guarantee of prosperity and liberties of the nation.

1.3.3. FERDYNAND DWORZACZEK

Doctor Dworzaczek (1804–1976) was a close friend of the Chopin family, an opponent of theoretical speculation within the field of medicine, and the teacher of a number eminent physicians, including Tytus Chałubiński.

1.4. PHILOSOPHERS

To reconstruct Chopin's worldview it is necessary to examine the philosophical thoughts of some of his peers.

It seems that Chopin knew the philosophy of his time, both Polish and foreign, far better than some historians, including Władysław Tatarkiewicz, believe. Chopin knew many philosophers in person and was also acquainted with their ideas. Mikołaj proudly spoke of Frederick in a letter of April 26, 1834, to him:

You have received a thorough education and [...] have not only been reading music scores.

Therefore, contrary to Tatarkiewicz's convictions (1963, pp. 735, 737), between the developments of contemporary philosophy and the workings of Chopin's mind there were

not parallelisms and synchronisms but also clear, though obviously unidirectional inspirations.

Three Polish philosophers was setting the tone for the intellectual life of Warsaw at the time: Szaniawski, Zubelewicz and Lach-Szyrma.

1.4.1. JÓZEF KALASANTY SZANIAWSKI

The oldest of them was Szaniawski (1764–1843). In politics he went all the way from the left wing of the participants of the Kościuszko Uprising to the right wing of the opponents of the November Uprising (just before it started he went to Vienna and returned to Poland only after the fall of the resurrection).

Despite this evolution, one constant thread is manifested in his thought and actions: the emphasis on the need to serve Polish culture and civilization in any accessible, acceptable and effective manner. Should a course of action fail to fulfill his criteria of acceptability, he did not hesitate to retreat from current politics (as in 1839, when he tendered his resignation as a member of the Council of State). Such conduct was consistent with his subjectivist epistemological *credo* recapitulated in his thesis *Co to jest filozofia?* [*What is Philosophy?*] published in 1802 (Tatarkiewicz (ed.) 1970, p. 62):

The most important criterion of existence and truth can only be found in ourselves.

Szaniawski expounded his views on society in the work *O naturze i przeznaczeniu urzędowań* [*On the Nature and Purpose of Offices in Society*] (1808) in which he presented the “most general social principles”. First, individuals should be supported within the boundaries of a society, and their development facilitated. Second, individual rights should not conflict with the good of society. Third, every nation represents the land of its origin. Fourth, every nation has its own specific attributes. On these principles Szaniawski

based the following practical directive (Walicki & Sikora & Garewicz (ed.) 1977, p. 261):

WE NEED TO DEVELOP MORE PRECISELY AND BRAVELY THE DISTINCTIVE MARKS OF OUR NATION, FREEING THEM FROM THE DESTRUCTIVE RUST WHICH HAS COVERED THEM DUE TO TWO CENTURIES OF FOREIGN INFLUENCE [...] [–] this is a great aim whose realization we have the pleasure and honor to participate in.

That was the characteristic feature of Szaniawski's thought: the belief that care about Polish tradition not only does not conflict with European (as we would call them today) interests, but is their essential component. Chopin's statements and actions on many occasions echoed the philosophical beliefs and principles we have summarized above.

1.4.2. ADAM IGNACY ZUBELEWICZ

Chopin could have come in contact with the ethical ideas dominant in Warsaw in the twenties of the nineteenth century through Zubelewicz (1784–1831), a professor at the University of Warsaw in the years 1818–1829. We learn about Zubelewicz's ideas from the university lecture *O zasługach Platona w filozofii* [*On Plato's Merits for Philosophy*], given to the public and brought out in print in 1821.

Like Plato, Zubelewicz considered ethics to be the core of philosophy (1821, p. 59):

Plato saw all parts of philosophy as closely [...] connected. He extended the effect of dialectics [*scil.* logic] to the whole of philosophy, as Plato maintained that philosophy can only achieve scientific nature through logic, which provides methods for philosophical speculation. Theology [*scil.* metaphysics] he considered to be the highest of theoretical skills. He viewed ethics as the highest of practical skills because he thought of philosophy as cognition inseparable from moral action, the ultimate goal of man. Plato's understanding of philosophy differs from that of today's philosophers in wording only, not in substance.

The basis of Plato's ethics was anthropological optimism — the belief that man is inherently good and will act virtuously if only he fully realizes his nature. Plato identified individual ethical excellence with inner harmony. More than that, he considered harmony to be the essence of ethical excellence. In his reports, Zubelewicz expressed his approbation for Plato's views on this matter.

These beliefs must have been very common in Warsaw at the time, as they are also expressed — after their own fashion — by the aforementioned artists–aestheticians: Aigner and Tatarkiewicz.

Interestingly, Zubelewicz shared Szaniawski's subjectivity — at least, as regards evaluation of the worth of man. The quoted thesis contains passages on the topic (Zubelewicz 1821, p. 51):

The greatness of man is only relative; first one would have to define the scale according to which it could be estimated.

It is also worth noting that one of Chopin's motives for traveling abroad was finding a “scale” which could serve as a point of reference for his talent. In the end, the «evaluation» turned out to be positive for the composer.

1.4.3. KRYSZTOF LACH-SZYRMA

Warsaw's most prominent philosopher of that time was certainly Zubelewicz's student Lach-Szyrma (1790–1866). Chopin probably did not attend his lectures — at least, that is what we learn from Władysław Tatarkiewicz (1963, p. 735) — but he met the philosopher in person and was familiar with the general outline of his thought. It might also be noted that Lach-Szyrma participated in the November Uprising as a commandant of the Academic National Guard.

Chopin may have encountered Lach-Szyrma's views in the form of public statements and printed works, in particular the thesis *O związkach myśli* [*On Connections between*

Thoughts] (1825). His attention could have been drawn in particular to what Lach-Szyrma had to say about the rationally understood «metaphysics» of music.

Lach-Szyrma wrote e.g. about a holism in musical perception, pointing to the fact that a melody composed of a great number of sounds, even if it is performed by an orchestra, is heard as one whole. Similar ideas were developed a hundred years later by the German psychologists from Carl Stumpf's circle in the form of gestalt psychology and phenomenology.

Lach-Szyrma also wrote about the metaphorical nature of musical terminology, noting that recourse to the analogy of metaphor is inevitable when one wants to express musical ideas in words.

One of Lach-Szyrma's sentences became Chopin's life principle (Tatarkiewicz (ed.) 1970, p. 309):

A head that thinks in a proper way will act properly: for no one acts in contradiction to his thoughts, rather, a man acts according to their inspiration.

Also, Chopin must have experienced the painful effects of the rule of memory described by Lach-Szyrma (Tatarkiewicz (ed.) 1970, p. 302):

The vividness and clarity of an object showing itself to one's memory remains in direct proportion to the power and emotion that accompanied his initial perception. Glowing and striking items can be recalled with greater ease than dark and neutral ones. Great joy and great sorrow are remembered throughout life: whereas small joys and small sorrows, as they are born every day, so they are blurred in our memory on everyday basis.

To that we may add a description of the strange way in which Chopin's and Lach-Szyrma's roads crossed in Scotland. Describing in *Pamiętnik mego życia* [*The Diary of My Life*]

(1864/1872) his first visit in Edinburgh in 1824, Lach-Szyrma noted (1864, pp. 8–9):

One memorable meeting for us was a concert with reading, the more memorable as it was organized specially for us. It was arranged by Janiewicz, a Pole who had long been a resident in Edinburgh [...]. Janiewicz played his own compositions, based on Polish national songs, on the violin, and among others he also played Ogiński's great *Polonaise*. [...] A few days later our good compatriot invited us to an evening party during which we were treated to another concert. His daughter, a fluent piano player, played for us and sang Polish and Scottish songs. The time passed pleasantly, as if in one of the hospitable house by the Niemen or Wilia River, because Janiewicz was a Lithuanian by birth, and although he spend all his childhood abroad, he preserved all his national feelings.

It is not inconceivable that during his journey to Scotland a quarter of a century later Chopin may have pictured in his imagination the person of the Warsaw professor of philosophy who, after the defeat of the November Uprising, had settled in Scotland (first in Edinburgh and later in Devenport). Perhaps, he even met him there in his own person.

2. ACTIVISTS AND WRITERS

From among the activists and writers of the older generation who exerted the strongest influence over Chopin, at least Potocki, the Sowińskis, and Hoffmanowa must be mentioned here.

2.1. STANISŁAW KOSTKA POTOCKI

The person of incomparable impact on the Poles' morale in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was Potocki (1755–1821), Grand Master of Polish Freemasonry (whose member he was from at least 1784), and official supervisor of the Warsaw Lyceum (since 1805).

Potocki integrated two apparently contradictory theoretical stances: metaphysical fatalism and anthropological optimism.

In one of the feuilletons published in the years 1816–1817 under the title *Świstek krytyczny* [*A Scrap of Criticism*] Potocki propounded fatalism (1820, p. 3):

The world is a great lottery in which we see only winners and losers. Beauty, intelligence, wit, birth, wealth, power, talents, honors, even health, in a word, everything but virtue, is a lucky prize in a lottery.

On the other hand, in *Mowa miana przy otwarciu Liceum Warszawskiego* [*Speech for the Opening of the Warsaw Lyceum*] (1805) he contended (Potocki 1816, Vol. II, pp. 127–128):

From among the goods a wise government may offer to its citizens, the most important one is proper care for the upbringing of youth, as that is the guarantee of prosperous future of the Country.

In *Podróż do Ciemnogrodu* [*A Journey to Gotham*] (1820) he observes gravely (Potocki 1820, p. 77):

It was not education but the lack of it, coupled with uncurbed passions, that has stained with blood and dishonored European revolutions. We cannot, however, deny that the revolts did overthrow a number of pernicious superstitions even as they have brought on disasters.

2.2. KATARZYNA AND JÓZEF SOWIŃSKIS

The Chopin family maintained cordial contacts with Katarzyna (1776–1860) and Józef (1777–1831) Sowińskis. During his childhood, Frederick frequently met the couple in his family home.

Mrs. Sowińska, a Calvinist of German origin, was a model of charity for the Chopins' children: she was a nurse in the November Uprising, and after that she helped the insurgents'

families persecuted by the tsarist authorities. She was also a paragon of steadfastness: she never ceased in her charitable works, even though she was sentenced to two-year imprisonment (in the years 1835–1837). Chopin dedicated to her his *Variations in E major on a German National Air* (on the Tyrolean Song “Steh' auf, steh' auf, o du, Schweizer Bub”).

Sowiński, who was a hero of the Kościuszko Uprising and the Napoleonic wars (a veteran of the siege of Smoleńsk and the Battle of Borodino), made friends with the Chopins as a commandant of the Application School of Artillery and Engineers in which Mikołaj Chopin was a professor of French. He was killed during the November Uprising as a commandant of fortifications of the Wola district of Warsaw. His death was regretted by Chopin in *Album Stuttgarcki* [*Stuttgart Album*]:

Sowiński, this good fellow, in the hands of those rogues [*scil. Moskals*]!

By “good fellow” (Polish “pocziwiec”) Chopin meant an exceptionally honest and noble man, for such was the opinion Sowiński enjoyed among his friends, including Frederick.

2.3. KLEMENTYNA HOFFMANOWA NÉE TAŃSKA

As we remember, Frederick and his sisters held Hoffmanowa (1798–1845) in especial respect. Hoffmanowa was unreservedly devoted, in word and deed, to charitable works and to the cause of women's empowerment.

It was her footsteps that Chopin followed during his visit to Wieliczka and the Ojców vicinity.

3. PEERS AND FRIENDS

Chopin's character was also built through his contacts with young people from different parts of Poland (as well as Lithuania and Ruthenia) met in his parents' boarding school, and through interactions with the school instructors.

The school enjoyed a very good opinion in Warsaw. Its reputation was maintained with the help of two mutually reinforcing factors: that it employed the best of Warsaw teachers, and that it was popular among the ‘prominent’ families from all over the country. Both qualities provided young Frederick’s with enhanced opportunities for contact with peers and their excellent tutors.

Chopin was a graduate of two Warsaw schools: the Warsaw Lyceum (where he began his education in 1823, from the fourth grade, and which he graduated from in 1826), and the Central School of Music at the University of Warsaw (from which he graduated in 1829).

While at the Warsaw Lyceum, as confirmed by Liszt (1852/1960, p. 130; Liszt consulted this with Ludwika Chopin), Chopin was friends with, among others, Borys, Kallikst, and Włodzimierz Czetwertyński, and became a favorite of their mother, Princess Idalia Ludwikowa Czetwertyńska; it was through the Princess’s patronage that Frederick began to frequent the salons of Grand Duke Constantine and his wife, Joanna Grudzińska.

Chopin’s colleague at the Central School of Music who achieved the greatest prominence in later years was Ignacy Feliks Dobrzyński (1807–1867).

At the same time Chopin maintained close bonds with his peers from the Warsaw literary circles: Stefan Witwicki (1801–1847), Seweryn Goszczyński (1801–1876), Bohdan Zaleski (1802–1886), Maurycy Mochnacki (1803–1885), Antoni Edward Odyńiec (1804–1885), Konstanty Gaszyński (1809–1866), and Dominik Magnuszewski (1810–1845). One of the things they had in common was the «sweet dream» of public appreciation, accompanied by bitter awareness the transience of fame.

The group included both the followers (Goszczyński) and determined opponents (Witwicki and Zaleski) of the armed struggle for the restitution of the Commonwealth. Significantly, once the uprising broke out, they participated

in it almost without exception (apart from Witwicki, who had very poor health, and Odyńiec, who had emigrated before the outbreak of the uprising); Mochnacki was among the leaders and chroniclers of the uprising. After the defeat of the uprising almost all of them (with the exception of Odyńiec and Magnuszewski) emigrated to France and (all except Goszczyński) stayed there, like Chopin, for the rest of their lives.

They were mainly poets (Goszczyński and Zaleski belonged to the so called Ukrainian school in Polish poetry, referring to the culture — including folklore — of the south-eastern districts of the State). Mochnacki, as a pianist and publicist, was an exception. Also Witwicki and Gaszyński dabbled in journalism; Odyńiec and Magnuszewski were also playwrights.

Special ties bound Chopin with Witwicki (most of Chopin’s songs were composed to his poems), Zaleski (Chopin’s pupil, Zofia Rosengardtówna became his wife) and Magnuszewski (they were friends since the times of learning at the Warsaw Lyceum).

It can be presumed that Mochnacki might have had some impact on the aesthetic views of Chopin. In his reviews he criticized the ideology behind his music and virtuosic showiness, praising, however, the melodiousness, lyricism and artistic «sincerity». Also Mochnacki’s and Chopin’s views on the semantic features of music appear to converge. In “Artykuł, do którego był powodem *Zamek Kaniowski Goszczyńskiego*” [“The Article to Which the Reason Was *Kaniowski Castle* by Goszczyński”] (1829) Mochnacki wrote (Mochnacki 1987, p. 199):

Musician [...] reveals hidden, secret thoughts [...] with the systematic arrangement of sounds.

Note that Mochnacki had a special vision of the scientific art criticism. He wrote in a polemic with Brodziński in the

text “O krytyce i sielstwie” [“On the Criticism and Idyllness”] (1830) (Mochnecki 1987, p. 265):

The main and most important task of good criticism is: to inquire, to explain the system of concepts and ideas, whether of the past or the contemporary civilization. [...] The critic provides historiography with its materials. He collects, dissects, organizes, illuminates history. He says: “what was”, truly allows to see: “what is”. But he never commands nor rules. He does not say: “this is how things should transpire”.

The fact that Mochnecki saw in young Chopin much of that for which we value him today is evidenced by his review from *Kurier Polski* [*The Polish Courier*] published on March 20, 1830:

It is difficult to say what prevails in him, talent of composition or masterful execution. Aside originality — the beautiful singing, great and bold passages in harmony with the character of the instrument, adorned in vivid color of feeling and fire, and finally — all these relevant pieces combined in one — all these are the main features of his compositions. [...] The earth, which gave him life with its singing, influenced his musical disposition, sometimes manifesting itself in Chopin’s works: many sounds of his tones seem to be like a reflection of our happy native harmony. An easy mazurka willingly changes and modulates under his hand, retaining proper integrity and accent. To combine the sophisticated performance and brilliant compositions with the beautiful simplicity of a family tune, as it was mastered by Chopin, one must have the right feeling, must know the echoes of our fields and forests, to hear the song of Polish peasant.

CHAPTER III. HOMELAND

1. COUNTRY

1.1. MAZOVIA

Country of Chopin's childhood — and more precisely childhood and adolescence — was of course Poland.

Chopin's Poland is outlined by six places: where he was born, where he lived, where he used to spend the summer, where he made sightseeing trips, where he was being treated and where he played at the invitation; the last three of these places partially overlap.

The place of birth — Żelazowa Wola — has already been mentioned. This is — the core of Mazovia.

The place of baptism is closely linked to the place of birth — sometimes it is the same as the previous one. In Chopin's case it was Brochów — precious to him also because here his parents and sister Ludwika were married.

We have also already mentioned Warsaw — the place where he lived with his parents continuously until he moved abroad. This is also the core of Mazovia.

Chopin's summer dwellings were friendly manors. It must also be stated clearly that he was a typical townsman. Manors were for him just a holiday retreat, a place of romantic sighs and ethnographic observation — but the village as such he did not like, neither Polish nor French. He wrote about this openly in a letter of August 18–20, 1845, to his family:

I am not suited to the village, yet I do use the fresh air.

In the native Mazovia — more specifically in the Płock Mazovia — Chopin's summer dwellings were Kowalewo near Drobin (estate of Count Ksawery Zboiński) and Sanniki near Gąbin (estate of Aleksander Paweł Pruszek). In Kowalewo Chopin was in 1827, in Sanniki — in 1828. In 1827 Chopin also visited Płock.

1.2. THE LAND OF DOBRZYŃ

Usually Chopin spent his summer in the Land of Dobrzyń — a part of Mazovia, which includes roughly the territory between the rivers Vistula, Skrwa and Drwęca. The estates, which he used to visit, were in the vicinity of three historical centers of the Land of Dobrzyń.

The first center is Lipno (in the south), near which there is Kikół — Count Karol Zboiński's estate, in whose palace Chopin gave concerts in 1827, and a village of Obrowo, where in 1825 he used to play with the country musicians during dances.

The second center is Rypin (in the northeast). Near Rypin were located Ugoszcz (Antoni Borzewski's estate) and Gulbiny (Alojzy Piwnicki's estate) which Chopin visited during his stay in Szafarnia in 1824 and 1825.

The third center is Dobrzyń–Golub, in which area were: Szafarnia, estate of Juliusz Dziewanowski, Chopin's friend Dominic's father; Sokołowo and Białkowo, estate of Antoni Wybraniecki, Chopin's friend Jan Białobłocki's stepfather; and finally Dulsk, the estate of parents of another Chopin's friend — Józef Wysocki — whom Frederick used to visit during his stays in Szafarnia and Sokołowo in 1824 and 1825.

The most important, for Chopin — and for explorers of his work — was his stay at Szafarnia, which he related in detail to his parents in a humorous handwritten magazine *Kurier Szafarski* [*The Szafarnia Courier*].

Here is a characteristic «musical» fragment from this magazine from August 31, 1824:

On the 29th day of the current month and year his lordship Pichon [*scil.* Chopin] passing through Nieszawa heard Catalani sitting on the fence, who was singing something loudly. He became much engrossed, and although he had heard the aria and the voice, still dissatisfied with this, sought to hear the words. He twice passed the fence, but in vain, for he understood nothing, until finally, out of curiosity, he took out three pennies, and promised them to the singer, as long as she repeated the song. For a long time, she squirmed, grimaced and made excuses, but encouraged by the three pennies, she made up her mind and began to sing a mazurka from which the editor [*scil.* Chopin], with the permission of sovereignty and censorship [*scil.* Ludwika Dziewanowska, Szafarnia's owners' oldest daughter], quotes only one verse as an example:

See there, beyond the mountains, the mountains as a wolf is dancing,
And yet he has no wife, for he is in such grief [*scil.* fatigue] (bis).

How carefree and joyful is the picturesque description of Lord "Pichon"!

1.3. THE LAND OF CHEŁMNO AND POMERANIA

To the west of the Land of Dobrzyń — between Vistula, Osa and Drwęca — the Land of Chełmno stretches, originally, like the Land of Dobrzyń, part of Mazovia, then a component of Teutonic Country, ultimately incorporated with it to the Commonwealth as a part of Polish Royal Prussia. In times of Chopin the Land of Chełmno was outside the Kingdom of Poland — within the German Kingdom of Prussia.

Here is Turzno (Augustyn Działowski's estate), where Chopin stayed a few times — in 1825 and later.

Here is Toruń too, which Chopin had visited in 1825 — taking notice in his correspondence of the distinctive buildings: The Leaning Tower ("The Slanting Tower" — as Chopin himself called it), City Hall and the house of Kopernik.

Other historic districts of Poland — are essentially places of Chopin's tourism, treatments or concerts.

As a tourist Chopin visited (in 1827) Pomerania — at that time located in the borders of the Kingdom of Prussia — and its pearl: Gdańsk.

On the occasion of a trip to Gdańsk he stayed in Kozłów near Świecie, in Ksawery Zboiński's estate, and in Waplewo near Sztum, Antoni Sierakowski's estate.

1.4. LITTLE POLAND AND GREAT POLAND

Also as a tourist in 1829 Chopin found himself in Little Poland. For several days he was sightseeing the former Polish capital Cracow — which in times of Chopin had a status of a Free City (as so called Republic of Cracow) — with *Collegium Maius* in the vanguard.

He also went to the nearby Wieliczka as well as to Ojców and Pieskowa Skała.

While in 1830 he was in Poturzyn near Hrubieszów at his friend's — Tytus Woyciechowski's parents' estate.

Of all the places of Great Poland, visited by Chopin, the most important was Antonin near Ostrzeszów, belonging to Prince Antoni Radziwiłł, by whom Chopin was invited in 1829.

He also visited Strzyżewo near Ostrów Wielkopolski, where his godmother, Anna Wiesiołowska lived.

In the capital of Great Poland — Poznań — he stopped briefly in 1828, giving among others concerts at Archbishop Teofil Wolicki's.

Equally briefly — in 1829 — he was in Żychlin near Konin, at the wedding of his friend from Warsaw, Melania Bronikowska, and — passing — several times in Kalisz, including in 1830, on his way to Vienna.

1.5. SILESIA

For health reasons, Chopin spent some time in 1826 in Duszniki-Zdrój in Silesia, where he also gave a charity concert. Silesia was once a part of the territory called "*Regnum Poloniae*", but from the late Middle Ages, its political ties with Poland started to loosen.

Silesia was not a district of the Commonwealth of Poland before the partitions — incorporated in the second half of the fourteenth century to the Bohemia; in the early sixteenth

century, together with the Bohemia to Austria; in the middle of the eighteenth century it was conquered by the German Kingdom of Prussia; it has retained its affiliation with Germany until the end of the Second World War.

Apart from Duszniki — after 1825 Chopin was three times in the capital of Silesia — Wrocław. He gave two concerts there as well.

2. HERITAGE

Not only his CONTEMPORARY Warsaw cultural environment influenced Chopin, but also some coryphaei of Polish musical, literary and philosophical TRADITION — including those active outside of Warsaw.

2.1. MUSICAL TRADITION

2.1.1. ANTONI RADZIWIŁŁ

Much points to the fact that Mikołaj Chopin actively sought Prince Radziwiłł (1775–1833), cellist and composer, to take care of his son (Iwaszkiewicz 1955, p. 71). There are reasons to believe that such endeavors have been crowned with success — and Prince Radziwiłł was a discrete (via Antoni Koźuchowski) patron of Frederick until his own death (Liszt 1852/1960, pp. 124–125).

During a visit in Radziwiłł's home in Antonin, Chopin had the opportunity to hear the Prince's works — including music for *Faust*, which made a strong impression on him. Chopin in return wrote two pieces for Radziwiłł: *Trio in G minor*, Op. 8, and *Polonaise in C major*, Op. 3. In gratitude for his work, which was dedicated to him, the Prince wrote in a letter of November 4, 1829, to Chopin:

My dear Chopin! I accept with great gratitude the dedication of the *Trio* of your composition, that you were kind enough to dedicate to me. Please, if you will, try to even speed up the printing, so that I may have the pleasure of playing it with you during your stay in Poznań on your journey

to Berlin. Please accept, Sir, the re-assurance of my genuine interest, which your talent aroused in me, as well as of my high respect for you.

2.1.2. MARIA SZYMANOWSKA

There is no doubt that Chopin followed closely Szymanowska's (1789–1831) artistic activity — both in piano and composition.

Therefore it is worth noting two facts concerning her. First — she remained in close contact with (and perhaps she was also a student of) Franciszek Lessel (about 1780–1838), who was one of the best students of Haydn. Secondly — her works almost exclusively include those forms which were later practiced by Chopin: preludes, nocturnes, polonaises, waltzes, mazurkas, fantasies, variations and songs; she also wrote *Serenade* for cello and piano — dedicated to... Prince Radziwiłł.

2.2. LITERARY TRADITION

In times of Chopin the closest and most powerful trend of the Polish literary tradition was sentimentalism — in the persons of Adam Naruszewicz, Karpiński and Antoni Młczyński. Amongst the enthusiasts of sentimental poetry was Linde (apparently he had the habit of reciting from memory Naruszewicz and Karpiński's poems to the students of the Warsaw Lyceum), which must have left a lasting mark on the literary tastes of his pupil.

2.2.1. ADAM NARUSZEWICZ

In Warsaw, in 1805, thanks to the efforts of Tadeusz Mostowski, Naruszewicz's (1733–1796) *Wiersze różne* [*Miscellaneous Poems*] were published. Linde probably had them, so did Mikołaj Chopin — and his son, Frederick, must have had to look through the two volumes of this wonderful series of *Wybór pisarzy polskich* [*The Selection of Polish Writers*]. And if so, he remembered for a lifetime the verses of Naruszewicz's idylls and stories.

Chopin will be hearing the echoes of his idylls and stories throughout his later life.

2.2.2. FRANCISZEK KARPIŃSKI

To deal directly with Karpiński's (1741–1825) poetry Chopin owes the richness of his vocabulary relating to emotions — especially «sentimental»: longing, regret and sorrow. Karpiński's poetry certainly reinforced in Chopin his feeling of love for his homeland. And certainly he sang with his family — as it is sung in Poland until this day — the beautiful «mazurka» carol to Karpiński's words: “Bóg się rodzi...” [“God is born...”].

2.2.3. ANTONI MALCZEWSKI

We are allowed to presume, that Chopin had in his hand a copy of *Maria* [*Mary*] by Malczewski (1793–1826), published in 1825, a piece which is a kind of poetic analysis of the phenomenon of longing and sadness.

2.3. PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION

The University of Warsaw of the first half of the nineteenth century was in the predominant trend of antispeculative philosophy, appealing to the principles of common sense. This trend was represented, among others by Zubelewicz and Lach-Szyrma; outside Warsaw the most important representatives of this trend were Anioł Dowgird (1776–1835) and Michał Wiszniewski (1794–1865). The first one was a philosopher active in Vilna (where he was Adam Mickiewicz's teacher of logic), but was also well known in Warsaw (as a member–correspondent of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning). The second one was a professor at the Jagiellonian University, who practiced, apart from philosophy — and especially methodology — psychology and the history of literature.

2.3.1. FELIKS JAROŃSKI

Particularly noteworthy is, apart from already mentioned ones, a philosopher from Cracow — Jaroński (1777–1827)

— who has already been mentioned in connection with Brodziński, a student of his lectures at the Jagiellonian University — author of an important programming text titled *Jakiej filozofii Polacy potrzebują* [*What Kind of Philosophy do the Poles Need*] (1810). It contained three methodological postulates, peculiar to the philosophy of common sense.

The first postulate recommended to treat philosophy as the logical basis of all knowledge (Tatarkiewicz (ed.) 1970, p. 13):

Philosophy [is] the general ability or introduction to all branches of skills.

The second was a call for minimalism and practicism (Tatarkiewicz (ed.) 1970, pp. 15–16):

Where [...] there are final limits [...] of reason? Here they are: (1) Let a man want to know just what his own mind can overwhelm. (2) Let a man to apply what he knows to greater self improvement, or to do himself morally better and happier. [...] What am I? What do I know? What should I expect? What should I do? These are the questions that philosophy should answer everyone for.

According to the third postulate, the special interest of philosophers should be language (Tatarkiewicz (ed.) 1970, p. 37):

[Because] the most common source of error are the disadvantages of language and using words that do not have fixed meaning.

Through Brodziński these ideas have found their way to his listeners in Warsaw — including Chopin, who used these principles as a measure of the value of philosophical views, with which he met after leaving the Poland.

2.3.2. JÓZEF BYCHOWIEC

Among other reasons it is noteworthy that philosopher Bychowiec (1778–1845) from Vilna, who studied for some

time in Królewiec (where he met personally with Immanuel Kant) — Joachim Murat's adjutant later. In *Słówko o filozofii* [*A Short Word about Philosophy*] (1816), known in intellectual circles, which formed the personality of Chopin, he spoke in a manner characteristic for the need of lifelong artistic taste (Tatarkiewicz (ed.) 1970, p. 142):

A man does not stop attaining the knowledge after he knows how to perform his duties; it is not enough for him to meet the essential needs: he wants to have the nature of his existence, if possible, more pleasurable. He admires his beauty and noble pathos (*le beau et le sublime*), so he looks for regulations to improve its taste.

2.3.3. BRONISŁAW FERDYNAND TRENTOWSKI

Almost a peer of Chopin was Trentowski (1808–1869), who was listening — like him — Brodziński's and Lach-Szyrma's lectures at the University of Warsaw. Although ultimately he devoted himself to creating romantic «national» philosophical fantasies, he refers very critical — like Chopin — to the doctrine of Towiański (1799–1878), which derailed many minds, especially in the Polish emigration in Paris. He wrote in the published in 1845 “Rzecz dotycząca się towiańszczyzny” [“Paper on the Towiańskism”] (Walicki & Garewicz & Sikora (ed.) 1977, p. 280):

Everyone with common sense and trim mind SEES IN IT [in the science of prophets] — BY HIMSELF — despite the disposition of his countrymen to beautiful and poetic knowing and to supernatural, in spite of all pretenses of celebrated scholarship, skill and genius, despite so many real and venerable truths — the dark side of human life significantly lightening for us a HIGH LEVEL OF THE MOST OBVIOUS INSANITY.

Almost the same words Chopin spoke about messianism in general and about towiańskism in particular — and lack of personal contacts within the Paris period with Józef Hoene-Wroński (1776–1853) and Towiański (Tatarkiewicz

1963, p. 736) looked like ostentation, though about one of the followers of towiańskism, Izydor Sobański, he spoke with a high praise in a letter to Fontana of September 11, 1841:

I am not afraid for Mick[iewicz] and Sob[ański]; they are stout heads and can survive few more emigrations, [and] not to lose reason or energy.

3. ABROAD

Chopin in Paris very quickly found himself in the center of artistic and intellectual capital of France; some explain it, inter alia, with Chopin's alleged membership in masonic organizations (see, for example Iwaszkiewicz 1955, p. 143). Very fast — in 1833 — he became an official member of the Polish Literary Society.

After leaving Poland, Chopin, however, lost contact with the academic philosophers: there is, in particular, no traces of contact with leading French philosopher of those times, a professor at the Sorbonne — a historiosophic philosopher Victor Cousin (1792–1867). In Chopin's circle there were two philosophizing politicians, two philosophizing essayists — and two philosophizing poets; the first four were foreigners — two other immigrants from Poland.

Two philosophers–politicians were: Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) and Louis de Bonald (1754–184). A much more important for Chopin's world view and creative attitude had the remaining four.

3.1. PHILOSOPHIZING ESSAYISTS

3.1.1. HUGUES FÉLICITÉ ROBERT DE LAMENNAIS

With Lamennais (1782–1854) Chopin acquainted thanks to Mrs. Sand, who was a great admirer of his socialist–Christian political program. Mrs. Sand wrote of him in *Histoire de ma vie* (Sand 1855, Vol. XII, pp. 134–144):

[Life of Lamennais was] the progress of intelligence born of the bonds of old beliefs and sentenced by Providence for loosening and breaking them among a thousand afflictions, under the influence of logic more powerful than doctrine — the logic of feeling.

Chopin, like all Polish emigrants in France, respected him for his liking for the Polish cause. Lamennais wrote in an essay “Prise de Varsovie” (Lamennais, F. de, *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. II, Bruxelles 1839, Société Belge de Librairie. Hauman et Comp^e, p. 477) published in 1831:

The heroic Polish nation, abandoned by France, rejected by England, was killed in the fighting, which led so gloriously in eight months against the Tartar hordes allied with Prussia. Moscow once again will subdue the nation of the Jagiellon and the Sobieski houses. [...] Thus, a noble nation, our brother in religion and weapons, when you fought for your life, you could only help our wishes, but now, once you fell on the scene, we can offer you only our tears.

Lamennais was also the author of sublime “Hymne à la Pologne”, translated by Niemcewicz. Complementation of the “Hymne” was a beautiful essay “La Pologne” of 1838 (Lamennais 1970, p. 283):

In the side, which lays the sun with the long days, I saw a lot of people scattered in a beautiful and rich land, and wherever I turned my eyes there were gloomy faces, downcast brows, silent mouths and only the eyes — where silent tears slipped off form — and they were still dangerous.

Chopin also shared Lamennais’ position on political hypocrisy, against which in *Paroles d’un croyant* warned so (Lamennais 1834, pp. 68–69):

Do not let deceive you with empty words. People will try to convince you that you are really free, they will write for the word “freedom” on the pieces of paper and bill them at all corners. Freedom is not a poster

that can be read on the street corners. It is a living power, which we feel in ourselves and around us, the genius of home care, the guarantee of social rights and the rights of the foremost law. The oppressor, who hides his name, is the worst of oppressors. He combines a lie against tyranny and injustice of the desecration, because the name of freedom is sacred.

He would probably agree with this fragment of *Esquisse d’une philosophie* (1840–1846) (Lamennais 1840–1848, Vol. III, p. 127):

The beauty [...] is the outer form of Truth.

However, the most important idea for Lamennais — socialist–Christian utopia — for Chopin was equally unacceptable, as any intellectual fancies as a political program.

3.1.2. RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Philosopher, who Chopin knew personally in Paris and met on several occasions (including during his stay in London), was an American Emerson (1803–1882). In a letter of August 18, 1848, Fontana asked a friend:

If you see Emerson, your [*scil.* here: Anglo–American] famous philosopher, remind him of me.

It seems that Emerson’s views coincided with what Chopin liked — including because they corresponded to what was in Warsaw: the distance to the dubious authority and vague speculations, and the belief that in philosophy one can and must rely on common sense.

Emerson was associated with Chopin in many specific ideas.

These included primarily the views on the status of artists and function of art. Here are comments on this topic scattered in various essays of Emerson.

On the status of artist Emerson wrote in “Spiritual Laws” and “Self-Reliance” (1841–1844/1929, s. I, pp. 184, 47, 55 and 53):

Each man has his own vocation. The talent is the call. There is one direction in which all space is open to him. He has faculties silently inviting him thither to endless exertion. [...]

To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men — that is genius. [...]

The great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude. [...]

I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me.

Both Emerson and Chopin, aware that creativity — a field of dreams and imagination — requires extraordinary focus, concentration.

Notes on the functions of art, which Chopin would sign under, included in the essays “History” and “Art” (Emerson 1841–1844/1929, s. I, pp. 22, 340 and 328):

The true poem is the poet’s mind. [...]

The sweetest music is not in the oratorio, but in the human voice when it speaks from its instant life tones of tenderness, truth, or courage. [...]

The artist must employ the symbols in use in his day and nation, to convey his enlarged sense to his fellow-men. Thus the new in art is always formed out of the old.

Chopin and Emerson had a similar belief in the purpose, responsibilities to others and faith.

Emerson wrote on destiny in his essay “History” (Emerson 1841–1844/1929, s. I, p. 22):

In the man, could we lay him open, we should see the reason for the last flourish and tendril of his work; as every spine and tint in the sea-shell preexist in the secreting organs of the fish.

Both occupied similar positions on the two most important relationships: mercy and friendship. Emerson expressed it very eloquently in the essays “Self-Reliance” and “Friendship” (Emerson 1841–1844/1929, s. I, pp. 53 and 206):

Do not tell me [...] of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they MY poor? [...] I grudge [...] [even] the cent, I give to such men as do not belong to me [*scil.* as not being connected with me] and to whom I do not belong. [...]

It [*scil.* friendship] treats its object as a god, that it may deify both.

Like Emerson — Chopin was alien to the «demanding» faith, which is based on prayer imploring. The position of Emerson was similar; in his essay “Self-Reliance” he wrote (Emerson 1841–1844/1929, s. I, pp. 76–77):

Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul. It is the spirit of God pronouncing his works good. But prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and theft. [...]

Another sort of false prayers are our regrets. Discontent is the want of self-reliance: it is infirmity of will. [...] Our sympathy is just as base.

A grief present in Chopin’s life and work — it certainly was not bewailing for sure.

3.2. PHILOSOPHIZING POETS

3.2.1. ADAM MICKIEWICZ

By strange coincidence, a kind of systematic course of the history of philosophy was given to Chopin by a poet — Mickiewicz (1798–1855). In his lectures on Slavic literature in the years 1841–1843, Mickiewicz has an outline of the history of European philosophy, especially philosophy of politics and philosophy of history from Plato — and in Poland from Witelo — to the nineteenth century (with the relevant

mentions of Descartes, Kant, etc.). The lectures contained also references to Emerson, however, far from approval (Mickiewicz, 1841–1843/1858, Vol. VIII, p. 345):

Emerson, American philosopher, in the religious eyes very similar to Leroux [...]. [...] Emerson's man has no ground under his feet, hovers somewhere unknown at what time of day is.

Chopin — who appreciated Mickiewicz very much and admired his work — probably with particular attention listened to what Mickiewicz said in these lectures on patriotism and Polish affairs.

He heard e.g. about the place of patriotism in the world view of the Poles (Mickiewicz 1841–1843/1858, Vol. VI, p. 22), their concept of homeland (1841–1843/1858, Vol. VI, p. 23) and the importance of national institutions (1841–1843/1858, Vol. VIII, p. 348):

In Poles patriotism is the main tenet of the entire spiritual and intellectual education. [...]

Homeland of Poles lives and works wherever their sons hearts faithfully beat. [...]

Like religious rites dispose us to an easier feeling, and taking the truth, like national institutions are nothing but a collection of the data supported to a man so that he could easily replace the feeling into action.

He either heard about that what — according to Mickiewicz — distinguishes the Poles negatively and positively: their innate envy on one hand (1841–1843/1858, Vol. VII, p. 59) — and love of personal freedom on the other hand (1841–1843/1858, Vol. VIII, p. 46):

Here's how [Długosz] outlines the national character of [the Poles], with his excellent knowledge of: "Every nation has its own qualities and defects, which could be called national. Poles are especially prone to envy, derision and kicking around." [...]

Well [...] was there in Poland [...] *veto*? How to reconcile it with the durability of the society? It is known that, according to philosophers, the society is the result of the general consensus of its members, whereby each of them renounces a part of personal rights in favor of a general. [...] According to them [*scil.* Polish ideas] every person who is part of a whole political being, never ceases to use its rights and should always come out of society: personal freedom is raised to the supreme end.

From Mickiewicz Chopin learned that the tradition of proper thinking — we would say today: of analytic philosophy — goes back in Polish philosophy to Renaissance, i.e. the time of Grzegorz of Sanok (c. 1407–1477) (Mickiewicz, 1841–1843/1858, Vol. VII, p. 102) and Jan of Głogów (1445–1507) (Mickiewicz, 1841–1843/1858, Vol. VII, p. 103):

Among the scholars [...] of [Jagiellonian] era we mention here Grzegorz of Sanok [...]. This man was a rare genius; at the time when the scholastic philosophy of reversing all the heads, he penetrated its vanity; dialectics, fencing with syllogisms, all this wisdom arranged only with words, he called openly the "dreaming awake"; [...] advised to draw a real skill in its natural sources; [...] entered [...] on the path of critical analysis. [...]

Pride [...] of the Cracow Academy was [in those days] a famous scholar, Jan of Głogów; [...] according to the custom he dealt more specifically with Aristotelian philosophy; however it seems he was seeking new ways to exit from the arid scholastic intricacies.

On foreign thinkers Mickiewicz looked largely through the prism of their attitude to Poland — hence his very critical remarks on Montesquieu (1689–1755), Voltaire (1694–1778), Gibbon (1737–1794), Saint-Simon (1760–1725) and Fourier (1772–1837) (Mickiewicz, 1841–1843/1860, Vol. II, pp. 288–289, 292–293):

Philosophers, standing [...] [in the era of partitions of Poland] leading the European movement, representatives of materialist philosophy, [...]

violently and maliciously insisted on Poland. The most famous among them Voltaire, falsified history to justify the partition of Poland [...]. Gibbon [...] could be [...] cited as a devotee of Mongol [*scil.* Moskal] system. [...] Montesquieu [...] shows for [...] [Poland] no liking. [...]

[There are] philosophies [holding] the measure between Catholicism and materialism [...]. Let's mention here, for example, Saint-Simonians. Saint Simon's students did not accept the nationality, but their main representatives praise Russia as the representative of power, in the hope that when this force can convert all of its subordinate people would come under the management of Saint-Simonism. Fourierists, who also reject any thought of national and historical, and want to establish a new society, set up the Slavs.

Hence — on the other hand — the conditional expression of appreciation for Maistre (1753–1821) (Mickiewicz, 1841–1843/1858, Vol. VII, p. 314):

Among Catholic philosophers one of the people who thought deeply was Joseph de Maistre; he has seen clearly the injustice suffered by Poland; he calls nations talking on its history a dark ones; however, as a French emigrant, as a legitimist, and that the Russian Empire was based only on legitimism, he had nothing for Poland but irritating complaining. [...] For some universal instinct, by a peculiar train, every philosophical system is being rotated to the North.

In his lectures, Mickiewicz especially devoted much space to the nineteenth-century German philosophy, especially Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (and — not quite correctly — his Polish followers, i.e. Trentowski and August Cieszkowski), and he was highly critical (Mickiewicz, 1841–1843/1858, Vol. VII, pp. 311–312):

The system, which survived the others [...] was put by Hegel. We will consider only a political part, trying to express just the main idea of the author, tangled in the dark and difficult expressions giving a guess. [...] According to Hegel, [...] there is no other God but the human person. [...]

We're not quite turned into the ridiculous things. [...] [However,] the ideas of Hegel it is the most perfect state, under which the Deity might be present, is the kingdom of Prussia.

The metaphysical issues in the narrower sense was not much in the Mickiewicz's lectures. The most important may have been mention of the criterion of certainty (Mickiewicz, 1841–1843/1858, Vol. VIII, p. 340):

What's the criterion of certainty philosophers considered? This is what can give a man a definitive conviction that this or that feeling is adequate, this or that judgement is true? Without this certainty, without this belief there is no action; and we should talk about applying philosophy to life.

Chopin certainly was interested in ideas of Mickiewicz for an aesthetic — particularly his views on music (Mickiewicz, 1841–1843/1858, Vol. VIII, pp. 73, 71–72):

Without the music [...] there is no true lyrical poetry. [...]

What is [...] [because] lyric poetry without a lyre? What are those poets who, like singers, not only compose music for their songs, but they did not quite hear it themselves? Music in the works of lyrical it is not accompaniment, but the main, important part of poetry; it is its soul, life and light. You just prove the validity of national music, singing nation. We see now the reason why, in countries where people no longer sing, poets must stop to create true poetry. What is the national music then? Here people's songs are born in a momentary feelings of people, often very mundane but reliable excited by inspiration, the many scattered tones or themes, and provide a set of national music. Whence comes this musical inspiration? Rightly, these tones separately, coming out suddenly and unexpectedly from his breast inspired, called "motifs". *Motivum* is something that sets in motion, gives the impulse; it is the element of movement. [...] Sometimes, even very educated musicians are very poor in the motives; they look for them at the door of inns or listen to rural violinist. Slavic people have a huge treasure of these motives still unknown and unused by the composers.

3.2.2. CYPRIAN KAMIL NORWID

The second philosophizing poet — with whom Chopin encountered only in the last years of his life — was Norwid (1821–1883).

Norwid expressed his beliefs *implicite* and not very communicative — not surprising, therefore, a provision against Norwid of sober in these matters Chopin, who wrote the Delfina Potocka with his characteristic humor (Chopin 1949, pp. 306–308):

Certainly it was easier for bears of Radziwiłł³ to dance, than me to write me to Norwid. I write alone, as you know, straight up and ask him to teach me what he meant. But it is a natural born philosopher, melting everything in the philosophic sauce for you cannot understand what he is doing or saying. Who can understand it enough to be able to talk with him? This is the third philosopher, who appeared in our time in the Polish nation; I am glad that instead of worrying that my brain is far from understanding the philosophers. [...]

With his philosophy you won't go to the tracks [*scil.* no time to catch it] and perhaps I am too stupid to dig the foundation of his thought.

It didn't bother, however, in making an ultimately strong spiritual ties between the two artists; it also didn't prevent them against appreciating very much each other.

Chopin valued Norwid, because when he “finished digging” — as the result of long discussions with Norwid — “to the foundation of his thought”, there were true romantic elements, but with the character not messianic, but if not intellectual, then at least emotional–aesthetic. And such an intellectual and also emotional and aesthetic relationship to reality, were characteristic both to Norwid and Chopin (Tatarkiewicz 1963, p. 737).

³ Prince K. Radziwiłł (1734–1790), called from his characteristic saying the “Lover Lord”, had a soft spot for these animals: he was using specially trained bears serving in his palace on sumptuous feasts, and as riding guests also over his estate.

Norwid wrote about Chopin's work in 1850, and so after his death, in *Promethidion* (Norwid 1971–1976, Vol. III, pp. 661–662):

Lifting the folk inspiration to the power of permeating, lifting the FOLK to the MANKIND not by external means or formal procedures, but by the internal development of maturity — this is what gives us listening to the music of Frederick as singing on national art. Thoughts that have not yet flew on the horizon, wings rustling away like aeolian harps — and this is a prophet of MUSIC. [...] NATIONAL ARTIST ORGANIZES AN IMAGINATION.

In POLAND from the grave of Frederick Chopin art will develop as a morning glory wreath, through the concept a bit more scrupulous about LIFE FORMS, about a beautiful direction, and about the CONTENT OF LIFE, about the direction of goodness and truth.

Artistry then will transform to the entire national art.

The last sentence Norwid affixed with such a self-commentary (1971–1976, Vol. III, p. 662):

Long, long time I was thinking and looking for, where is the nearest harbor for Polish art, the child of INSPIRATIONS, the mother of WORKS, that moment of RESTING. I have found that a feeling of HARMONY BETWEEN CONTENT AND FORM will beat us the job of art. I have found that art solely focused on the harmony of content and form and on ROMANTICISM (this means CONTENT) leads to a clean first with a bayonet the social FORM, because art is the highest HEROISM!

As you can see — allegations of unnecessary complexity of style, posed by Chopin to Norwid, were the righteous. Couldn't Norwid catch the content of his thought in simpler words: that Chopin's merit is introduction of the elements of of Polish folk music to the culture of the entire world — not by pushing it into the framework of existing structures, but through the development of its original internal form?

PART II

PERSONALITY

1. APPEARANCE

The average height (170 cm) — hence probably Chopin was called familiarly by Mrs. Sand “my little”; slim constitution, slender, brittle (“consumptive”), shoulders slightly raised (“the way the Polish militaries do”, as noted by Georges Mathias; Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 389); the end of his life hunched over, his head forward, his face elongated, oval, pale complexion, clear, his hair was brushed back, curly, lush, bright, a shade golden-brown with reddish highlights; eyebrows and beard also clear, high forehead, cheeks slightly sunken, blue-gray eyes with hazel flecks, a prominent nose, hooked, mouth small, rounded jaw, hands (with the “fourth finger unpracticed”) and small feet. Adding: the sophisticated movements, wise look, sometimes humorous, sometimes soulful and dreamy (“melancholic”), a nice smile, the voice of a liquid, usually mild, quiet, muffled.

On one detail of beauty — prominent nose — Chopin had a complex, as it seems, although he covered it with the jokes. In a letter of August 19, 1824, to Wilhelm Kolberg, he wrote:

Flies often sit on my haughty nose.

Kurier Szafrski of August 27, 1824, reported:

Mr. Pichon [*scil.* Chopin] suffers great distress because of the cousins [*scil.* mosquitoes], which lots are in Szafarnia found. They can bite as

well, however, not in the nose, because then it would be even greater than now.

In a letter of July 8, 1825, to Białobłocki, he wrote:

Examen close, [...] already under my nose (past the Poles said UNDER BELT, as for I do not wear a belt [...]), only a big nose, so now you have a clear reason for which I write that examen are under my nose).

NB. The «nassal» issue tortured him for life. In a letter of August 18, 1848, to Fontana, he wrote:

What I have left is a big nose and fourth finger unpracticed.

Thus, the appearance of Chopin can be reconstructed on the basis of certificates of his writing and painting.

From written certification — the most important are: the French description of a passport from 1837 (Sikorski-Mysłakowski 2000, pp. 37–38), the characteristics given in the *Kurier Warszawski* [*The Warsaw Courier*] No. 288 of October 31, 1849, and much later description of Liszt (1852/1960, p. 102).

As the most “hit” painting certificate thought — during the life of Chopin — the portraits of two medallions: a common with Ferdinand Hiller in 1835, of unknown authorship, and the Chopin himself in 1837, by Jean-François Antoine Bovy — and from lithographs of Polish Bank, compiled by Paweł Bolesław Podczaszyński from drawings taken by Kwiatkowski at the time of Chopin’s death, which reported *Kurier Warszawski* No. 331 of December 15, 1849.

2. HEALTH

Chopin was sickly since childhood.

But it was after his departure from country when his health has deteriorated markedly — so that Hector Berlioz could say not without a reason that Chopin was “entire life

dying” (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 16) — except: he meant the whole life spent outside the homeland. He was often cold — then began to spit blood.

Different doctors put up different diagnosis for the disease, which led to his untimely death: mostly it was tuberculosis and the chronic disease of the larynx. Grzymała wrote that after the autopsy, which was made at the request of the Chopins, “they convinced that he wasn’t ill with what they thought he was”. His nephew, Antoni Jędrzejewicz, argued that Chopin “died in a result of heart aneurysm”.

His attitude to his own illness was strange. We can understand the great role played in the life of Chopin by the battle with the disease, noting, *inter alia*, number of observations of health, enshrined in the preserved correspondence. From early youth he felt on his back «the breath of death». At least since the death of his sister Emilia he had to know that his life may actually be over at any time. He wrote in a letter of December 12–26, 1845, to his family:

Typically, the more healthy you are, the less patience you have in physical suffering. There is no cure in whole world for this — even your mind can do nothing.

About the doctors and their practices he sometimes expressed with reluctance and even undisguised irony. In a letter to Fontana of December 3, 1838, he confided annoyed:

I barely restrained [doctors] from bleeding me, using local drugs or scarifying, and thanks to Providence, my condition is such as in the past it was.

In a letter of June 18, 1849, to Grzymała, he wrote:

I almost don’t go away, but sometimes to the Bois de Boulogne — I’m stronger, because more food eaten and medicines rejected, but

I suffocates and cough, only it is easier to endure for me. I haven’t started to play yet — I cannot compose — I do not know what hay I will eat soon.

In turn in a letter of December 3, 1838, to Fontana, he ironized:

I was ill for past two weeks as a dog: although caught a cold despite of 18–degree heat outside, roses, orange, palms and figues. Three doctors most famous throughout the island studied me: one sniffed what I spat, another tapped where I sapt from, and the last one touched and listened to my spitting. One said, I was already dead, the other — that I was dying, the third one — that I WOULD DIE.

Everybody underlined his patience in the face of disease, although the torment — with a strong cough and increasing difficulty in breathing — gradually lead to a complete discouragement. The most paralyzing him was the physical weakness. He confided to Delacroix that lack of activity was hardest (Delacroix 1932, Vol. I, p. 288: record of April 14, 1849):

Boredom is the cruelest torment for him. I asked him if he did not know before this unbearable feeling of emptiness that I experience often. He said that he could always find something to do. Even the smallest activity fills time and disperses fumes. What else worries.

He waited to die, while he had some phobias, probably associated with this. He told several times (with the vague intention) of death in the hospital — first in a letter of August 9/10, 1841, to Fontana, and after years in a letter of October 30, 1848, to Grzymała:

Once I dreamed that I died IN A HOSPITAL, and so I stuck it in my head that it seems to me that the dream was yesterday. If you survive, you will know if you should believe in dreams or not. [...]

I can die IN A HOSPITAL, but at least I won't leave behind a wife without bread. Moreover, unnecessary I write you all this because you know that I think this...

Shortly before his death he had to say (Sydow (ed.) 1955, Vol. II, p. 460):

When the cough choke me, I beg you, open my body that I won't ever be buried alive.

When during his stay in England he had a big accident — he wrote in a letter of September 4–9, 1848, to Grzymała, that the vision of a handicap would be for him not to lift:

I must admit that I saw quietly my last hour, but the thought of broken legs and hands scared me very much. I need no HANDICAP in addition to it all.

3. MANNER

Chopin divided his time mainly between a rich social life, very comprehensive work and extensive teaching duties, about which he wrote in the letter of October 11, 1846, to the family:

Soon you have to think about the mill, I mean the lessons.

“The mill” was something that has become a necessity only in Paris, because piano lessons for girls from wealthy homes were the primary source of income. However, the habit — during some periods almost every day — of sitting, music-making and «partying» he brought from Poland, where he also was not averse from universal in the Polish aristocratic homes hunting (for example, he participated in huntings in the estate of Prince Radziwiłł at Antonin). In his youth he was a bit of a habit «in spite of himself». In a letter of September 4, 1830, to Woyciechowski, he wrote:

As on one hand I consider social relationships the most sacred thing, just on the other hand I maintain that they are the devil's invention, and it would be better that people in the world did not know the money, desserts, shoes, hats, beefsteaks, pancakes, etc., and how people also call it.

Over time, this habit became an obsession, affecting its destructive influence on organism. Neither Woyciechowski's friendly reminds in Warsaw did not help, nor warnings of Paris friends did: Mickiewicz's delicate and later Mrs. Sand's less delicate.

Further it got more complicated by the matter that he was characterized by a rare thing in environments in which he lived: not absorbing others with his personal matters, «tuning in» to the expectations of partners and total discretion. As Liszt wrote (1852/1879, p. 176):

In the social relationships and conversations he always seemed to be interested only in what others care.

This attitude — free of conversational narcissism and social gossip — Chopin held consciously, especially towards his friends. In a letter of August 31, 1830, to Woyciechowski, he wrote:

I am glad that in my heart has been drowned a secret that in me there is the end of what you are just the beginning. Enjoy that I have a gap, in which you can throw everything without a fear, as to the second you, because your spirit since long time ago lies there at the very bottom.

The social attractiveness of Chopin was increased by the ease of making friends, elegant language flirting revealed in “chasing rainbow” combined with the ability to win over the recognition in the sedate gentlemen, and even worship of exalted ladies.

Not only he was still looking for social contacts, but he was in the circles of the aristocracy and plutocracy welcome;

what's more — these environments were quite anxious about his presence in the showrooms. He was said to be — and indeed he was — an “idol” or “spoiled child” of showrooms or “darling of princesses”.

Not without significance here were his exquisite manners. Liszt wrote (1852/1879, p. 177):

Manner [of Chopin was] characterized with so aristocratic refinement, that involuntarily he was treated like he'd be prince.

Moreover, it exposed him frequently to the torture companionship of people of mediocre minds and coarse way of being. For example, he complained in a letter of the summer, 1837, to Grzymała:

I have had a musical lunch from which I cannot ESCAPE in spite of all my ability to SLIP through the hands.

On prolonging parties he could not so often escape from his glass and reluctant to him Juliusz Słowacki could write about one of these parties to his mother in a letter of September 3, 1932 (Sydow (ed.) 1955, Vol. I, p. 217):

In this evening we were boring to death from 10 pm to 2 am — in the end, however, Chopin got drunk and lovely improvised on the piano.

Not as much innate as taken from home charm (according to Mrs. Sand it was held by Chopin “habitually”) and natural refinement he was able to complement with an elegant dress.

Emilia Hoffmannowa noted in her *Wspomnienia* [Memoirs] not without a reproach (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 419):

Living almost exclusively among the highest social circles, he has imperious habits.

It is worth adding that to himself he basically invited only the representatives of «the aristocracy of the spirit». We read in Liszt (1852/1879, p. 143):

Most prominent minds of Paris met in the lounge of Chopin.

This consumptive lifestyle was interrupted before the critical phase of the disease. As Liszt wrote (1852/1879, p. 200):

Withdrawing [...] from the whirl of social life, Chopin lived his joys and sorrows within the circle of family and friends of his youth.

Let's assume for simplicity that the mentality of a man is described by his abilities (intellectual, volitional and inventional), dispositions and inclinations. If we'd try to briefly and clearly define those elements in Chopin's mind, we could say that he was extremely multilateral capacity, highly sensitive temperament and an exceptionally expressive inclinations. In a word — he was a man of exceptional mind. The uniqueness of this was also in the fact, that Chopin developed mentally very quickly and therefore occurred very early the crystallization of his volatile mind, vivid imagination and strong will, and sensitive emotions and expressive inclinations.

1. ABILITIES

As Tadeusz Kotarbiński aptly noted (1960, p. 392):

No systematic effort to work, even organized in the wisest way, is not able to meet the genius gift.

Chopin was above all extraordinary musical talents — but beyond that he was also gifted in linguistics, acting and painting.

1.1. LINGUISTIC TALENT

1.1.1. CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES

Chopin in childhood showed a tendency to write poetry — and one must admit that his childish were all successful attempts.

Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki had in his hands one of such attempts — in the form of playful poem, let's call it "The ball at colonel's wife", counting 42 verses (each with four six-and-eight-syllable lines), with several woven French inserts in the text. This poem tells how its fourteen-year-old author was invited with his parents to the friendly colonel's wife's birthday, and not having the appropriate shoes, he bought them in one of the stalls (or shops) with shoes. On the spot, in the salon, they find already very tired colonel's wife, playing pantalion (which is something between a piano and xylophone). Frederick offers to help lady who after some resistance allows him to play.

After a long played dancing — the author starts dancing. After the cotillion waltz and quadrille — at the mazur he unfortunately slipped and fell. To the victim a doctor was called, but by mistake — came just a hairdresser. Unfortunately, the effect of the fall turns out to be a broken leg.

The whole is cleverly written, imaginatively and with great sense of humor.

1.1.2. LANGUAGE SENSITIVITY

Chopin not only knew the language, but also "ruled" it. He used Polish language perfectly spontaneously, but often — using it — watched the functions of this tool. In his letters we find a number of «critical analysis» of used words and phrases. Here's an example from a letter of September 18, 1830, to Woyciechowski:

DIVINE LANGUAGES! What unfortunate phrase, as the divine navel or divine liver is a terribly ugly.

There are many funny neologisms or language jokes in letters. In a letter of August 8, 1829, to his family, he wrote for example:

I do not know what it is, but the Germans are surprised with me, and I am surprised with them that they have something to be surprised of.

There were two great sources of linguistic skills and sensitivity in Chopin.

One source has been associated with the French origin of Mikołaj Chopin: bilingualism of his father certainly had influence for that Frederick since childhood knew the importance of language as a tool of communication.

The second source was the presence in his close surrounding of Linde — an outstanding philologist and lexicographer, whose sense of meaning necessarily had to be extraordinary. Linde, moreover, wrote in the “Preface” to his *Słownik języka polskiego* [*Dictionary of Polish Language*] (1807–1815, Vol. I, p. I):

Human speech, the supreme interpreter of human perceptions and feelings [...] is in some way one; because it is planted on the same regulations of reasoning, corresponding to the nature of things, under the equal way of thinking, the human heart and feelings. [...] Everyone has his own peculiar way of thinking, as far as his imagination; but each man undoubtedly has a general regulation of reasoning which, being a matrix of logic and philosophy, is the soul of both, all disciplines and skills.

And later he confessed (Linde 1807–1815, Vol. I, p. XIV):

I will not stop congratulating myself if my work will help to invigorate the national spirit, to give glory to its precious jewel, the mother language.

Common Chopin’s complaining that he has difficulty with writing — was just an excuse: indeed probably he just did not like to write letters. In a letter of July 27, 1825, to Białobłocki, he frankly confessed:

See you soon; you know I do not like to scribble a lot, except for 4 hands.

This is evidenced also by frequent complaints of his family and the equally frequent apologies from Chopin that he was “again” silent for a long time.

It seems that particularly in this area he was lazy and it can be testified with this strange excuses, which he wanted to hide his laziness with, against his familiars and — against himself. In a letter to the family written between March 29 and April 19, 1847, he confessed:

Dearest loves! If I don’t respond right now, then it is difficult to do it and conscience pushes out of paper instead of pushing in.

Earlier — in a letter of April 23, 1840, to Fontana, he wrote:

I love you, but you know I cannot write.

He similarly wrote in a letter of September 4, 1848, to Grzymała:

Forgive me all the scribbling: you know how painful is for me sometimes to write: my pen is burning under my finger, hair fall from my head and I cannot write what I wanted, only one thousand of unnecessary things.

In fact — his pen was great.

His language was the highest quality Polish language: rich vocabulary with striking accuracy of the selection of words and phraseological compounds was capable to reveal the finest nuances of thought. This was in the Polish language — which is only *ex post* to say — very modern. When we read his letters today, we are impressed that it is written very contemporary to us, with an elegant Polish language of the Warsaw intelligence — much more advanced than Polish language of many writers in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Here are just a few illustrative *bon-mots* by Chopin:

About himself in the letters sequentially — of December 26, 1830, to Woyciechowski, of August 9/10, 1841, to Fontana, and of November 9, 1846, to August Franchomme:

In the salon I go quiet, and when I'm back I'm thundering on piano.
[...]

What else I dreamed, but something else came true. [...] And now I'm dreaming awoken; some rigmaroles; so I write such nonsense to you. [...]

I work a little bit. Draw a lot. Cough enough.

About citizens of Vienna in a letter of January 29, 1831, to Elsner:

They call here waltzes the “works”! And Strauss and Lanner, who play to dance for them — they call the “conductors”!

About Paris opera artists in a letter of April 15, 1832, to Józef Nowakowski:

You will learn those divas close, which are the smaller the closer you come to them.

About Sigismund Thalberg in a letter of December 26, 1830, to Matuszyński:

Plays great, but he is not my man.

About Clara Wieck (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 70):

The only woman in Germany who can play my pieces.

About his love for Maria Wodzińska — like her brother, Antoni, reported in a letter of October, 1835, to his mother, Teresa Wodzińska (Sydow (ed.) 1955, Vol. I, p. 266):

Say there that I love all of them terribly, so terribly much.

Another thing is that Chopin wasn't satisfied with this. He wrote in a letter of September 14–18, 1833, to Franchomme:

For nothing would be pleading with my silence. If wish all my thoughts could move themselves to the post office, without putting them on the paper!

It is worth noting again that the letters by Chopin — at least these which remained (and it must be remembered that there are many lost ones we know that existed — but they were burnt by Chopin or disappeared under mysterious circumstances) — concerned cases of ordinary everyday, giving the impression of hasty notes made with the current observations and rarely were compact as pieces written by masters of «saint» epistolary art. Chopin, however, from time to time, aspired to practice such art. For example, he wrote in a letter of July 8, 1825, to Białobłocki:

This letter is like a box with duke's mixture. There is no consistency of...

1.1.3. FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Among the foreign languages, which Chopin ruled, for obvious reasons French was closest to him — that is the language of his father. He ruled it well, but he could tell as Mickiewicz about his French (Mickiewicz, 1841–1843/1858, Vol. VI, p. 1):

I am a foreigner and I have to use a language that has nothing to do with the one, which simply serves as a tool of my thoughts.

No wonder that his contemporaries recorded this state of affairs. Hiller, a pianist and a great friend of Chopin, for example, wrote (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 245):

He understood [French] [...] in subtle shades, but he did not say [...] quite smoothly, more searching than finding, expressions of his shrewd observations and insights. [...] He [also] never could write well in French.

Liszt added (Liszt 1852/1879, p. 203):

The language of French he ruled over very well [...]. However, he mentioned the French was not for him; he alleged the lack of voicing sounds and the internal heat. [...] French words — according to the presumption of Chopin's compatriots — had no dignity or passion or grace [a lot of Polish words they considered as untranslatable to French].

Chopin complained himself to Mrs. Sand and her daughter Solange — after almost twenty years of daily conversations in French in Paris — that he often lacked the appropriate words in this language to express what he would like to express, and that in order to avoid the errors of language he must look up the dictionary. In a letter of August 14, 1843, he wrote to Mrs. Sand:

Tomorrow, if you ALLOW, I will write you again. [...] Bouli [*scil.* Maurice Dudevant], I embrace you warmly. (I choose only these words that I know how to spell.)

In a letter in the autumn of 1845, to Marie de Rozières, he apologized:

I am writing to you without any dictionary.

Similarly, in the letters of October 2, and November 24, 1847, to Solange:

Please shake hands with your husband in behalf of me and improve my French, as in the past. [...]

I suffocate and have a headache, so I apologize you for my corrections and French.

He also knew German language — reportedly as much as the French. About English language — during his stay in Great Britain — he wrote in a letter of August 19, 1848, to his family:

I do not know, and have no time nor the inclination to learn.

1.2. ACTING TALENT

All those who personally knew Chopin, stress that he had a great acting talent. It manifested itself in childhood and early youth directly — as Chopin often participated as an actor in various theater productions; for his whole life it manifested itself in the ability to imitate, and especially parody (we need to add it was just great) — other people.

We cannot associate with Chopin acting directly — as we read his scores and correspondence. So let's mention at least the most comprehensive report on the subject, which comes from the time of his contemporaries. Here is what Wójcicki wrote about it in *Cmentarz Powązkowski [Powązki Cemetery]* (1858, Vol. II, pp. 18–19):

In 1828, after death of his sister Emilia, the home theater at [Marianna] Pruszkowa's shows a versed comedy by L. A. Dmuszewski titled *Barbara Zapolska*. Actors were learnt how to play by the outstanding artist Piasecki who was also the teleprompter himself during the performance. Frederick played the role of Baltazar, Prince Ostrogski's hat check, and his younger sister, Izabela, played Maryna, confidante of Countess Barbara Zapolska. In the last scene of act I, when he greets with Maryna, Frederick, who counting on his memory was too lazy to learn the script, after the termination of the first note forgot the role, watching in vain to the prompter's help. Meanwhile, Piasecki busy with his character, which has changed much, and with excellent play, forgot to keep the words and prompt. Chopin, seeing that he is abandoned by him, did not lose his consciousness and began to improvise. His sister was waiting for the last words of his role to answer him, but in vain. Finally, Piasecki noticed that, prompt the text and act I ends. Audience even did not notice that, because Frederick bamboozled them with his face, boldness and appropriate improvisation. [...]

A great French dramatic artist Hervé was in Warsaw then. When in the home theater was played some French piece, Frederick chose the same role that Hervé played earlier himself. The French actor just watched him playing and later he shook the young man with enthusiasm and admitted

that Frederick had a great dramatic talent. He played especially great in the scene when, speaking of the rich man, which was the master tailor, his little fingers on the incomparable mime imitated dissecting scissors. [...]

As in the roles played on home theaters he changed his character beyond recognition, so this gift remained home during the meetings, and in Paris in an even higher level, without using any props for this change. There was in Warsaw an Evangelical pastor, Tetzner, who declaimed Polish homilies every other Sunday. Not knowing how to speak Polish well, he was breaking the language. Frederick, before traveling abroad, dressed in red wig, imitated him with such truth and comedy, saying those homilies half Polish half German, that the audience rolled on the floor laughing.

When Chopin was visited in Paris by honorably known in the musician world Józef Nowakowski and asked by him to meet with the famous Liszt and Pixis, Frederick said to him “Wait, I’ll show you both, but each individual”. And then he played Liszt first, sitting and playing piano such as Liszt, then presenting Pixis. It must have been a great similarity, when the next day in the theater Nowakowski, when temporarily left by Chopin was close to the person sitting before him and taking Pixis by pretending him Frederick, struck on the shoulder and said “No! Give a break, do not pretend here”. A stranger greeted too familiarly, Pixis himself, jumped up in anger. Fortunately, Chopin came back soon and explained this mistake, and our artist apologizing met at once with the one who he wanted to approach. [...]

Endowed with a special taste, according to the selected word, he composed Polish and French charades with two or three images of living people. Having no other gear close at hand as the ordinary household ones, he was laying these images so picturesque and decorative, that the applause aroused.

Chopin’s acting ability is confirmed, *inter alia*, by Niemcewicz, who mentioned his stay in Mariánské Lázně in 1836 this way (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 73):

Chopin — one of the first pianists in Europe, cheerful, funny, knows how to mimic everyone entertained us very well.

1.3. PAINTING TALENT

Chopin also had considerable artistic talent in drawings. His teacher was no one else but a prominent Polish painter, Zygmunt Vogel — a pupil of Bernardo Bellotto (Canaletto).

The drawing capabilities of Chopin show his first preserved landscapes in pencil and unfortunately there are few, they are not dated and we do not know whether they are drawings from nature — or whether painted fantasies.

Secondly — remained a successful portrait of Linde, which Chopin drew in a notebook during one school lesson; Linde, in whose hands fell that notebook, saw the portrait and indicated it with a jocular remark: “Well-painted notebook”.

Thirdly — in the Lyceum lessons of Polish history, in which there were names like “Długosz”, “Kadłubek” or “Laskonogi”, Frederick drew their funny cartoons, referring to the etymological meaning of those names (“Długosz” — “somebody who is long”, “Kadłubek” — “a little trunk”, “Laskonogi” — “somebody with long, thin legs”). A few cartoons from that period survived, but it must be clear that the caricatures were not the best — perhaps indeed because they were occasional and cartoons were drawn in haste.

2. DISPOSITION

Chopin! Unique soul, charming mind, happy in the moments when physical suffering allowed him to rest a little. Innate refinement, excellent manners. The genius of sublime and melancholy! Integrity, impeccable integrity, sophisticated delicacy. Modesty full of moderation, selflessness, generosity, unwavering devotion. [...]

His character was formed by disease. Cheerful, friendly, animated, when he did not suffer too much. Melancholic and discouraged when fell because of impotence. Like his music, he was sensitive and passionate. Betrayed oddities, unexplained bias, unseen, but dislikes stubborn, sometimes again — love that does not leave him for a lifetime. When he had time to engage, he never retreated in fact. [...] Tactfully, with unerring intuition rarely able to distinguish true friends from the villains who seek

benefits. [...] We must admit that the understanding never failed him. While to the real and genuine concerns he showed kindness, compassion, willingness to help, he was difficult to deceive him tears or pretense. Very polite, he had attacks of coughing, which allowed him to escape when the salon was entered by an unpleasant person.

This way Chopin was recalled by Solange in 1895 (Eigeldinger 1978, pp. 226–228).

Everything we know about Chopin, moreover — matches the vision of duty.

Disposition of a person is such a complex conglomerate of psychic phenomena, a vision that it's easier than using a structured description impassive, «objective» tools of language.

This is due, *inter alia*, that the individual layers of disposition — temperament, emotional sphere, volitional sphere, and (let us call it so) style — overlap each other and the neighboring areas of the psyche, and that the grid concept, which is to describe these phenomena, we have, is very rich but also in a large part semantically under-determined.

In particular, it is difficult to describe the disposition of Chopin. Liszt noticed this, writing (Liszt 1852/1879, p. 175):

His personality draws mistly, like bluish haze had obscured, elusive for the cool analysis.

There are following reasons of this.

Well, different people in different ways evaluate the disposition of Chopin. Probably some of them are confused, but in most cases the difference takes the fact that these people raised to the rank of a momentary mood disposition of the various phases of his life — or the same phases, but with different moments and in different circumstances, external engagement. Meanwhile, Chopin's disposition in some of its ingredients — like in many people — was subject to the distinct evolution of his life and his feelings in some respects have been changing depending on the different,

often difficult to accurately capture the factors. Chopin remarked that himself. Apt is in this case a note by Jan Kleczyński (1879, p. 25):

Another is man in his everyday matters, another one when upon the ray of divine inspiration.

Although Liszt claimed (1852/1879, p. 177):

Everything in him was harmonious.

However, probably Mrs. Sand was right, writing about Chopin (Sand 1855, Vol. XIII, p. 127):

He was a wonderful condensate, ruling its own logic of inconsistencies.

We must therefore accept the fact that it is impossible to determine the disposition of certain parties in the manner of Chopin in «monochrome» way: it was simply a heterogeneous and we can — and should — say that it ranged between often very distant from each pole. In the case of positive poles they were — we'd like to say — not extremes, but excellences. Mrs. Sand noted this and was seeking in this a tragic fatality. She wrote in a letter of April 23, 1839, to Charlotte Marliani (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 84):

His kindness, patience and sensitivity concern. [...] He's a being too subtle, too unusual and too perfect to live a long time.

Some attributed the origin of his duality. Kleczyński for example wrote (1879, pp. 6 and 20);

Born of a French father and a Polish mother, Frederick Chopin had a lot of both nationalities. Naturally gifted with a sensitive disposition, deep and sensitive, willing to dream and sorrow, but he also had uncommon liveliness of mind and wit. These two opposing factors directly merged

in his essence in a wonderful harmony and stressed it sequentially, in life and in works. [...]

Two elements: the Slavic melancholy and dolefulness — and French vivacity and cheerfulness, made up the spiritual essence of Chopin.

Maybe it was true, but how mazurkas — some wistful, some smiling, some happy — not only alluded to the homely kuyaviaks, mazurs and obereks? Perhaps it is rather that in his mind constantly clashed two elements: male and female.

Anyway — it is impossible today to determine the actual origin of the «music» of his soul...

2.1. TEMPERAMENT

2.1.1. SOBRIETY OR DREAMNESS

In matters of «life» proper for Chopin was responsible, careful, a bit suspicious — «Warsaw» (as though some may say) — sobriety (see Iwaszkiewicz 1955, p. 10). As rightly pointed out Ryszard Przybylski (Hellman & Skowron & Wróblewska–Straus (ed.) 2009, p. 19):

Sobriety of his mind is as captivating as a poetic flight of his musical genius.

This sobriety made he distanced himself — with humor — from fashion to mesmerism. In his letter of August 15, 1848, to Camille Pleyel, he joked with the «ghosts»:

Nothing here [*scil.* in a Scottish castle, where he stayed then] lacks — there is even a red cap, which is supposedly HAUNTED. After all, what happened on the continent, I believe that the spirit deals with the headgear — and would be disgraced, if someone had taken him for one of your demons — as nobody had seen him for some time.

But when he found — in his opinion — that a «clair-voyant» found a package from «his» Scottish ladies of 25

thousand francs for him, he confessed in a letter of July 28, 1849, to Grzymała:

Now I believe in magnetism.

However, in matter of «supernatural» he was rather a dreamy nature. Skrodzki just mentioned the year 1823, spent in the company of Frederick (*O Chopinie* 2010, p. 41):

More than once I heard him humming for himself during his lonely walks in the garden.

Chopin confided himself that he often was able to dream, when — as he wrote in a letter of August 18, 1848, to Fontana — “no sound in my head I do have”. In the same letter he wrote:

I dream of a home, of Rome, of happiness, of a dinner.

2.1.2. CHEERFULNESS OR GRIEF

Both cheerfulness and grief tend to have different shades.

With these different shades of cheerfulness — and especially grief — Chopin seemed well self aware (Liszt 1852/1879, p. 24):

[He said] he got fleeting moments of carefree joy, but he never was freed from the feeling which is proper ground of his heart, and for which the term is merely in his mother tongue, because no other language has the equivalent of Polish word “żał”; the word was repeated several times, as if his ear could not be satisfied by the sound of the word, coming a whole range of feelings evoked by the deep sorrow — from repentance to hatred, blessed or poisoned by the bitter fruits of the tree.

According to Liszt further clarifications were like this (Liszt 1852/1879, pp. 24–25):

“Żal!” [“Grief!”] Strange [is] this noun, with a variety of strange and even stranger philosophical content. Flexible to various grammatical forms, it’s housed in a humble submission, all shades and emotions arising from the doleful resignation, when it comes to facts and external things, and if we can say so, with all gentleness bows his head against the inexorable quirk of Fate. But the moment when the subject of this feeling is a man, the word “grief” is changing face of the grammatical form, means the unrest deep resentment, riotous protest, the conception of revenge, relentless menace pervading in the depths of the heart in anticipation of retaliation or one who is barren bitterness!

It is not impossible that Chopin had relied in its submissions to the *Słownik* by Linde — his philological authority. There was, at the “grief” entry, said (Linde 1807–1815, Vol. VI, Part II, pp. 796–797):

Regret, sorrow, pain, heart, mind [...]. Sorry for the loss, cost, painful feelings of loss or the cost [...]. Sorry for the act, regret its conduct, the exercise is to conduct, behavior, way of life; recantation, cf. repentance. [...] Pity, addiction, compassion [...]. Complaining [...]. Sorry to someone, sorry for somebody, feeling miserable with the referenced harm.

Shades of meaning they can order weather and sorrow at our own risk.

Well, there is a cheerfulness of happiness; a cheerfulness of closeness; a cheerfulness of reliance; and a cheerfulness of unconcern.

There is a grief–sorrow — “silver grief” (Liszt 1852/1960, p. 69) coupled with a sense of failure. There is a grief–longing — “gray grief” coupled with a sense of loneliness. There is a grief–regret — “fiery grief” (Liszt 1852/1960, p. 69) coupled with a sense of someone’s disappointment. Finally, there is grief–helplessness — “black grief” coupled with a sense of despair.

Chopin experienced all shades of both the cheerfulness and grief, but in correspondence appear more words for the latter.

Cheerfulness — happiness, intimacy and trust — reaching a carefree prevailed at the Warsaw time. Not accidental

is his paraphrase of the proverb, “Old age is not joy, youth DOES NOT delight”.

Fred’s sunny disposition is confirmed by numerous certificates. Józefa Wodzińska recalled (*O Chopinie* 2010, p. 39):

The fact that little Fred already had the reputation as the best pianist in Warsaw gave him less charm in our eyes than the fact that no one of the boys was not so eager to have fun and tricks like he was.

One of Chopin’s jokes was described by Wójcicki (1858, Vol. II, p. 19):

Neighbour of *Szafarnia* goods, where his *Courier* was published, citizen Romocki residing in Obrowo, sold wheat to a Jew. Frederick wrote on behalf of the merchant a letter, half Polish, half Jewish, that he resigned the contract, perfectly imitating doggerel letters, and gave it to his friend to pass it to Obrowo. Mr. Romocki became angry after reading this letter, being sure that it was truly written by a merchant, and if the merchant was close that time, he’d be undoubtedly painfully overlaid with a stick.

In these jokes were a lot of humor typical for Warsaw, trying to detect funny cracks in all things (Iwaszkiewicz 1955, p. 10) — even in a friend’s disease. He wrote in a letter of March 12, 1827, to ill Białobłocki:

If you died, tell it to me, I’ll tell the cook, because since she found out about this, she was praying all the time [...]. Everybody hugs you after the resurrection.

The tendency to joke, moreover, was one of the most enduring characteristics of his psyche. Do not lose it in adulthood — even though his body was ruinous by disease. Mrs. Sand wrote (1859/1968, p. 347):

He had the most subtle sense of humor.

Here's testimony from a letter of September 29, 1839, to Fontana:

To Jaś [Matuszewski] give from me for breakfast mustaches of sphinx and parrot's kidneys with tomato sauce sprinkled with scramble eggs of the microscopic world. Bathe yourself in the whale broth. [...] And to Mrs. [Maria] Platerowa blow somewhere [in butt] from me, and to Mrs. Paulina [Plater] sneeze. [...] Put a finger in Oślowski and ring the young Niemcewicz interlaced with Orda.

However, it began to be gradually with a melancholic self-irony. In a letter of July 26, 1841, to Fontana he wrote:

Imagine that I have my nose getting longer and my reason getting shorter — in 30 years it will disappear at all.

The same melancholic self-irony is evident, *inter alia*, in letters of October 27, 1841, and August 18, 1848, to Fontana, and October 1, 1848, to Grzymała:

Old bald head of yours let meet with my withered nose and sing to ourselves: Long live the Krakowskie Przedmieście! to notes by Bogusławski, with tenor of Krzysztofowicz, accompaniment by late Lenz. [...]

We are old dolts, on which time and circumstances played their unfortunate trills. [...]

[By night] I can breathe and dream till morning.

He used more self-irony in relations with foreigners. To Franchomme, he wrote in a letter of August 6–11, 1848:

I feel like a dumbass at a masked ball, or like a violin E string on basolia — surprised and stunned.

During living in Paris — when in a letter of December 3, 1838, to Grzymała, he put his state of mind with the words “earth black — as my heart” — prevailed grief. But even

then long periods of grief interlaced with brief periods of cheerfulness. So Mrs. Sand wrote in a letter of July 24, 1839, to Mrs. Marliani (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 85):

As soon as he feels a bit strong, he is cheerful; and when the melancholy overwhelms him, he throws himself at the piano and composes beautiful pages.

In Poland, Chopin felt happy; in France he lost sense of happiness to sense of failure. He wrote about this breakthrough in linguistically unusual letter of September 22, 1830, to Woyciechowski:

You live, you feel, you are lived and perceived by others, so you're unhappy-happy.

He analyzed that grief-sorrow after September 8, 1831, in *Album Stuttgarcki*:

Dry sadness came over me a long time. Ah — a long time I could not cry. — How can I just ... lonely! Longing and well! — What kind of feeling? Well and longing. — When longing is not good, but nice! — This is a strange situation — But a corpse is the same. Well and sick in the same time. Moves to a happier life and is well, it regrets the past and longs to leave. This corpse must be so, as I was at the time, when I finished crying. [...]

Some momentary dying of my feelings was seen — I died to the heart for a moment! Or rather, the heart is dead to me for a moment.

With this “dry sorrow” was coupled grief-longing. Chopin wrote about it in his letters of December 12, 1831, to Woyciechowski, and of July, 1848, to Grzymała:

I almost go mad with longing, especially when it's raining. [...]

I have unrestrained nerves; I suffer from a stupid longing and despite all of my resignation I do not know, but I'm worried what I'll do with myself.

In the background, of course, was the growing sense of loneliness, which he described yet in a letters of October 3, 1829, and of December 25, 1831, to Woyciechowski, then in a letter of September 9, 1848, to Grzymała:

It's so sad have no one to go in the morning, to share with him sadness and joy, as it is unfairly when something weighs and there is nowhere to lay it down to [...].

I would like to see you here, you will not believe me, because I'm so sad here, I do have no one to confide. You know how easily I establish relationships; you know, as I like to chase with them rainbows; you see, I have enough of such relationships, but with no one I can sigh. — I always am, with regard to my feelings, in synopses with others. [...]

I feel alone, alone, alone, though surrounded.

As the health deteriorated increasingly, started to appear a grief—regret and the feeling of disappointment (“I’m angry”) and most tragic grief: grief—helplessness and a sense of despair. Saying goodbye to Stanisław Koźmian in April 1848 he said briefly (Iwaszkiewicz 1955, p. 234):

My public profession is finished; you have a church in the village, you give me a gracious piece of bread for the rest of my days, and for that I will always play for you the organ hymns in honor of the Queen of the Polish Crown.

This was despair — if we’re allowed to say so — “sublime” and not “morbid”. Such despair we can hear — according to Kleczyński — in the “Funeral March” (Kleczyński 1879, pp. 27–28):

Composition, which apparently reveals a whole ocean of despair, is that famous “Funeral March”. The sound of a bell, stubbornly repeated, pervades the soul with horror, the melody floats above it so sad that the heart tears apart — but who among us dares to say that a composition is morbid? Who just once in our life was in a position, through the music so

dramatically plasticised, the one will undoubtedly understand how much of greatness in the dreadful groan, and how much of majesty in this pain.

In about the same time as Kleczyński, Solange wrote similarly (Eigeldinger 1978, p. 227):

A march vibrating with pain is played nowadays — absolutely without understanding it — on the accidental military funerals and ceremonies. Is not this voice of despair rising towards the sky — excruciating and wonderful?

2.1.3. HABITS OR NEWS

Mrs. Sand wrote about Chopin (1855, Vol. XIII, p. 85):

He was a man of very strong habits and even the smallest CHANGE was in his life a threatening event.

Chopin was simply afraid of change. Such reluctance to any change is indeed typical of people who are oversensitive, which provides mental stability and repeatability of the event anticipate — at least in part — those are to come.

2.2. EMOTIONAL SPHERE

2.2.1. INDIFFERENCE OR SENSITIVITY

What was happening around him, Chopin was extremely sensitive of: there were few things which was neutral about. So it was in Poland, and in France.

About his stay in Poturzyn Chopin wrote in a letter of August 21, 1830, to Woyciechowski:

I honestly tell you that I am pleased to mention it all — your fields left in me some longing — the birch under the windows cannot get out of my memory.

In France — as Mrs. Sand wrote (1855, Vol. XII, p. 125):

[He yielded to the impressions] with unprecedented ease and slowness. [...]

[He was] sensitive to every beauty, every charm, every smile.

His sensitivity is also demonstrated in relation to what he did. During his own recitals he «lived» so much with his own interpretation that after the concert he was utterly exhausted and usually “just did not know what was happening to him” (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 271); he got calmed only after a long time.

2.2.2.2. RESERVE OR OFFENCE

He was, rather, offended by the nature — although he tried to show his offence not too much. He was very sensitive on being judged by others: it was probably one of the reasons why played mostly in the group of people which he knew appreciate him very much.

About Chopin's offence Mrs. Sand wrote (1855, Vol. XIII, p. 93):

A wonderful thing: a big pain didn't break him as much as minor annoyances did.

No wonder that a person who treats his own life rather lightly (or even fabularized it) could not understand Chopin at this point. He believed that such “minor annoyances” are something extremely petty in the one who makes it to him: we somehow depreciate the person about whom such pettiness we cannot stop of.

2.2.3. STIFFNESS OR TENDERNESS

One can be sensitive to the values emerging in the world and sensitive to the point of self-worth, and also to the people — even the closest ones — stiff. Certainly it applied not to Chopin.

About Chopin of the Warsaw times — from 1827 — Stephen Heller wrote (*O Chopinie* 2010, p. 42):

With Stefan Witwicki we often visited Frederick. [...] Chopin, then gay, young, was playing for us his wonderful songs. Brilliant mind, clever, funny, sensitive.

Solange just wrote about him — and herself — in the Paris (Eigeldinger 1978, p. 237):

Came [*scil.* Solange] into the dark and laying on the pillow burst into tears. [...] Chopin, who guessed what was happening to her, [...] could not find the right words, [...] spoke in the language of angels to silence her pain. He played a long time. What he improvised in this dark room? Undoubtedly a masterpiece of sensitivity and merciful heart. Indeed, she approached, crouched at his feet and listened with delight. When he learned that stopped crying, took her head in his hands and placed a kiss on her hair. A tear flowed over girl's forehead. Oh holy tear of compassionate genius, Christian tear, divine tear! Not a word fell...

Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (1955, p. 32) explains this sensitivity quite crudely that Chopin grew up “among biddies”. It is true: in the family home he was numerically dominated by “biddies”, but, first, only Izabela and Emilia could be certainly called as stereotypically «feminine», and second, Chopin's father had the reputation of a man rather stiff than tender.

Chopin's tenderness — let's stress it — had nothing to do with sentimental fondness. In a letter of August 16, 1838, to the parents he mocked honestly with some “German Korinna,⁴ full of wows, i's and THE MOSTS”, a victim of sweet sacrifice romanticism.

2.2.4. COLDNESS OR AMOROUSNESS

It was said of Chopin that he was amorous, that he had numerous love affairs and romances, and that he was unstable in affection.

How much of this was truth — that is not easy to figure out.

⁴ An allusion to old Greek poetess.

2.3. VOLITIONAL SPHERE

2.3.1. SELF-CONTROL OR VEHEMENCE

It happens often that hot-tempered seem to be — self-controlled: so they are able to «freeze» their vehemence. Something similar was — according to Liszt — in Chopin (Liszt 1852/1879, p. 111):

Even in moments of highest excitement he self-controlled himself. [...] That permanently keeping in check the violence inherent nature brought to one's mind superior beings full of melancholy who grow stronger on restraint and seclusion.

They stressed in particular his self-control in the last moments of life, when it was absolutely clear to him that death was inevitably approaching. Princess Czartoryska wrote in a letter of October 17, 1849, to Józef Kalasanty Jędrzejewicz:

Our poor friend has gone — he suffered a lot until came to the last moment, but he suffered with patience and with angelic resignation.

2.3.2. PATIENCE OR FUSSINESS

Iwazskiewicz (1955, p. 52) saw in Chopin's a fussiness — due to «delight» and later disease.

But in Chopin dominated patience.

He had this extraordinary ability to concentrate. He wrote in a letter of September 22, 1830, to Woyciechowski:

If I see something that interests me, I'll be blind or horses and wagons coming through me.

However, Mikołaj Chopin in a letter of April 26, 1834, to his son noted that there were periods of distraction:

You confess to be sometimes distracted.

2.3.3. EXCELLENCE OR MEDIOCRITY

Chopin was a perfectionist.

Even... small cracks in the ceiling shocked him. He was touching up his compositions for weeks. Mrs. Sand wrote (1855, Vol. XIII, p. 126):

He had a dream of the ideal, not silenced by philosophical nor merciful tolerance for the things of this world. He never wanted to negotiate with human nature. He did not accept anything from reality. Here was his weakness and his strength, his greatness and his misery. Inexorably to the slightest flaw, he showed great enthusiasm for the smallest lights, in which, exalted with the power of his imagination, he wanted to see the sun.

2.3.4. DETERMINATION OR INSTABILITY

Frederick's father reproached him lack of determination. In a letter of February 9, 1835, he wrote:

You complain about your editors, I know you: they exploit your trust, they know that you cannot refuse [...]. You are not assertive enough to be able to bargain.

Mikołaj Chopin thought that determination is compatible with tactfulness. He wrote to his son in a letter of March 21, 1842:

I confess that I did not expect after him [*scil.* it's about Liszt] what you write me about him [...]. What to do in such circumstances? Simply to act with foresight and sensitivity, not giving back even one step. You can keep your dignity and try to make him responsible for this.

Frederick sometimes complained about his indecision. He wrote about this in a letter of September 22, 1830, to Woyciechowski, and of December 26, 1830, to Matuszyński:

Another thing I do not follow you — that is to decide suddenly. [...]

You know, I am MOST HESITANT creature in the world, and only once in my life I could choose well.

And in a letter of December 26, 1830, to Matuszyński, he formulated it more bluntly:

My parents tell me to do what I want, and I do not like this. To Paris [go]? The local advise me to wait. Backwards? — To sit here? — Kill myself?

Indecision had two consequences.

First, as Chopin wrote about himself in a letter of July 18, 1834, to Feliks Wodziński:

I always did everything too late.

Second, as noted Mrs. Sand in a letter of April 18, 1841, to Pauline Viardot, Chopin was difficult to change the decision he once took:

It is difficult for something more fun, more frightened and uncertain than the Chip Chip [*scil.* Chopin], which can no longer change his mind.

The really important things he could not make decisions quickly about.

2.4. STYLE

2.4.1. ARROGANCE OR MODESTY

There was in Chopin's soul a strange combination of beliefs about his own values (and even — genius) with a natural modesty.

Liszt wrote (1852/1879, p. 120):

Chopin had a very strong awareness of his value.

Chopin himself wrote in a letter of September 18, 1830, to Woyciechowski:

I just could be over the all where it comes to me.

Therefore, it was probably unnecessary conventional — and ostentatious — praise. As noted by Liszt (1852/1879, p. 75):

Sometimes it was clear that praises irritate him.

The conviction of self-esteem often goes hand in hand with an authority. According to François-Joseph Fétis — what was probably exaggerated — that is the case with Chopin: according to him he had a propensity for bullying environment, including — even friends (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1947, p. 379).

Chopin entertained a belief in the power of the self-worth — as Mrs. Sand recognized it without any doubts — a “just pride” (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 474), primarily manifested by a sense of honor. Liszt wrote (1852/1879, p. 173):

Analysing accurately the nature of Chopin, we will not find in it a single impulse, not one slightest impulse, which would not be dictated by the most subtle sense of honor and weave the noblest sentiments.

The source of Chopin's “just pride” was aware of the value of his work. He was convinced of both the excellence of his performances, and — above all — the brilliance of his compositions. He was aware that as genius — probably they won't be appreciated during his lifetime. He wrote to Potocka — by restricting that write about someone else, but we do not quite know who else might he thought about if not himself (Chopin 1949, p. 309):

Strangest of people is a genius; he goes in the future so far, that his contemporaries lose him beyond the horizon, and we do not know which generation will be able to comprehend him. Genius has a big nose and an excellent SNIFFALITIS, which can sense the future direction of the

wind. Do not think that I make myself a genius with my huge nose; you understand I talk about another kind of nose.

Reviews of his concerts, on which he performed his pieces were not always flattering (see: German reticence, the change of Robert Schumann rank, *etc.*). But Chopin never had doubts how to create. There was no significant *volt* in his work (except that over the years his music expressed more and more suffering, and so called musical language was more and more complicated — what is actually a natural tendency). Moreover, he was endure to external pressures: he could decide to write this opera, which all people waited for — but he never did it finally.

How he manifested his modesty?

Chopin never swelled, he did not like the advertisements, he had no inclination to be megalomaniac, *etc.* In a letter on March 27, 1830, to Woyciechowski, he wrote:

I do not want to wrap the butter in me, as it happened to Lelewel's portrait.

When in a letter of September 22, 1830, to Woyciechowski, he wrote about his successes — the joy and pride mingled with embarrassment:

Striking Rondo, strong Allegro. Oh, cursed love of self! But if someone is you, egoist, I owe understanding of myself. [...] I have a sincere desire to quietly, saying nothing, decide to leave on Saturday for a week, without mercy, despite the laments, crying, complaining and incidence in my legs. Notes into bag, ribbon into the soul, the soul on the shoulder, and into a coach. [...]

If I am still stupid, I should think that I am on the top of my career, but I can see how much I have to do, and I see it all because of living close to the first artists and knowing what each has a lack of. It's so much shame for writing such nonsense; I bragged about it, like a child would, or like an eager beaver who defends himself beforehand; I'd erase what I wrote,

but I have no time to write the second sheet; moreover, maybe you have not forgotten my character, then you recall the one who is today just like he was yesterday, with the only difference — having only one whisker, when the other does not want to grow.

A manifestation of modesty was also a tendency to self-irony. For example, he wrote in a letter of August 12, 1829, to the family:

If the newspapers beat me so much I cannot show more of the world, I decided to paint rooms, for a brush across the paper is easier to pull, and one is always the sonny of Apollo.

The tendency to self-irony, moreover, was for Chopin — a more general tendency. As recalled Solange (Eigeldinger 1978, p. 235):

Chopin [...] had no lack of irony.

Confirmed that Liszt (1852/1879, p. 75):

He skillfully mastered sophisticated irony and wit.

2.4.2. OPENNESS OR SECRETIVENESS

Kleczyński wrote about Chopin (1879, p. 15):

[Chopin] rarely let someone look into his soul, rarely was confiding to anyone.

He confided to a few best friends — and that hides his own particular suffering. In a letter of December 25, 1831, he wrote to Woyciechowski:

Seriously speaking, my poor health, I am happy outside, especially among my owns (I call the Poles “my owns”), but something inside me is murdering me — some misgivings, anxieties, dreams or insomnia

— longing — indifferent — will to live in the moment of death, desire — a sweet peace, some numbness, unconsciousness mind, and sometimes the exact memory bothers me. I feel sour, bitter, salty, some hideous mixture of feelings thrashes me! Sillier than ever.

As in many other cases — he walked here in the footsteps of his father, who wrote in a letter of the beginning of 1834:

The so called great world, [...] seen up close, is very small, but you must take it as it is, and be silent.

Secretiveness was the kind of supplement of his discretion, which has already been mentioned above. Liszt noted that — writing (1852/1768, p. 21):

Kind to others, in private life easy, always equal and serene, skillfully concealed from the eyes of others his internal experiences.

This is confirmed by Solange (Eigeldinger 1978, p. 233):

He had the habit to confide.

Mrs. Sand wrote — as usual in the overreacted way (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 15 and 87):

Chopin never manifested outside his spiritual life. [...] Even in the circle of closest ones he remained closed in himself. [...] He really confided only his piano.

This is the most secretive of [...] geniuses.

The expectation that everything we tell each other about ourselves is our deepest belief — is childish; the belief that it is as we say it — it's credulity. Chopin was very annoyed with such childishness and credulity. Liszt wrote about it (1852/1879, pp. 22–23):

People who were tied with Chopin in always closed relations, had the opportunity to see at certain moments of impatience and reluctance of the fact that people too hastily believed his word.

But keep in mind that this is some kind of secretiveness — namely not talking others what we think about them — which sometimes closes dangerously to hypocrisy, which means speaking them the opposite of what we think about them. Unfortunately, Chopin's correspondence reveals that he sometimes approached very dangerous to the border of hypocrisy — for example when he put on airs and grace to certain representatives of the aristocracy or plutocracy, although he could not stand them.

2.4.3. GENEROSITY OR UNFORGIVENESS

Solange wrote about the generosity of Chopin. Liszt remarked, however, that generosity was accompanied by internal unforgiveness (1852/1879, p. 181):

Chopin knew how noble his heart was to forgive and he never remained even the slightest shadow of sorrow in his heart for those who hurt him somehow; however, all the wounds sank deep in his soul, instilling a deaf ferment and interior suffering there in so huge amount, that he often forgot the event, but still felt the secret spiritual torment about it.

Generosity can be combined with unforgiveness — and it seems Chopin was like this.

3. LIKES

3.1. ARTISTIC PREDILECTIONS

Chopin had a clear preference, not only in music, but also in other arts.

As for literature — he did not like Shakespeare, but he valued Voltaire (Tatarkiewicz 1963, p. 736) and Polish poetry, especially works of Mickiewicz. Liszt noted (1852/1879, p. 233):

He liked to listen to the new poetry, which was brought to Paris by the Poles, and if the words of the poems he liked, he often voiced by the melodies rapidly disseminated in the country, sometimes as pieces of an unknown author.

He depicting the Gothic architecture. About the interior of the St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna he responded in a letter of December 26, 1830, to Matuszyński:

It is impossible to describe the magnificence of this, the size of these enormous arches.

When it comes to painting — from the youth he walked to the exhibitions. Here is testimony from a letter of September 29, 1825, to Białobłocki:

Exhibitions in Warsaw are to begin, both in the Town Hall [*scil.* where the exhibitions were formerly] and the halls of the University [*scil.* where there were exhibited works by contemporary Polish painters].

He also visited galleries in the cities; among others he noted a visit to Grünes Gewölbe Gallery in Dresden and in Vienna Gallery. He watched the images with the eyes of musician. He wrote in a letter of November 14, 1830, to the family:

There are images in which the view seems to me that I hear music.

Mrs. Sand wrote reproachfully about Chopin's taste (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 324):

Does not understand neither painting nor sculpture. Michelangelo scares him. Rubens deters him. He hates [Delacroix as] a painter.

And explained it with her usual confidence:

Everything that seems to be eccentric — worsens him. He closes himself in the narrow conventionalism.

But how delicate and «fragile» Chopin could admire their works, performances filled to the brim with heavy and sensual human forms? Valid certificate is given by Solange (Eigeldinger 1978, p. 228):

He admired Raphael, Perugino, Fra Angelico, Sassoferrato. He did not understand neither Rubens nor Michelangelo. About the first one he said: "This is a painter of thick buttocks". About the second one he said: "His models have colic. They twist in terrible pain."

Let us add to the list of his favorite painters Murillo and the Spanish school. In his letter of October 1, 1848, to Grzymała, he wrote about the owner of Stirling Castle in Scotland:

He has here very beautiful and numerous paintings — many Murillos and Spaniards.

Two things are striking. First, this list of artists from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century estates: Italians Fra Angelico, Perugino, Raphael, Sassoferrato and Spaniard Murillo — they are painters of mainly or almost exclusively (Fra Angelico) religious themes. Secondly, the characters in their paintings are light, slender, soulful. They belong to the Apollonian world, and not — to the Dionysian.

Chopin in the arts did not tolerate a veristic orgiasticness. Here's what he wrote about Auguste Clésinger in a letter of June 8, 1847, to the family:

In the world of Paris [...] this *mariage* [*scil.* Solange with Clésinger] was bad — because of his statue, which was on display, exposing a woman naked in the most obscene position — *pour motiver sa pose* [*scil.* to justify that pose] he had to clip the hose to her leg — so the twists and twists. It is simply ordered statue by Mosselmann [...], representing his mistress. His and others, *car c'est une femme entretenue très connue dans Paris* [*scil.* because it's a woman hanging around obscene, very well known in Paris].

So they wonder that a young person, like Sol[ange], is interested in an artist publicizing works so *voluptic* [*scil.* lascivious] and, *pour ne pas dir* [*scil.* or rather] shameful. But indeed there is nothing shameless in art — and, indeed bare belly and breasts are modeled very beautifully — I assure that on the future exposure the audience will watch in the form of the new belly and breasts the statue of his wife. Everywhere Delaroche painted his wife deceased — and this one will be carving Sol[ange]’s tush of white — *il est de cette force* [*scil.* it is such a type]. — Mrs. S[and] wrote me from the village about him: *il est hardi, lettré, actif et ambitieux* [*scil.* it is bold, educated, active and ambitious] — it KIND OF BENEFITS! [...] Everyone adores her [*scil.* Mrs. Sand]. [...] Only from time to time she tells an untruth, but the *romancier* [*scil.* novelist] is allowed to.

That letter — what is significant — is a rare incident, when Chopin puts French phrases into a letter to his family in Warsaw.

3.2. VITAL PREDILECTIONS

3.2.1. CARING TENDENCIES

Chopin liked children: caring tendencies he got from the family home.

It is known that he gave expression to his love for his nephew.

He spent much time with Mrs. Sand’s children: daughter Solange and son Maurice. He also cared for the little daughter of Mrs. Viardot, who visited Nohant in 1843. In the words of Mrs. Sand (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 99):

Good Chopin always talks about you [*scil.* about Solange and Maurice]; he says and does everything to amuse me and him. [...] [Little daughter of Mrs. Viardot] is dancing, laughing, talking with Chopin in Polish, with Françoise in Berrichon, and with Pistolet in Sanskrit.⁵

⁵ Berrichon dialect — that is, from the French province of Berry — the girl is likely to meet with Françoise, and so the maid in Nohant; “Pistolet” is probably the name of the local dog.

3.2.2. «HOME» LIKES

Chopin attached utmost importance to both the dress, which we wore, and to the apartment, where he stayed and received relatives and friends.

Chopin’s apartments are spacious and luxurious — and stylish (which after all does not always go hand in hand) — furnished: stylish furniture, luxury rugs, elegant trinkets. For this — favorite flowers, violets (Liszt 1852/1960, p. 120): he was sensitive to their appearance and smell.

Let’s visit salon in the last Chopin’s apartment at 12 Vendôme Square — immortalized by Kwiatkowski. Prevail the pastel colors: sand (symbol of reason), pink (love symbol) and gray-blue (symbol of longing) — confluent on the carpet in a light violet (symbol of arrogance) in a turbulent pattern.

Above the fireplace two three-candle chandeliers, two vases and a clock between them.

Piano. Right next to the leg — in a pot — maybe his favorite violets (a symbol of modesty). Four seats at the empty table and Empire chaise lounge: Méridienne, and with it — seems to — a decorative box.

Walls upholstered in striped silk fabric. Doors — white.

Equipment — how not to believe — carried over from the apartment in the Orleans Square 9. Except that walls were there convoluted as here the carpet is — and on the wall of a mountain landscape, which we cannot see.

Stanislaus Augustus would feel familiar here — as in his private royal apartments. In general, the two men — if they can meet, preferably on the Thursday Dinners — would like each other much...

It is known that Chopin — like king Staś [Stanislaus Augustus] — collected prints. Astolphe Marquis de Custine wrote in a letter of March 18, 1837:

You like prints, so I am sending you the most beautiful that I could find.

The apartment had to be — as usual for the musicians — quiet.

His letters have numerous references on this subject — from a time when he could not afford, and later, on larger apartments. These are some characteristic notes of a letter of December 26, 1830, to Matuszyński, and of November 18, 1831, to Norbert Alfons Kumelski:

My room [...] is big [...]. Quietly. [...]

I have a little room beautifully furnished in mahogany.

In a letter of October 4, 1839, he admonished Fontana:

Once again [check apartment], is it decent, if not stink, dirty or not, whether the neighbours are not so many that it is possible to go for a walk without them? Are not there any trumpets and similar things in the house.

When it comes to culinary pleasures of Chopin, he is fond of milk (and cocoa); as for «ludic» pleasures, Chopin liked playing chess.

3.2.3. «FARM» LIKES

It is surprising: Chopin parents were exceptionally resourceful. His father, who had no formal training from ordinary officialist then tutor — has become the teacher of the most renowned schools in Warsaw. School run by Chopins (mainly by Justyna) — has the opinion of the best in the capital. Chopin's financial condition was stable: they could even afford to grant loans to its major benefactors — Skarbeks.

Meanwhile, Frederick's financial situation since leaving Warsaw never was stabilized. It met — as we remember — with criticism of his loving but tough father.

Chopin in certain periods of his life in exile earned pretty well: mainly in the provision of lessons, because publication of the compositions does not generate too much income, and

he aversed the public — paid — concerts at all. Certainly he was not — contrary to the parents — frugal. In this one point his father's admonition have not had the desired effect. Frederick wrote, for example, in a letter from mid-January, 1833, to Dominik Dziewanowski:

Today I have five lessons to give; you think I earn much; wagon and white gloves, without which you would have a good tone, cost more.

In a letter of October 3, 1839, to Fontana he gave the instruction:

Go [...] to [...] my tailor on the boulevard and tell him to immediately make me a [...] black, modest, velvet vest, but with some little pattern, something modest and very elegant.

It does not even look for the lack of a sense of savings — but the mere extravagance... Although a loving father was trying to justify it somehow. He wrote in a letter of September 7, 1834, to his son:

You already have your own furniture, it seems, even quite expensive; I understand, however, that you could not do otherwise, because you give lessons at home, and now — like all the time — people judge a man on appearance.

Moreover, it is not inconceivable that in a certain period of residence in Paris, Chopin played the stock market. According to Iwaszkiewicz (1955, pp. 14–15, 142) a proof for this could be the intimate relationship with a known of suspect financial transactions Grzymała and the French banker Auguste Léo; incidentally, they both belonged to the Freemasons.

Perhaps, however, maybe guilty was only Paris: «demanding» city, expensive, attractive — for each artist. Chopin noted in a letter of January 25, 1843, to Tomasz Nidecki:

All artists [...] prefer poverty here [in Paris] than to live in luxury abroad or in the provinces.

Chopin's habit for luxuries was so great that he had no particular qualms when the period of progressive disease — at the melting incomes — his accounts were covered by a Russian Princess Natalia Obrescov and Scottish student, Miss Stirling.

It is interesting that the lack of a sense of savings Chopin combined with great diligence and generosity. He wrote about his diligence in a letter of September 18, 1830, to Woyciechowski:

I realized that I was not yet the worst shirker and that I can work when the need compulses.

It was confirmed by Mikołaj Chopin in a letter of September, 1832, to his son:

I can see [...] that at last you know all the top artists in the art you practice, and that you can compete with them. I was sure of that, knowing your diligence.

He has never refused a financial assistance to needy compatriots — if only his own wallet was not empty.

His father had it bad. He wrote in a letter of February 9, 1835:

How is your business? Do you always have enough leeches?

And in a letter of December 15, 1835, he complemented:

I applaud your intention to save something and selecting better those who you can come to the rescue to. I was worried hearing how you was paid for your good heart; looking at that this man I would never expected this of him; he had probably read J. J. Rousseau and there is where he learnt ingratitude from.

CHAPTER VI. ATTITUDE

People with whom Chopin met — because of his attitude towards them — can be deployed within three concentric circles.

In the most extensive circle would be people, which he acted with kindness; in the narrower one — those who he had for friendship; in narrowest one — those for whom he felt love.

1. KINDNESS

Liszt highly praised Chopin, that he was “kind to others” and “easy livable” (1852/1960, p. 25). He wrote (Liszt 1852/1879, p. 144):

He had that inborn gift of Polish kindness, which not only subordinates the owner to rights and obligations of hospitality, but also tells him entirely to give up of remembering of his own person, to think only of the wishes and pleasure of visitors.

A similar opinion of him had Mrs. Sand (Tomaszewski 2010, pp. 87 and 16):

He is [...] always nicest. [...]

[He goes by] the noblest concurrence of feelings.

This was confirmed by Solange (Eigeldinger 1978, p. 226):

[He was characterized by] unwavering devotion [to others].

Ethical foundation of this friendship was the impeccable righteousness of Chopin.

Kwiatkowski put it succinctly (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 16):

He was as pure as tears.

In the circle of friendship of Chopin there was almost whole environment. Exceptions — they were. It happened that some liking was replaced by dislike — but it is difficult to share the opinion of Mrs. Sand (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 312) that it is evidenced by the variability of attitudes toward others. Initial attitude was generally positive, keeping it in face of evidently negative facts demonstrates clearly a dogmatic blindness, which is completely strange to Chopin. It is hard to be kind for the publishers, who seemed to prefer the works of Chopin for a profit... only for themselves.

Sometimes the kindness becomes a caricature: imposing intrusive to others with its «services». In a letter from September 4–9, 1848, to Grzymała, Chopin complained of such intrusion:

It's ugly outside, and I'm angry and sad, and I'm sick of people caring too much.

2. FRIENDSHIP

In the Linde's *Słownik* under the item “friendship” Chopin could read (1807–1815, Vol. IV, p. 640–641):

Fostering, [...] good behavior with someone, the deck of confidence. [...] [Friendship] turns someone else's interest in our own.

This “fostering” may have had varying degrees of course — and Chopin was fully aware of this.

Among his friends were — the most numerous — some of whom his friendship was a response to worship (to Chopin,

or in relation to what was dear to him) on their part; some he understood without words with; and at last those with whom he could simply “sigh” to (see letter of December 25, 1831, to Woyciechowski).

An example of the first type of friendship was friendship with Marquis de Custine. In one of the letters to Potocka Chopin wrote about him (Chopin 1949, p. 307):

Yesterday de Custine has visited me. Good man indeed! He is curious of our national music. My music is already familiar to him and he asked me to play today works by the greatest Polish artists. So I played him what I could. When I finished, he told me that all the works of those artists do not see that these are the Polish national works [...]. About my compositions he said that they are quite different than the work of the French, Germans and British. And said that Polish music begins with me.

It had to be a great friendship, since the Marquis wrote to him in a letter of June 30, 1836:

You are the only person I authorize to come to Saint-Gratien [*scil.* the Marquis' estate] whenever you want and even without noticing me about it before.

A year later, in the spring of 1837, he wrote to Chopin with concern:

You are sick, and what's worse, you may get sick much more seriously. You come to the end of the suffering and anguish of the soul and body; when concerns of heart change to disease we are lost; the idea is to prevent this in your. I do not try to comfort you, I respect your feelings, which, moreover, I can only guess, but I wish that the remaining feelings never changed to the physical suffering. It is the duty to live, if a man is like you, a source of life and poetry; do not lose this treasure and don't treat the good God lightly, IGNORING His most precious gifts. It would be an unforgivable crime, because God himself will not give away a past wasted voluntarily by you. [...] Are you stop in Paris

because of the lack of money? If so, I can lend them to you, you will return it to me later, and you rest for three months!!! If you feel lack of love, please let at least friendship act; live for yourself and for us; you can still get rich. [...] Anxiety will haunt soul in solitude, it's true, but the physical rest will influence the soul, and the wings of your talent will get you toward the worlds, which allow to forget about ours. Free yourself from the routine of your life in Paris; here awaits for you an opportunity hard to find: a month of rural life in suitable conditions, then travel towards the banks of Rhine.

An example of the second type of friendship was friendship with Białobłocki and Woyciechowski. In a letter of June 20, 1826, he wrote to the first one:

Do not expect in this letter simple name day compliments, these feelings, that which is dreamed, exclamation marks, apostrophes, pathetic parts, and similar rubbishes, buncombes, trashes and boshes [...], but whoever is bound by a eleven-year-long friendship involves [...] does not need write letters with compliments, because he never writes what he would like to write.

However, in letters of September 18 and 22, 1830, Chopin wrote to Woyciechowski:

[I want with you] to talk like it is said when the joy shuts the access of all the cold and forced words and the heart with another one talks in some divine language. [...]

I understand you, penetrate your mind and... let's hug, because I cannot speak more.

Such non-linguistic agreement with “divine language” also associated him with Heinrich Heine, who wrote about Chopin (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 18):

When he sits at the piano and improvises, it seems to me that I was visited by someone close.

It was summarized by Liszt (1852/1879, p. 147):

They understood the halfwords and halfsounds.

So it was a friendship of minds — not hearts. Solange put it perhaps too sharply (Eigeldinger 1978, p. 228):

[Heine] alienated [...] [Chopin] with his Jewish cynicism, but [...] [his] beautiful verses delighted him, and extreme intelligence — amused.

Sometimes friendship as a response to worship was connected with the joy of intellectual intercourse with a friend. This was the case of Delacroix. He wrote in a letter of May 30, 1842, to Mrs. Sand (Sydow (ed.) 1955, Vol. II, p. 350):

Dearest entertainment for me is wandering around the garden to talk [to Chopin] about music, and in the evening in a corner of my salon listen to it, when God himself comes down with the music from his divine fingers.

They were also — fewer — friends «for life and death». For these friends, in letters addressed *per* “My Life!”, which probably should be understood as meaning that they were friends, for which he lived and was ready to give his own life. About this highest degree of friendship, Chopin wrote in a letter of September 18, 1830, to Woyciechowski:

Often the one who wants to improve, he deteriorates. And I think that I cannot with you make it better or worse. The liking I have for you makes supernatural efforts to force your heart to the feeling of liking. You’re not the master of what you think, I am the one and I shall not let to abandon me like trees abandon the green which gives them all the specificity, joy and life.

An example of this type of friendship — *NB.* only with the Poles — was friendship with a school friend and his

preagonal confessor, Father Aleksander Jełowicki and Norwid.

3. LOVE

It is impossible to describe — objectively, dispassionately — love.

Two things, it is true, are certain.

First, the love generally (with the exception of the love between mother and daughter, and between father and son) is the relation between a man and a woman. When a man, like often Chopin does, asks the other man, either directly or in letters of “My Darling!”, or says or writes that he loves him, he usually points the friendship — not love *sensu stricto*.

Secondly, a component of love is friendship — or, as the old Linde put it in his *Słownik*, love is a higher degree of friendship (Linde 1807–1815, Vol. III, pp. 114–115):

Loving, cherishing, adoring [...]. Feeling stronger than friendship, brighter and more sensitive than gratitude.

Everything else — what can be said about love — must necessarily be accompanied by the flat of uncertainty, perhaps except the fact that love cannot live without so called “tenderness”. That tenderness can indeed be expressed in different ways — from tender thoughts and glances full of praise to a tender hug and an act of making love — but it is always a constant desire of closeness of loving people.

This gives a base to distinct love «pure», familial, passionate...

3.1. «PURE» LOVE

«Pure» love in the life of Chopin was certainly a youthful love for blue-eyed blonde, Konstancja Gładkowska. He wrote about this, leaving no doubt about that fact. Was it the love reciprocated?

Konstancja wrote on October 25, 1830, in Chopin's *Sztambuch* [*Album*] (Hellman & Skowron & Wróblewska–Straus (ed.) 2009, pp. 419 and 422):

Strangers can better reward, evaluate each other,
But love you more than us they certainly cannot.

But here “to love” means only “to admire”. It wasn't a coincidence that Chopin made a postscript below which says “they can”. Incidentally, this «pure» love of Chopin to Gładkowska still continued after her marriage. This is evidenced with Ludwika Chopin's words from a letter to his brother:

You write that your love is here. [...] I wonder, how can you be so unfeeling. Palace seemed to be [for Gładkowska] more important, but you made a bad interest; you said she had a good taste, feeling! Ah, the feeling! But it seems she has that feeling only in the singing, and you are the proof for it!

The «pure» love was probably feeling of Chopin to a “Parisienne”, “the granddaughter of a famous master”, which Mrs. Sand recalls (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 310).

The «pure» love, but with the views for something more, as it turned out — deceptive ones, was love for Maria Wodzińska.

It was a mutual love. It is felt in Maria's words, “a loyal secretary”, from a letter of January 25, 1837, to Chopin:

Mother scolded [me], and so I thank you, thank you so much, and when we meet, I will thank you even more.

And then in French:

I hope that there is no need to repeat the assurance of the feelings of your loyal secretary.

This love was the victim of the cold «calculating» of Maria's parents, but the memory of the engagement has expired neither in Chopin's nor in Wodzińska's heart. Frederick kept letters from Maria whole life, adding to them an inscription saying: “My misery”. Mary for the rest of her life played Frederick's pieces the way as she wanted to give them the inscription: “Our misery”.

3.2. FAMILIAL LOVE

Of course Chopin participated also in a familial love: to and from mother, to and from sisters (especially Ludwika). It is possible that he also loved Mrs. Sand's children with a kind of fatherly love, and Mrs. Sand (at some stage) and Miss Stirling loved him with a shadow of mother's love.

3.3. PASSIONATE LOVE

And how about a passionate love?

It is said that it connected Chopin with Mrs. Sand and Delfina Potocka. Both ladies, moreover, were seen as... seductresses.

There is also an opinion that Chopin didn't act to conquer Mrs. Sand, but that she conquered him. Eloquent proofs of that are the first impressions of Chopin's meeting, which took place in late October, 1836. He wrote about this in a letter to parents (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 277):

I met a great celebrity, Mrs. Sand, but her face was unpleasant; I did not like her: there is something repulsive in her.

Meanwhile Mrs. Sand did everything from that moment to be as close as possible to Chopin and — to win over his friends. She had been on all evenings with Chopin, and in a letter of March 28, 1837, she wrote to Liszt (Sydow (ed.) 1955, Vol. I, p. 299):

Marie [d'Angoult] told me that Chopin is expected; please tell him [...] that I adore him.

To Marie d'Angoult, she wrote in a letter on April 3, 1837:

Tell [...] Chopin that I worship him like an idol.

After a year, in June 1838, Mrs. Sand confided their misgivings in a letter to Grzymała (Sydow (ed.) 1955, Vol. I, pp. 315–316):

I think our [*scil.* her and Chopin's] love can exist only in those circumstances in which it was born, that is, from time to time, when the successful wind connects us, we fly together in a land of stars, and then we separate to once again walk the earth. [...] I would be satisfied most, if our poem could be arranged so I knew nothing, absolutely nothing about his PRACTICAL life, neither he about mine, and that he lived according to his own religious, worldly, poetic and artistic principles. [...] I have no doubt that a man becomes better when he loves with sublime love, and that not only he is far from sin, but on the contrary, close to God, who is the source and focus of this love. Maybe you should use this, my dear Sir, as a final argument, that explained everything well, and thus no way to hurt his beliefs about the obligation, a religious sacrifice and devotion, you would bring relief to his heart.

And to Chopin she wrote this autumn:

Love me, my angel, my dearest happiness. I love you.

Meanwhile Heine describes relationship between Chopin and Mrs. Sand this way (Iwaszkiewicz 1955, p. 187):

This great musician and pianist was for a long time her CAVALIERE SERVENTE.

On the other hand Zygmunt Krasiński bluntly called Delfina Potocka “Don Juan in a skirt”.

Chopin against women — even of the low state — was full of gallantry. Some of them thought on this basis that he was amorous. But he certainly was not a seducer.

There are signs that — as in the case of Wodzińska — Chopin had in the case of Mrs. Sand a hope that not the «pure» love will be at the end. Perhaps — as some suggest — he imagined that he would create with her a real, common house. It is significant that in the context of Miss Stirling he wrote that he could not tie up with the woman and then make her unhappy — as a gravely ill man and therefore not giving her support in life. Well, in relation to Mrs. Sand he didn't have to have similar objections. She had two children (which in fact took a liking to Chopin), stable financial situation, and she was known not only of the «male» manners, but also of the «masculine» character — so she did not need support in any way.

As Hoffmannowa recalled — Potocka, whom he met on November 17, 1831, he “looked at [...] always like at god” (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 420). But this is the sign of «pure» love. In a letter of April 19, 1847, he wrote to the family:

Mrs. Delfina Potocka (who, you know, how I love) was to be [...] with me.

But here again “love” in relation of Chopin against Delfina meant just the same what in relation of Gładkowska against him.

There are those who believe that at least the first few months of closer knowledge of Chopin and Mrs. Sand was fulfilled with love, some even resort to accusations that Mrs. Sand ravaged physically (and mentally) Chopin. Perhaps it was for him — as Paris and its night life salon. After muting first passion being with her must have been more and more difficult: it turned out that this is not his ideal — not an ideal at all — but the woman extremely intelligent, although with

often vulgar and always mercenary, and the features were for Chopin at least alien. Nevertheless, for many years he was unable to liberate of this relationship. He was kept in it by a sense of responsibility for Mrs. Sand and her children. Let's trust Chopin, when he wrote in a letter of December 12, 1845, to his family:

Never believe bad rumors, because there is a lot of people in the world who cannot see the happiness with peace.

After the dramatic breaking up — he wrote in a letter of December 26, 1847, to his sister Ludwika:

I do not regret that I helped her endure the most delicate eight years of her life, whereupon, when her daughter was growing, and her son was becoming a little man, I do not regret all that I had. [...] Let bygones be bygones. Mrs. S[and] may have about me only a good memories in her soul, if she once looks behind her.

PART III

WORLDVIEW

As we remember, Chopin was provided by his circle at the Warsaw Lyceum and the University of Warsaw with a sense of practical realism and a common-sense aversion to exalted speculation concerning the substance of the universe and romantic messianism dreaming of the reform of all humanity. Chopin's ATTITUDE towards others was cordial and sympathetic; he believed that IT WAS GOOD when people were friendly towards each other; however, contrary to messianists, he felt that seeking a universal way to MAKE all people friendly and good-natured was doomed to fail from the start.

He spoke of towiańskism plainly in a letter of March 23, 1845, to Witwicki:

What could be crazier than that?

He was additionally distanced from the messianists because of the vague language they used for their speculations.

A similar attitude at the Vilna University was adopted by Dowgird, who expressed his metaphysical standpoint in extremely precise language. Any derogation from the principle of accuracy was tolerated only in metaphysical aphorisms, which constituted a kind of *résumé* which crowned reasoning in which this rule was applied.

Sadly, Chopin left similar punch lines in the field of metaphysical declarations. He usually gave them the form of condensed self-devised anecdotes, often paradoxical at first glance, or he used ready-made models taken from a «book» of Polish proverbs which, as it turns out, he was very familiar with.

What these sentences were meant to summarise can only be the subject of more or less probable hypotheses. These hypotheses are, however, worth voicing, especially since the degree of their understanding grows within the net of their interrelationships.

CHAPTER VII. FORTUNE

1. LIFE

1.1. UNCERTAINTY

This is how Chopin contemptuously expressed the «fundament» of his worldview in a letter of September 25, 1830, to Fontana:

INKY PINKY PONKY. This is the greatest truth of life.

There is no doubt he meant by this that nothing is certain in life.

This epistemological starting point is pessimistic in its character. It is also close to an ontological, rather than epistemological, thesis — about the absurdity of existence.

1.2. LOSS

This impression is heightened by the fact that Chopin, in his own words this time, speaks of the certainty of death in the letters of October 27, 1841, to Fontana, and of November 30, 1848, to Grzymała:

Anyway [...] time flies, the world passes, death chases us. [...] This world passes me somehow, I forget myself, I have no strength.

Let us connect both phrases, complete the ellipses, depersonalise, and, wherever necessary, risk interpretation. We achieve the following thought:

Time flies. Our life passes, not always according to our intentions. In addition, details of our life plan seem to slip our minds. We feel, however, that death is getting near. With the passage of time it gets increasingly harder to accept.

We get consolation only in oblivion. In a letter of February 10, 1848, to his sister Ludwika, he wrote:

Time: ultimate doctor.

In a letter of November 18, 1831, to Kumelski, oblivion brings to mind a kind of mental rubbing out of past events:

Often when I look through letters in the evening or write something in that diary of mine and glance at the litany, it seems to me that all those remembrances are a dream; I do not believe that, in fact, it all happened.

With the passing of years it becomes eradication from the memory of “all that, in fact, happened”, including increasingly more issues and longer periods of life. In a letter of August 12, 1829, to his family he quoted approvingly his friend’s, Romuald Hube’s, opinion:

Hube claims that man will never get anywhere the regular way and according to his own plan; something has to be left to fate.

1.3. HOPE

However, Chopin completes his metaphysical viewpoint in a letter of October 27, 1841, to Fontana:

What will be, will be — as the old proverb goes.

How shall we understand this?

These can only be the words of an optimist who is not easily discouraged by life’s adversities. Then the saying, “What will be, will be” becomes an expression of hope.

But this saying can also be a life motto of someone who is in constant fear of what is to come and who is supposed to be calmed down by it.

Which was true in the case of Chopin?

It was probably the first as he was closer to rational hope than to irrational reassurance.

But perhaps the significance of these words was changing over the years and we will never know what Chopin really meant.

2. FAITH

There is something which supports rational interpretation: faith.

There are people whose faith shines though their lives to such a degree that its light is visible in each action and behavior. There are those for whom faith is an important factor although, as often happens with essence, hidden so deep that others, strangers, do not have even indirect access to these areas of their psyche.

Chopin's mother and his sister Ludwika were definitely in the first group. Chopin was decidedly not one of them.

Did he belong to the second one?

Religious faith is many-layered; it contains a layer of dogma (and within it the ethical thread and the eschatological thread), a layer of ritual (genetically tied to tradition) and a layer of institution... Believers sink into these layers in various combinations and to various depths. There are also differences of attitude towards religion: from its proclamation and strict following to total rejection and attack.

Chopin's belief was certainly far from extreme in this respect even though Mrs. Sand claimed the contrary (1855, Vol. XIII, p. 129):

Chopin [...] was strongly tied to religion. He claimed about me [...]: "Yes! Yes! I am completely [...] sure that she loves God".

However, for personal reasons she is not a credible source. For other reasons, also priest Jełowicki is not one, as he presented Chopin as utterly indifferent to the matters of faith in a letter to Ksawera Grocholska and he claimed for himself the credit for converting Chopin in the hour of his death. The only point in which he was not economical with the truth is when he said that Chopin was inclined to treat confession as a way of "confiding to a friend" rather than a sacrament (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 530). Such view certainly stood in opposition to the catholic dogma, but was not yet scepticism.

Chopin's standpoint on faith was probably close to what Marquis de Custine voiced (1843, Vol. II, pp. 363–364):

The more reason and science limit the domain of faith, the greater the reflection of God's light, focused in its divine prism; it is better to believe when you believe less. The signs of the cross do not denote piety.

As Liszt rightly put it (1852, p. 114):

Deeply religious and honestly devoted to Catholicism, Chopin never spoke openly about it, keeping the matters of faith to himself and never manifesting them to the outside world.

Let us revise that: he never manifested his faith in words. But it shines most wonderfully through some of his compositions, most importantly, as Bohdan Pocij aptly noted, in *Prelude in E major*, Op. 28, No. 9 (1989, p. 68):

In the cycle of Op. 28 we can single out one piece, which could be treated as inspired by religion: *Prelude in E major*, with its simple, cord-melodic structure, hymnic character, and movement as if derived from the swaying of church bells (a similar stylistic effect as in the "Funeral March" from *Sonata in B-flat minor*); *Prelude* which increases the elevated spirit until the triumphal culmination. A listener sensitive to transcendental references in music, its sacral qualities (values) and religious symbolism,

may sense in this short, expressively condensed piece a great metaphysical and religious tension, passionate longing for God, transcending to the divine. Perhaps here, only once in the cycle, lies the crucial spiritual stress, directing our attention towards the sphere of which Chopin himself spoke little, although he, being a genial artist and a romantic man, felt very deeply its importance in the hierarchy of values.

To confirm these words, let us quote Chopin himself, just like a composer should be quoted:



He who has never experienced “transcending to God” during *ad communionem* anthem will never extract the full value from this *Prelude*.

It is also worth noting that Chopin was very familiar with the *Holy Bible* and he could quote it from memory until the end of his life. In a letter of 17–18 October 1848 to Grzymała he wrote with visible impatience about camouflaged attempts to convince him to follow Protestantism on the part of Miss Stirling’s sister:

Mrs. Erskine, who is a very devout Protestant, and honest, would probably like to bring me round to Protestantism — she brings me the *Bible*, talks about the soul — takes down Psalms for me — religious, honest, but really concerned about my soul — she’s always saying there is a better world than this one — but I know it by heart and answer her with quotes from the *Holy Bible* and explain to her that I know all about it.

3. DEATH

3.1. “BICKERING WITH GOD”

Chopin’s first written reflection upon death comes from the so called *Album Stuttgartarcki*. Here is the beginning (Chopin 1829–1831, pp. 526–528),

Strange thing! This bed, which I’m going to, may have served some other dying man, and it does not disgust me now! Maybe many a corpse lay and lay long upon it? — And how is a corpse worse than me? — Also a corpse doesn’t know anything about his father, mother, sisters, about Tytus! — Also a corpse doesn’t have a sweetheart! — He cannot speak with others with his own tongue! — A corpse is as pale as me; as cold as I now feel about everything. A corpse ceased to live — and I have lived my fill.

The word “corpse” appears twenty two times in Chopin’s *Album Stuttgartarcki*. Why? On the one hand, Chopin gets the news of the violent suppression of the November Uprising.

He imagines scenes of massacre (Chopin 1829–1831, p. 528):

The Stuttgart clock tower clocks chime a night hour. How many corpses in the world now! — Mothers lost children, children — mothers; how many plans fell through, how much sadness about the corpses at this time and how much consolation.

Among the killed there are his friends and relatives (Chopin 1829–1831, p. 530):

Suburbs in ruin — burnt — Jaś! — Wiluś surely dead on the ramparts — I see Marcel in captivity [...]. [...] Do you have a mother? — Such a bad one! — Mine is so good! — Or maybe I don't have a mother any more. Maybe she was killed by Moskal... murdered — senseless sisters, will not budge — no — Father in despair, cannot cope; nobody to support Mother.

Why does he also call himself a “corpse”? Several hypotheses come to mind.

Firstly, he is surely in a state of severe psychological trauma mostly caused by the uprising, fear for the people he left behind, but also an unhappy relationship.

Secondly, in consequence of traumatic exhaustion there arises in him an emotional emptiness, a burnout of a kind — “dry” sadness, i.e. without tears. We read (Chopin 1829–1831, p. 528),

Oh tears? — They haven't flown for so long? — Is it so? — Yet a dry sadness came upon me. Oh — I could not cry for the longest time.

One gets an impression that at this moment of the monologue tears appear in Chopin's eyes, which actually bring him relief. This is why he writes that he feels good and homesick at the same time...

Thirdly, and most importantly, Chopin comes to realize clearly how impotent and helpless he is. Just like a corpse

which has no influence on what is happening in the world, he also has no influence on the fate of his country and compatriots (Chopin 1829–1831, p. 528):

Whatever can come of my existence! — I am of no use to people because I have no calves or gobs! — And even if I did, I would not have anything else anyway! What with the calves — when it cannot be without them!

There are various interpretations of those “calves” and “gobs”. We came up with this: in armed struggle for the freedom of the Country there is demand for propagandists (“gobs”) and soldiers (“calves”); Chopin is no good for either propaganda or combat... This is why he is like a corpse (Chopin 1829–1831, p. 528):

Has a corpse calves? A corpse also like me (!) has no calves; and in this lies another similarity. So mathematically I am not very far from a close bind with death.

Obviously, finding a relevant analogy is not yet a “mathematically exact” proof of the sameness of the objects; let us remember however that these are not a schoolboy's digressions of a dull logic student, but rather the spontaneously scribbled thoughts of a twenty-year-old artist in a state of severe depression.

Some wordings from *Album* have encouraged others to seek analogy with “Improvisation” from scene II, part III, of *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*) by Mickiewicz. Chopin writes (Chopin 1829–1831, p. 530):

Oh God, thou art! — Thou art and not take vengeance! — Haven't You had enough of Moskal crime — or — or you are Moskal yourself!

Whereas in “Improvisation” Konrad says (Mickiewicz 1832/1956, pp. 8–19):

Listen to me, God [...]! [...]
 You are silent! You are silent! [...]
 Whoever named You love was a liar [...].
 I look at my unfortunate fatherland
 As a son at his father on the wrack,
 And I feel all the pain of my people
 Like a mother the child in her womb.
 I suffer, I rage. — While You, happy and wise,
 You still govern,
 Still judge,
 And never are wrong, so they say! [...]
 Speak! For I shall fire on this nature of Yours [...],
 I shall shout that You are not the father of the world but...

The Tsar!

Let us remind that the last word is not spoken by Konrad; it is the devil who says it...

The analogy between Chopin's "God-Moskal" and Mickiewicz's "God-Tsar" is presumably the result of the fact that at that time such comparisons were simply common in Poland, grounded in the well-known tendency of Russians to «divinise» the autocrat. The mechanism of this process will later be rightly described by Chopin's friend, Marquis de Custine, in his *La Russie en 1839*, published in 1843.

Naturally Russians, when they adore the tsar, regard him as so GOOD as God. Poles on the contrary: they call God a "tsar" when they admit He could be so BAD, so CRUEL as a tsar.

Indeed, such supposition is made by Chopin, and for three reasons.

One reason to think of God-being-as-cruel-as-tsar is less relevant from the ideological point of view, as it is incidental: it is the sight or image of a particular death, especially the death of a dear one, what is more, a noble death for the motherland. Chopin draws an otherwise obvious conclusion — it would be better if I were not born at all, since I cannot die like that (Chopin 1829–1831, p. 528):

It is clear that death is man's best deed — so what would be the worst? — Birth! As opposed to the best deed. Then I am right in being angry about being born! — Why oh why was I not allowed to stay inert in the world?

Is it then worth to live like this? Only when there is OTHER motivation — for instance love for the relatives (Chopin 1829–1831, p. 528):

Today I do not long for it [*scil.* death] — unless you are unwell, children [*scil.* sisters]. So also you do not wish anything better than death! — If not, I wish to see you again — not for my own, but an indirect, happiness, since I know how you love me.

Two other reasons for the arising of the God-tsar idea are stronger as they are of a metaphysical nature.

Perhaps the ESSENCE of human life rests in the fact that it is full of suffering and it is, as Søren Kierkegaard will put it in 1848, a "deadly disease". In a letter of July 18, 1856, to Maria Trębicka, Norwid writes that when he complained to Chopin about his suffering, the latter used to say (Norwid 1971–1976, Vol. VIII, p. 269):

You are not the first and not the last to suffer like that.

The conviction that life is a "deadly disease" was expressed by Chopin in *Album Stuttgarcki* as follows (Chopin 1829–1831, p. 528):

Why do we lead such a wretched life, which devours us and only serves the purpose of producing corpses!

The ESSENCE of human life may also lie in the fact that it puts everyone beyond good and evil as it touches everyone alike, as Nietzsche put it later, in 1885. Chopin states (Chopin 1829–1831, p. 528):

On the one hand, what a multitude of dishonest caretakers — on the other, oppressed beings — are corpses. Good and evil corpse! — Virtue and crime is one!

The life of every human being — good as well as evil — is living-towards-death. This «metaphysical» fact can be «tamed» in three ways.

It is true — but after death all bills are settled: the virtuous are saved and the evil are condemned.

It is true — because God is cruel (“like a tsar”).

It is true — because there is no God.

There is then a threefold alternative: the Catholic God who “redeems the sins of the world”, «oriental» God-tsar and — atheism.

Chopin in his *Album* does not reject the first option, does not choose the last one, but at least allows the middle element. This was the essence of his Stuttgarian “bickering with God”.

3.2. FEAR OF DEATH

Death, which Chopin wrote about in *Album Stuttgarcki*, was only an imagined death, and it was, as it later turned out, an incorrect image. Those who Chopin thought were dead had not in fact lost their lives; also the Russian army led by Ivan Paskevich, which invaded Warsaw after the capitulation of the Polish army, did not carry out a massacre like the one which befell the inhabitants of Warsaw’s Prague district in 1794, when following the occupation of the city by the troops of Aleksandr Suvorov, about 20 thousand innocent Prague inhabitants were brutally murdered within a few hours. This is what the Prague massacre seemed like in the testimony of the few survivors (Mościcki 1924, p. 18–20):

No one was spared. Infants severed from their mother’s breasts were pierced with spears, “so they do not grow to take revenge” and thrown into burning homesteads; teenage boys were caught alive in order to take

them away to Russia and there, a devilish concept, raise as enemies of their own fatherland. Nuns in the Benedictine convent were raped and slaughtered, [...] miserable dwellers were dragged out of their houses to put them to fanciful death amidst drunken folly. [...] Soon city squares were covered with hideously slashed bodies, without clothing, in one terrifying mass crammed into mud, shapeless, and yet still twitching with spasms of life of groups and pulp of bodies of soldiers, civilians, Jews, priests, monks, women, children.

A painter’s vision of this crime is presented in the works of Jan Piotr Norblin and Aleksander Orłowski.

However, Chopin stood face to face with a death that was not imagined but real; in 1827 he buried his sister Emilia, then two childhood friends — Białobłocki (in 1828) and Matuszyński (in 1844), as well as his father (in 1844).

Did Chopin fear death?

Mrs. Sand had no doubts that he did, and she had a ready explanation: his fear of death had its source in Polish Catholicism (Sand 1855, Vol. XIII, p. 130):

Catholic religion casts a terrible shadow upon death. Instead of dreaming of a better world for [...] pure souls, Chopin had only terrifying visions [...]. Thoughts of his own death were accompanied by superstitious representations taken from Slavic poetry. As a Pole, he lived among nightmares straight from fairy tales and legends.

This explanation was simple as well as misleading. It could only have arisen in the mind of one who, like her, formed an opinion about these issues on the basis of *Dziady* by Mickiewicz and applied a literary vision of old (and beautiful!) customs preserved in the Lithuanian province to the mentality of the 19th century Warsaw intellectual elite.

Naturally, it is not to say that there were no periods in which nightmares formed in his imagination. However, it was at the time when his health was worse than bad:

bodily emaciation, sleepless nights, a nasty cough during the day...

This does not mean Chopin felt no fear of his death. Yet, it was more of a feeling of anxiety whether he managed to create works whose value would outlive his death, or even — would be appreciated only after his death. This is the meaning of his mysterious words in a letter of October 20, 1841, to Fontana:

The sky is pretty, I am sad in my heart — but that is of no importance. If it were otherwise, maybe my existence would be of no service to anybody.

3.3. “PENULTIMATE DAYS”⁶

He was dying with dignity, although he dreamed of a different death — different in two ways. In a letter of September 4, 1830, he confided to Woyciechowski:

How sad it must be to die somewhere else, not where you lived. How terrible it will be for me to see an impassive doctor or servant by my death bed instead of my family.

First of all then, he died “somewhere else”, although apart from an “impassive doctor” and “servant” there were friends and his beloved sister Ludwika by his bed. Secondly, he died not as a soldier. Before his death he complained (*O Chopinie* 2010, p. 30):

I die miserably in bed — I would understand if it were in a battle.

Yet, in spite of a “different death”, he died resigned to his fate.

In a letter of 25 June, 1849, to his sister Ludwika, in which he asked her to come visit him in Paris, he wrote:

⁶ The title of this paragraph alludes to the words of the startling poem by C. K. Norwid.

God willing, all will be well, and if he will not, at least act as if he did.

In a letter of September 17, 1849, to Franchomme he still hoped it was not the end yet, but he added without a trace of rebellion:

What will be, will be.

Those “penultimate days” of Chopin were variously described by eyewitnesses.

According to Mrs. Viardot, which she wrote in a letter of the end of October, 1849, to Mrs. Sand (Sydow (ed.) 1955, Vol. II, p. 262):

He [*scil. Chopin*] died exhausted by the priests, who forced him to kiss relics six hours in a row until he breathed his last.

Liszt turned out to be much more moderate (1852/1879, p. 305):

Since priest *** was absent, who was in a very close relationship with him since they left the fatherland together, he asked to bring priest Aleksander Jełowicki, one of the most illustrious representatives of Polish emigration. He saw him twice. When the priest was giving him Holy Communion, the dying man accepted it with great devotion, surrounded by a group of friends. Then he asked each and every one to come up to his bed and blessed each of them, praying to God to give grace to them, commending to Him their wishes and hopes.

Two more descriptions are worth quoting.

The first, an extensive one, comes from Solange (Eigeldinger 1978, pp. 230–231):

Gutmann set himself up in the salon with some poor Pole [*scil. Kwiatkowski*], who would not give in and sketched the dying man’s

profile in pencil. The sister, exhausted and worn-out with emotion, flung herself on the bed. The door was closed. A young chaplain [*scil.* Jelowski] and Mrs. Clésinger stayed. She was sitting at the edge of the bed, holding the dying man in her arms, supporting him with her arm; he, the priest, warmed the poor swollen legs with hot towels. The feet were already ice cold. About two a.m., on the 17th, he began to lose his sight, but he remained conscious. He lifted his head and spoke to Mrs. Clésinger, “Do not stay here. It will be hideous. You shouldn’t look at this”. Again his head fell heavily on his friend’s arm. The young woman had never seen death before. She got frightened and called for Gutmann. Big and strong, the already famous pianist, held the master in his mighty arms to prevent him from suffocating. “Who is here?” asked Chopin. He was already unable to see! “Your disciple.” “I am thirsty. Let me drink.” Mrs. Clésinger gave him a glass of water with a splash of wine to drink, from which he drank a sip. His head tilted back. Gutmann held it. Then his eyes directed at Solange completely clouded over and he froze in the last, wistful embrace...

In the other description, Chopin’s niece, Ludwika Jędrzejewiczówna–Ciechomska, who did not have to (like Viardot) give vent to her anticlerical idiosyncratic feelings, stated concisely and to the point:

He died confessed and anointed.

Norwid in his letter of 25 October, 1849, to Cezary Plater commented bitterly on Chopin’s final moments (Norwid 1971–1976, Vol. VIII, p. 80–81):

Chopin died — I wasn’t there at the moment of death, as there was too much satin and lace around the bed of the suffering man — but I saw him some days before and said goodbye. When people instead of HELPING–TO–DIE start HELPING–TO–LIVE, it will be better then, otherwise it’s all just a farce!

Chopin himself affixed his death with telling symbols.

Firstly, according to Liszt, on Chopin’s request Potocka sang Alessandro Stradella’s aria *Se i mei sospiri* for him, one that was reputed to have saved his life.

Secondly, again according to Liszt (1852/1960, p. 174), he requested to be buried in Père–Lachaise cemetery next to the grave of Vincenzo Bellini, who he was friends with and whose music he valued.

Thirdly, as Liszt writes (1852/1879, p. 200):

Chopin, who among all distinguished contemporary musicians gave the least public concerts, wished to be put in his grave wearing the suit he wore for his performances.

Fourthly, he asked his sister Ludwika to take his heart with her to Warsaw (as an emigrant he could not be buried in his country); as we know, it rests now in one of the naves of Holy Cross church in Warsaw.

At times, as Wilhelm von Lenz writes, “prompted by weaknesses” (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 418), Chopin misjudged others (e.g. he overestimated Adolf Gutmann). Mrs. Sand attributed it to the fact that Chopin simply lacked knowledge about human nature. As was the case in many issues concerning Chopin, she was altogether wrong; she took opinions differing from her own to be a lack of knowledge. She forgot that the inability to apply a criterion in some cases did not really denote being unaware of its existence.

Below there are rudiments of Chopin’s anthropology. It was not complete, but the fragments which Chopin managed to consider and leave the conclusions on paper were strikingly accurate.

1. INDIVIDUAL

1.1. RESPECT AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Chopin was rather pessimistic in assessing human nature. In a letter of 19 August, 1848, to his family he complained:

People are always guided by something other than truth.

This is why he considered respect to be the ethical minimum in interpersonal relations.

He also claimed that respect for others is in a sense profitable, as less «costly» in comparison to the prospective effects of its lack. It is better to treat others with respect than to risk

having to humble oneself before them, apologising for the harm one has done them. Following an incident between Liszt and Thalberg, Chopin reprimanded the former (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 220):

Why did you offend him like that and then humble yourself in front of the offended?

This weighing of values, calculating goods, was generally something typical of Chopin. For instance, he thought striving for one’s own well-being, under certain conditions, was nothing wrong. But it was worthier to endow others with well-being; an altruistic attitude was more valuable. However, it is essential to establish in advance what is veritable well-being for those, who we want to «please», especially if these are subtle people. Otherwise it will be as it was in the case of Miss Stirling’s and her sister’s overprotection of Chopin, which he commented upon in a letter of October 1, 1848, to Grzymała:

They will strangle me with their goodness and I will politely not deny it to them.

Chopin considered protectiveness to be the ethical maximum in interpersonal relations. The model was motherly love, which he wrote about in a letter of July 24, 1847, to Mrs. Sand:

[A mother’s love for her children (?) is] the only feeling which does not change. Adversity may conceal it but never distort it.

Chopin knew of it from his own experience as he himself encountered the unique feeling.

1.2. MEMORY AND CONSCIENCE

Oblivion brings relief from our suffering, and oblivion comes with time. As Chopin remembered in a letter of July 24, 1847, to Mrs. Sand:

Time is the remedy.

People attempt to forget, especially if it weighs on their conscience. This is why they avoid the people who could be a «mirror of conscience» for them. They would rather pretend that everything is fine than face a painful truth.

Perhaps this is why Chopin regarded differentiating between “true devotion and flattery” as an important life skill, as he wrote in a letter of 10 February, 1848, to his sister Ludwika.

1.3. WOMAN AND WIFE

Chopin's outlook on the status of women was prevailingly «modern».

He believed that in the area of «knowledge of life», expectations should be higher for women than men. He compared Solange to her mother, writing in a letter of June 8, 1847, to his family:

A woman of twenty can be frivolous, not a forty-year-old.

In a letter to Potocka he distanced himself from Norwid's ungrounded generalisations (Chopin 1949, p. 306–307):

In Norwid's latest letter one thing struck me, that when writing about women in nothing but the best words, he still says that woman, being of a weaker mental disposition than man, will never create anything of value in philosophy, mathematics and music. You and your musical pieces immediately came to mind.

He probably also thought of his sister Ludwika, who was equally if not more intelligent and competent than her husband.

Admittedly, in a letter of June 25, 1849, he utters an «old-fashioned» sentence:

The wife shall be obedient to her husband.

However, one gets an impression that these words were written half ironically and half in fear that his brother-in-law, a traditionalist in the matters of marriage, might read them.

2. SOCIETY

In social issues Chopin was conservative and at the same time politically inert.

Chopin's political conservatism was of a slightly Royalist nature. For obvious reasons, he accepted the *status quo*. Let us remember that the natural environment for the development of his talent was in aristocratic houses, first Polish and then French. This did not prevent him from displaying considerable reluctance and even scorn towards aristocratic (and plutocratic) circles as such, especially French, although he had many friends in these circles. Simultaneously, he remained objective to and somewhat distanced from “the lower class”. In a letter of November 14, 1829, to Woyciechowski he stressed:

It is not birth that makes man.

For him it was not merely a saying; after all, his father was not made by his birth but by his hard work. Yet, in his letter of December 25, 1831, to Woyciechowski, he wrote:

The lower class [in Paris] is extremely embittered — and keeps plotting to change the state of their poverty, but, sadly, the government is too sensitive to such signs and has military police disperse them at a tiniest attempt of gathering. [...] What an impression those terrible voices of a discontent crowd made on me — you cannot conceive! — They were expected to continue the *emeuta* [*scil.* rebellion], as they call it here, but the morons have been quiet so far.

In Warsaw he played not only for his compatriots but also for Grand Duke Constantine.

It is worth noting that even though upon his leaving Poland he got from Grand Duke and his wife, a Pole by the way, a letter of recommendation, he never made any use of it. Also, he never went to St. Petersburg, the capital of the Tsar's Empire, in spite of the invitation. As Mrs. Sand noted (Czarkowski & Jeżewska, p. 460), he never came back to Kingdom of Poland although he was "certain he would be tolerated there" by the partition authorities.

In Paris he kept the company of the Czartoryski and Plater families. He could be found in the company of King Louis-Philippe and the socialist, Louis Blanc, of monarchists and republicans (e.g. Gottfried Cavaignac). He wrote about it half in jest in a letter of mid-January, 1833, to Dziewanowski:

I love carlists [*scil.* followers of king Charles X] and I hate philipists [*scil.* followers of king Louis-Philippe]; I am myself a revolutionist so I think nothing of money.

This was probably only a proof of his political realism, as he was opposed to both socialism, in any case in its utopian-religious character (e.g. Saint-Simon socialism), and the republican system. He made fun of the major Saint-Simon socialist, Pierre Leroux, in a letter of October 20, 1841, to Fontana:

Let us save ourselves till after death. *NB.* Not in the Leroux sense — as then the younger you die, the more right you are. Do not draw any conclusions of bad thoughts here; I'm going to have lunch now.

In a letter of 25 November to Mrs. Sand he ridiculed «fusionism»:

It is a new religion [...] in which the prophet had a vision in the Meudon forest, where he saw God. He promises the atrophy of differences between sexes as ultimate happiness at some point.

Irony can be sensed in his political views. In letters of March 3, and March 22, 1848, to Solange, he wrote:

Can you imagine, the birth of her daughter gives me more joy than the birth of the republic. [...] So far it has been quiet [in Paris] and confusion progresses steadily.

Many years later Solange remembered (Eigeldinger 1978, p. 228):

Egalitarian ideas bored him to death, even in the period of the greatest infatuation with the lady of Nohant. He smiled saying: "Let Mammy play!" This is how much he got from her incredibly boring enchantment with barefoot philosophers.

This attitude of political realism was most probably inherited. His father wrote to him in a letter of October 16, 1842:

So you have prophets in your country? How lucky of them to find some people naive enough to believe it in this century. But what wouldn't a man do to deceive his neighbour?

Let us add that Chopin's Royalist conservatism in the subject of Poland did not denote acceptance of order after the partitions but rather the conviction that restitution of pre-partition Poland was necessary. Yet even here he was far from Zaleski's naivety, when he wrote in a letter of March 5, 1846, to Chopin:

I wish you all the best for your name-day. Dear God, let us celebrate the next one in an already free and independent Poland. Things in Cracow are going excellently. Our Witwicki is lucky to be so close to the fire.

That "fire" was the Cracow Revolution, which ended one day before, a fact Witwicki did not know about at that time.

Chopin expected Poland's path to independence to be bloody. In a letter of April 4, 1848, to Fontana he wrote:

Galicia's countrymen set an example to Volhynia and Podolia; terrible things will surely happen but at the end of it there is great, free Poland, Poland in the end.

As for Chopin's attitude to political activity itself, and in general, ideological activity, Liszt characterised him rightly (1852/1879, pp. 185 and 184):

His inborn sensibility together with great finesse soon made him realise that there was absolutely no point in most political speeches, theological disputes and philosophical digressions. [...]

Even if he sometimes spoke about the political ideas, so frequently disputed in France, so violently attacked and so passionately defended, it was to point out whatever he thought false or wrong rather than to convince his listeners to the legitimacy of any of those ideas.

In a letter of April 15, 1832, to Nowakowski, Chopin wrote:

People here are discouraged [...] and bored with everything for various reasons, but mostly political, which paralysed the whole country.

He himself was also discouraged by the frequent political change, so characteristic to contemporary France. In a letter of July 8–17, 1848, to Grzymała he predicted:

God saved you in those last few days, which were only the beginning (sensible, they say) of the conflict of the two parties. Until now, it was all in the heads, in imagination and in books, put forward in the name of education, justice, solidarity, etc; but now all this filth will be calling for vengeance in the name of martyrdom. And there is no end of vengeance! Domestic war of principles, then the necessary downfall of civilisation under the mask of contemporary vision. Your

great–great–great–great–grandchildren will come from free Poland in a few hundred years or rebuilt France or something else entirely in its place.

Admittedly, Lenz called Chopin “the only political pianist” of his time (Tomaszewski 2001, p. 17); however, he did not mean Chopin's personal political activity (which did not take place) but rather the political weight of his work, which Schumann commented upon in his well-known aphorism (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 255):

Had the autocratic, mighty lord of the North known how dangerous an enemy threatens him in those simple mazurka melodies, he would probably have banned the music. Chopin's works are cannons hidden among flowers.

Nothing changed in thus understood Chopin's non–political attitude since Warsaw period. Then the issue of starting the uprising was on the agenda in his circles. It is hard to doubt Chopin's sincere patriotism, but Chopin was not a fan of the uprising as he doubted its success. The difference of opinion on this matter was one of the reasons of deteriorating relations with Mochnecki, who was an enthusiast of resistance. Another thing was that he was really involved in it and its progress once the uprising broke out, as can be seen in *Album Stuttgarcki*. Remembering about Russian censorship, he wrote with necessary caution in a letter of January 1, 1831, to Matuszyński, and of January 29, 1831, to Elsner:

Why cannot I at least beat the drum? [...]

Since the day [...] I learned about the events of 29 Nov[ember], I haven't received anything but disturbing anxiety and longing.

He asked to be sent a portrait of general Skrzynecki, who was nominated Chief Commander of Polish Army on

February 26, 1831, immediately after the battle of Grochów. Chopin wrote in a letter of July, 1831, to his family:

I received the portrait of our chief commander, general Skrzynecki, but it was badly damaged.

He had pangs of conscience about not taking part in the fighting and he noted in *Album Stuttgarcki* after September 16, 1831 (1829–1831, p. 530):

What to me — I sit here idly — empty-handed — Sometimes I only groan, I grieve on my piano — I despair...

In a letter of January 1, 1831, to Matuszyński he adds:

Why cannot I be with you, why cannot I be a drummer!!!

He was just as deeply emotionally involved in the Great Poland Uprising of 1848 and its downfall on May 9 of the same year. In a letter of May 13, 1848, to Grzymała, he writes:

I got all the dreadful news on Grand Duchy of Poznań through Koźmian (Stan[isław]) and Szulczewski, who Zalewski contacted with me. Trouble and hardship; I don't even long for anything in my soul.

Perhaps he felt it would be inconsiderate and reckless for an artist to join the political playground. Or perhaps he simply valued peace.

It is a fact that he «ran away» from both the Polish November Uprising of 1830 and the French July Revolution of 1848. In Great Britain, where he took shelter from “the hot, revolutionary climate of Paris”, he wrote in a letter of June 2, 1848, to Grzymała:

It is peaceful here. Either Irish or charter issues do not alarm.

3. NATION

3.1. NATIONAL COMMUNITY

To be a Pole is to be a member of the Polish nation. Nation is community, whose members are bound with one country, one lineage, one spirituality, one state and one heritage, in brief, one homeland.

Our native land is the place where we were born or spent at least a part of our lives, especially childhood and youth.

Chopin's homeland was Poland, or more precisely, its province, Mazovia. Kotarbiński, who himself came from Mazovia, but had a Sarmatian (that is, characteristic of all nobility in the multiethnic Commonwealth) and old Western Slavic spirit, writes about it (Kotarbiński 1960, p. 393):

Chopin's personality is prevailingly native Mazovian. Yes, Mazovian, I repeat, not Sarmatian in general or simply Slavic.

Chopin spent nearly half of his life in France and certainly got attached to his father's homeland. Yet this is how he put it, according to Liszt (1852/1879, p. 230):

[Chopin] left Vienna with the intention of going to London; however, on the way there he stopped in Paris, where he did not expect to stay long. [...] Years later, when he grew roots and got attached to France, he kept saying with a smile, “I'm just passing through here”.

He felt at home in Poland — this is how he saw it. In France he was always accompanied by a feeling of a kind of temporality, suspension. In an unsent letter of January 1, 1831, to Matuszyński he writes:

It seems like a dream, like intoxication, that I'm here with you, and what I hear is only a dream.

Gradually this sense of unreality came over him more and more strongly. He wrote in a letter of July 18–20, 1845, to his family:

I'm always partly with you and partly in the room next to mine, where the Lady of the House works, and not at all at my place at the moment, only, as usual, in some odd space. These are probably those *espaces imaginaires*.

Przybylski takes it for a symptom of split personality; a “product of a sick mind” (1995, p. 231). It is rather a symptom of chronic state of longing for his homeland, with its landscape and the people dearest to him.

About his descent Chopin wrote with humor which was so characteristic of him, referring to inter-provincial slurs, according to which Mazovians are born blind, in a letter of July 18–20, 1845, to his family, he wrote:

I'm a veritable blind Mazovian. Not being able to see far, I wrote three new mazurkas.

One more thing: our homeland is the country which will always remain our unvarying landmark. Poland, Mazovia, Warsaw were always these kind of landmarks for Chopin. His family, including his father, felt the same way. Young Ludwika characteristically expressed it in her disarmingly frank letter in *Podróż Józia* (Chopin–Jędrzejewiczowa 1830, p. 45):

We are staying [in Wrocław] in the Main Square; there is a golden tree painted on our inn; opposite there is city hall, old and dirty, but they say it's pretty and far prettier than the one in Warsaw. I don't know what they see in dirty walls; I think clean things are far prettier than dirty ones [...], and they praise a filthy building!

Lineage — it's all those who we descend from, among whom we grow, with whom we associate. Chopin's surname

was French, and he often complained because of that he was often thought to be French. On the other hand, Poles tried to encourage him to Polonize his surname. Maria Wodzińska writes in a letter of September, 1835:

We never cease to regret that your name is not Chopiński or that there is no other indication that you are Polish, since this way the French can argue with us over the privilege of being your compatriots.

At some point Chopin's surname was even spelled phonetically, “Szopen”. This is how even Kotarbiński spelled it, although he had no doubts that it is not a Polish name which makes you a Pole (Kotarbiński 1960, p. 393):

Szopen was and is Polish. He was a conscious and earnest Pole and his works were irresistibly Polish. French blood on his father's side and a French surname cannot change it. Being Polish is in its essence an amalgam of elements of various origin.

It is true, Chopin had a French father, but he thought himself to be Polish, he was raised among many Poles and associated mostly with them, even after leaving Poland (Liszt 1852/1960, p. 144).

His contemporary, Count Antoni Wodziński, wrote (Mirska 1949, p. 199–200):

The son of a Frenchman, he took nothing from the French, except for his politeness coupled with dignity.

Heine put it beautifully in a correspondence to *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 256):

In a way, he belongs to three nationalities: Poland gave him a chivalric spirit and a memory of his suffering, France — charm, Germany — romanticism.

The key expression in this quotation is “in a way”, which neutralises its literary sense. Chopin left no room for doubt here. As we remember, he called Poles “his owns”.

Spirituality — it is, among other things, specific traditions, faith and language.

Polish traditions include, among other things, sharing the Christmas wafer, the Christmas tree and carols, the blessing of the Easter baskets, and the Harvest festival. They also include traditional Polish hospitality. In Chopin’s letters there is often talk of the Polish Christmas and the Polish Easter. In a letter of December 12–26, 1845, to his family, he writes:

It is Christmas Eve today, our Vigilia. They do not know of it here.

He was raised in this tradition. Mikołaj Chopin writes in a letter of January 9, 1845, to his son:

On Christmas Eve [...] we all gathered by the table for dinner, according to tradition as you remember, and also to give Vigilia presents to your sister’s children.

In a letter of May 9, 1836, Mikołaj Chopin writes to his son with apparent pleasure:

They say [...] that the blessing of the Easter baskets took place at your house.

And this is how it was. In a letter written between December 26, 1847, and January 6, 1848, Chopin wrote:

I spent Christmas Eve in an ordinary fashion, but I thought of you all.

In a letter of April 23, 1840, to Fontana, he wrote:

The blessing took place in the club.

In a letter of February 17, 1847, to Grzymała, he reminded him jokingly:

It is Wednesday today, Ash Wednesday. At least come to repent, since you spent the carnival in sadness.

Also, Chopin’s *Kurier Szafarski* brought news of the Harvest festival in Szafarnia.

The Polish faith — it is Christianity, and especially (though not exclusively!) Catholicism. Chopin was undoubtedly Catholic (as we mentioned before), although in some periods of his life he did not manifest it as strongly as some would expect.

The Polish language — Chopin, especially when he was living abroad, communicated mainly in French. However, he thought in Polish, it was also the language he mastered in speech and writing.

The home state — it is not the same as the country. Each nation has a country, even if its shape changes over time; but not every nation has its own state. Chopin lived at a time when Poles did not have a fully independent state.

National heritage — it is the main repository of national culture and the subject of particular aversion (and in some periods intentional destruction) on the part of enemies of the country. Chopin took handfuls from this repository. In a speech during the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Chopin’s birth Ignacy Paderewski said (*O Chopinie* 2010, p. 37):

In Chopin there lies everything we were forbidden: colorful overcoats, belts with gold thread, sombre Czamara coats, the clink of noble swords, the groans of an injured bosom, the rebellion of a tethered soul, cemetery crosses, roadside country churches, the prayers of troubled hearts, the pain of servitude, grief for freedom, a curse on the tyrants and a song of victory.

However exalted these words may seem, they display well an important “part of Chopin’s soul”.

3.2. LOVE FOR THE HOMELAND

As we can see, Chopin fulfilled most conditions necessary to be Polish. At the same time, he was, which is most essential, a Pole at heart. And if one is a Pole at heart, what one should value the most is homeland.

Love for the homeland — patriotism, consists of two ingredients: pride and devotion. Those who love their country take pride in it and dedicate themselves to it, and so they spare no effort to add to its heritage.

National pride is manifested e.g. in emotions which take hold of us when we come to the places that are «sacred» in our tradition. Chopin felt these emotions when he pictured king John Sobieski's Battle of Vienna on Kahlenberg in Vienna.

National pride requires us to, among other things, take care of Poland's reputation. No wonder Chopin took offence when he accidentally heard a German saying in Vienna: "There is nothing to look for in Poland". He wrote about it in a letter of December 26, 1830, to Matuszyński:

Today [...] at lunch at an Italian restaurant, I heard: "God made a mistake, creating Poles" [*"Der liebe Gott hat einen Fehler gemacht, dass er die Polen geschaffen hat"*], so don't be surprised I cannot describe well what I feel. Don't expect any news from a Pole either, since the other person answered: "Nothing happens in Poland" [*"In Polen ist nichts zu holen"*]. Those bastards!

No wonder then that Chopin so commented upon the London *Times* publishing subjective negative articles about Poland in the spring, 1848, in a letter of June 2, 1848, to Grzymała:

[The *Times*] publishes such rubbish that even the English are stricken by its unfavorable attitude.

There is no doubt at all that Chopin added to the national heritage to the greatest degree. His patriotism was an active

patriotism of greatest value, and not, as it sometimes happens, TALKING about being patriotic. Mathias put it simply (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 393):

Chopin was a fervent patriot.

Liszt added (1852/1879, pp. 182–183):

The artist's patriotism found its expression in the direction of his work, in the choice of friends, in displaying special kindness to students of Polish origin, in doing favors to his compatriots frequently and willingly; though I cannot remember him talking willingly about his feelings for his country.

He also systematically frequented parties at the homes of Polish emigrants in Paris, during which he even agreed to accompany dances; there were also benefit concerts for Poles (e.g. Antoni Orłowski in Rouen), taking part in charity events for emigrants; there were collections for monuments of great Poles (e.g. a monument of Niemcewicz)...

3.3. ATTITUDE TOWARD FOREIGNERS

Some confuse patriotism with nationalism, claiming that there is no patriotism without nationalism: hate towards others. They propose cosmopolitanism as the most appropriate. It is a mistake; in order to love your own country you do not have to hate the countries of other people. One of Chopin's main mentors in Warsaw, Linde, realised that, and he thus described a patriot in his *Słownik* (Linde 1807–1815, Vol. IV, p. 64) as:

A citizen concerned about his country's well-being, defending the homeland as he would his ownership. [...] A citizen [who is concerned], insists on working for the homeland's good with all the means he has at his disposal. [...] Patriotism comes from the enlightened bravery which feeds only on the public good, and the heroism which makes sacrifices for it.

It is no wonder then that Chopin did not let anyone persuade him to abandon patriotism. He stated openly in a letter of January 29, 1831, to Elsner:

[Johann] Malfatti is trying in vain to persuade me that each artist is a cosmopolitan. Even if it is so, I am still in my infancy as an artist, whereas I have commenced my third decade as a Pole.

Chopin directed many snide remarks at people of various nationalities using, as one does in such cases, generalisations and making judgements resting on the *pars pro toto* principle about Russians, Germans, Austrians, the French, Polish and non-Polish Jews, Czechs, Americans or the British.

For instance, this is what he wrote about Germans in a letter of May 15, 1826, to Białobłocki:

Apparently, gentle Sir Jan, you got very drunk on German righteousness; you used to invite me to visit you, and now you advise me not to leave! What could be the cause of this accursed avarice! You shouldn't have gone to that Bischofswerder.

While he could not stand the stereotypical German meanness, he valued their love of order. He expressed it in a letter of September 16, 1828, to his family:

A part of Berlin from this side [*scil.* from the east] is not the prettiest, but it delights with order, cleanliness, well-matched objects, in a word, a far-sightedness of a kind, which can be noticed almost in every corner.

Later Chopin summarised the state of affairs prevailing in Germany with one word, “swamp”. His distrust towards Germans was encouraged by his compatriots. Friedrich Wieck, Clara's father, wrote, not very elegantly, to a friend in Halle in a letter of the beginning of October 1835 (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 251):

Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, Chopin is coming to Dresden, but probably won't give a concert here, since he is too lazy. Maybe he could stay longer if not for his false friends who discourage him from getting to know the Leipzig music scene, namely one DOG from Poland.

This is what he wrote about the French and Paris in a letter of November 18, 1831, to Kumelski:

It doesn't pay to think in this world; if you were here [that is in Paris], you'd take it to heart — each Frenchman bounces, screams, even if he's needy. [...] There is [in Paris] the greatest luxury, the greatest meanness, the greatest virtue, the greatest vice, adverts for cures of venereal diseases everywhere — more clamour, noise, rumble and mud than you can imagine — you vanish in all this and it is convenient because no one asks how anyone lives. [...] I thought to stay here for two years.

And in a letter of December 25, 1831, to Woyciechowski, he added:

Sometimes you can get 3, 5 sheets of printed rubbish for next to nothing. Now and then [...] *les amours des prêtres* [priests' love affairs], *L'archevêque de Paris avec M^{me} la Duchesse du Barry* [the archbishop of Paris with the duchess of Barry] and thousands of other coarse pleasantries, sometimes written with great wit.

Yet in a letter of December 12, 1831, again to Woyciechowski, he noted something important to him which Paris guaranteed: privacy. He wrote:

Paris is whatever you want it to be — you can have fun, get bored, laugh, cry, do all you wish and no one will even look at you, because there are thousands doing the same as you — and each in his own way.

In turn, the source of negative stereotype of Jew was the state of affairs in Poland, where Jews had been tradesmen for centuries, a job which was considered by the gentry, but

also by peasants, to be unworthy of a decent men, as it was impossible to do it without fraud. This is the sense of the word “Jew” in Chopin’s letter of October 11, 1841, to Fontana:

As to the selling of my furniture, I would be a fraud, a Jew like doctor Wołowski, if I were to sell old junk — make good use of them.

Later, already in France, the stereotype was strengthened by his own, sometimes unpleasant, experience with publishers and bankers of Jewish origin.

This is what he wrote about the English in a letter from London to one of his friends in Paris in July 1837:

Big deal!! — Huge bathrooms. — But there is nowhere to go pee. — But the English women, the horses, the palaces, the carts, the richness, the luxury, the space, the trees, all of it, from soap to RAZORS, all of it is outstanding — they are all standarized, all educated, all WAHED BUT BLACK like a nobleman’s butt!!

In a letter of August 6–11, 1848, to Franchomme, he added half in jest:

The people here are ugly but seem kind. On the other hand, the cattle is beautiful though it seems malicious.

In a letter of August 19, 1848, to his family, he wrote, this time in earnest:

If this London were not so black and the people were not so heavy and there was no stench of coal and no fog, then maybe I would have learnt English by now. But the English are so different from the French, who I got used to like my own kind; they only take everything for pound, and they like art because it is luxury.

What he thought about «the English soul» can be read between the lines from his letter of September 25, 1839, to Fontana:

I thank you very much for your kind, friendly, not English but Polish soul.

This did not stop him from admiring the culture of these nations and having friends among them: among Russians (Princess Obrescov), among Germans (Hiller), among the French (Delacroix), among German Jews (Heine), among Czechs (Václav Hanka), among Americans (Emerson), among the British (Miss Stirling, Scottish)... This list is obviously incomplete.

Only someone infected with so called political correctness can detect in his words something more than temporary, emphatic, emotional exaggeration, since he did not even spare his own kind. He writes about an old-fashioned Pole, Aleksander Moszczeński, in a letter of August 8, 1839, to Fontana:

[His] mazurkas, as you can imagine, are great, RAM DIDIRIDI, RAM DIDIRIDI, RAYDA [onomatopoeia meant to imitate the rhythm of the mazurka]. [...] He seems to be a kind-hearted OLD Polish law-giver (probably one of those who... [pee?] from the bridge to the river [*scil.* do not have toilets in their homes]).

For obvious reasons Chopin’s attitude to Russians, Germans (including Prussians) and Austrians, that is the nations whose leaders stood behind the partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century, was particularly telling.

This attitude was tinged with a *sui generis* ethnic fatalism. Norwid had some influence on Chopin’s outlook on this matter. This is Chopin’s account of one of his conversations on this subject with Norwid, included in his letter to Potocka (Chopin 1949, p. 308–309),

[Norwid], among other things, eagerly tried to prove to me that just as a man, a nation never changes; it always has the same virtues and vices. He said that the Teutonic Germans were as sly, despicable and cruel

as contemporary Germans. Also we will not get rid of our virtues and vices — squabbling, lack of consent, self-interest, which have put us in servitude, will do it again even if we miraculously manage to recover. I listened to him, like to a grim prophet and I had to admit he was right. I tried to find consolation in our Polish saying, “It will get better” [...] and I also attempted to console him with it. Then I played *Jeszcze Polska* [*scil.* Polish national anthem] and we both cried.

3.3.1. RUSSIANS

In Chopin’s times Russians were called “Moskals”. For Poles contemporary to Chopin, including him, the word was perceived as negative. It came from the fact that although the partitions and annihilation of the Commonwealth at the end of the 18th century was the work of three neighbouring empires, Russia, Prussia and Austria, in the end it was Russia which initiated the process, benefited from it and secured the after-partition «order». The greatest three Polish uprisings, the Kościuszko Uprising, the November Uprising and the January Uprising, were deliberately directed at Russia.

When Poles criticised Russians–Moskals, they basically meant the tsar’s regime and its departments working in the parts of Polish territory incorporated into the Tsar’s Empire, mainly including the police, informers and censorship; they also meant the political system itself, which was the base of all these institutions.

This system was totally alien to Poles, who valued other principles. These were: the possibility of choosing the country’s government, the openness of public life, relationships with neighbouring countries based on the principle of *status quo*, personal freedom of the gentry guaranteed by the law, including freedom of religion, humane (for those times) treatment of the lower classes of the society (peasants, craftsmen, merchants) and recognising the rights of the minorities.

We get an insight into this system from Chopin’s friend, Marquis de Custine, who went for a three-month-long trip to the Tsar’s Empire in 1839 and published his thoughts

on it in 1843 in *La Russie en 1839*. Interestingly, many of his critical remarks on the «Moskal soul», that is, those features of Russian society which encouraged the triumph of autocracy east of Poland, are still true now. Despite all the political perturbations and the changes in the Russian mentality connected to them, a contemporary «Marquis de Custine» would be left with many similar conclusions as his 19th century predecessor.

Here are the opening and closing sentences of *La Russie en 1839*, written by a man whose father and grandfather were decapitated on a Jacobin guillotine (1843, Vol. I, p. 18; Vol. IV, p. 327):

I went to Russia to seek arguments against proportional representation and I came back as an advocate of a constitution. A mixed system of government does not encourage activity but ageing nations have less need of action and such a government gives the most support to production and brings the greatest wealth and well-being to the people, and most of all, such a government causes the greatest activity of thought in the sphere of practical ideas; finally, it makes citizens independent through the system of law and not through elevation of spirit: this surely makes up for all the inconvenience. [...]

If your son is ever dissatisfied with France, use my example and tell him, “Go to Russia!”

The Moscow system, which de Custine witnessed on the spot, was, firstly, an absolute monarchy; officially it was hereditary but in truth it was «corrected» by bloody coups. It was unthinkable in this system to introduce a structure which would put any restrictions on the autocratic power of the monarch, even in the form of constitutional monarchy. Here are the words which de Custine used to present the tsar’s hypocritical point of view (1843, Vol. II, p. 17):

I have been a constitutional monarch [*scil.* in Poland] and the whole world is aware how much it cost me that I did not want to yield to the demands of

this DISHONORABLE system. Buying votes, corrupting consciences, charming some in order to deceive others — I despised all those methods as they are humiliating both to those who take orders and those who give them, and I paid dearly for the effort to be sincere. But, thank God, I finished with this despicable political system once and for all. I will never be a constitutional king again. My need to say what I think is too strong to ever let me consent to rule a nation with the use of my cunning and plotting.

Secondly, the Moscow system was manifested in secret politics: what counted here was, most of all, plotting and murder mixed with hypocrisy and self-hypocrisy. De Custine considered it to be an incurable disease of the system (1843, Vol. I, p. 196; Vol. IV, p. 279):

There are cures against political savagery; there are none against the mania of seeming to be something which you are not. [...]

Crime in the open triumphs only for a while, whereas false virtues corrupt the spirits of nations for ever.

Thirdly, another component of the Moscow system was imperial aggression: seeking to always enlarge the territory at the cost of the neighbours and regardless of the costs which Russia had to bear along with the neighbouring countries. De Custine wrote, almost prophetically (1843, Vol. I, p. 149; Vol. II, p. 336):

Russians are warriors, but only for the conquering; they fight out of obedience and greed, whereas Polish knights have fought only out of love to the cause. [...]

If the greatness of the purpose is measured with the amount of deaths, one has to foretell ruling over the world for this nation.

Fourthly, the Moscow system was characterised by the lack of autonomy of the individual, total incapacitation of the citizens, including those parts of society whose members were officially «free».

The lack of autonomy characteristic to the Moscow system was supplemented with brutal exploitation, which was a hierarchically ordered ruthless exploitation «of all by all». De Custine reproached Russians for it, as it led to the decline of compassion (1843, Vol. II, pp. 164–166):

The objects of our compassion have to retain some degree of self-dignity for us to take their misery seriously! ... Pity is commiseration, and what man, even the most compassionate, would want to commiserate with that which he scorns? [...] That you got accustomed to this cruelty [*scil.* cruel treatment of others] explains your [*scil.* Russians'] indifference; however, it does not justify it.

The crowning achievement of the Moscow system was ethnic intolerance: there could be only one true nation — Russian and, let us add, Eastern Orthodox.

Obviously, in various periods, depending on the external circumstances and the personality features of a given monarch and his camarilla, the indicated aspects of the system were present to varying degrees, but they never reached a «zero» level.

Marquis de Custine, after his return from the trip, wrote in a letter of November 15, 1839, to Chopin:

I have returned from the end of the world, and you — from even farther, since one travels farther in the heart and imagination than by post. In the name of Poland's honor I trust I will find you unchanged. [...] I'm staying in the country to rest after my ramble through Siberia.

“The end of the world”, “Siberia” — these are very telling terms to define St. Petersburg, Moscow, Jaroslav, Nizhny Novgorod...

Chopin approved of the sense of this description and it is not impossible that in some cases he even provoked the author's comments to some degree. This concerned especially the comments on Polish mentality, some of which

were snide, but most of which were favorable to Poles, even complimentary, sometimes even overly complimentary.

In the early letters of 1837 and the end of 1839, the Marquis reproached Chopin:

In my opinion, the Polish spirit is so fleeting that I cannot help feeling anxious that you might forget about our dinner today. [...]

Even I, who have considered myself to be a poet of sorts, begin to doubt them all, since I learned of the uselessness of selfless feelings. [...] Farewell, Polish Trifler!

But in *La Russie en 1839* he wrote (1843, Vol. I, pp. 151, 365; Vol. II, pp. 365–366):

Poles are in exactly the same position in relation to Russians as the latter were in relation to the Mongolians at the times of Batu–Khan’s successors. [...]

In vain do I try to think only about what I’m saying; my imagination wanders against my will from Warsaw to Tobolsk, and the very word “Warsaw” brings back my distrust [for what Russians say about Poles]. [...]

At present, the roads of Asia are still filled with exiles recently torn from their families, who walk in search of their own graves, like herds which leave a pasture to go to a slaughterhouse [...]. This new outburst of anger [of the tsar’s regime] was caused by a supposed Polish conspiracy — a conspiracy of YOUTHFUL MADMEN, who would be perceived as heroes if they succeeded, although in my mind their attempts are even more noble in their hopelessness. My heart bleeds for these exiles, their families, their country...

When he was sightseeing in the Treasury in the Kremlin he noted (1843, Vol. III, p. 203):

The throne and crown of Poland also have their place in this grand tsar’s and king’s firmament...

He describes how agitated he was at the sight of an inscription on a stone slab in the Dominican church in Nevsky Avenue in St. Petersburg (1843, Vol. I, pp. 268–269):

Poniatowski!... Royal victim of vanity, that gullible lover of Catherine the 2nd, he is buried here without any due respect, instead, he is deprived of respect for kingship; he only retained the pride of misery. [...] The adversities that befell that king, his cruelly punished infatuation and the treacherous policy of his enemies will draw the attention of all travellers to his abandoned tomb.

He quoted Krasicki’s fable, “Konie i furman” [“Horses and coachman”] (1843, Vol. III, p. 255):

I shall end with a fable, as if written solely for this purpose, to justify my anger [*scil.* at those who encouraged Cossacks to fight by means of deception]. Its author is a Pole, a bishop of Warmia, famous for his wisdom and wit during the reign of Frederick the 2nd. French translation by Count Elzéar de Sabran.

He wrote that Russians demonise Poles and blame them for all internal attempts to dismantle the empire (1843, Vol. II, p. 567):

Uproar in the Volga Region continues, and all the horrors are attributed to the provocations of Polish emissaries.

Even Aleksandr Turgenev, a member of intellectual elite, said things like (1843, Vol. III, p. 329):

Whenever Poles notice that the tsar is inclined to treat them more leniently, they start plotting again, send false emissaries and simulate conspiracy in the absence of any real crime, all of it exclusively in order to kindle hate in Russians and to provoke new persecution of their compatriots. In brief, what they fear most is forgiveness, since leniency on the part of the government would change the feelings of their peasants, who would become fond of their ENEMY in the end if they experienced his favors.

Poles’ natural aversion to the Moscow system was then paired with an aversion on the part of the exponents of the

system towards Poles. De Custine wrote (1843, Vol. I, p. 153):

The persecution of Poles is [not] the result of the emperor's personal antipathy: no; it is the result of cold and profound reasoning.

Also Chopin was affected by this aversion. Chopin, who was invited to the house of Wincenty Wodziński in Dresden, was playing his compositions there when Count Józef Krasiński, who attended the concert, was summoned to the Russian embassy and reprimanded by an official (Simonówna 1935, p. 105):

If Sir wishes to be our Monarch's faithful subject, and not spend his time in a foreign country with a reputation of a rebel, you should kick out demagogues such as Chopin! Or at least force him to keep quiet and leave the house, or else we will be unable to prolong your stay here [*scil.* in Dresden].

Naturally, there was never a shortage of demagogues in Poland; it is after all one of the ailments of democracy; but in Chopin's case such invective was certainly only a reflection of an ideological stereotype, characteristic to the tsar's officials, and not an objective appraisal.

Such is the nature of stereotypes. Even Chopin could not restrain himself from uttering an unpleasant allusion to Lenz, who was a German of Russian citizenship (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 411):

The only thing I can hold against you is that you are a Russian.

Strangely enough, it was a Russian, Mily Balakirev, who was one of the most devoted fans of Chopin and of the idea of making Chopin's home village, Żelazowa Wola, Chopin's culture centre. It is thanks to his initiative that the residence was gradually restored at the end of the 19th century; it is

thanks to his mediation at the tsar's court that a monument to Chopin could be erected next to the residence in 1894.

3.3.1. CZECHS

Chopin was fond of the Czechs like probably of no other nation. Perhaps the source of this fondness was his, and his family's, cordial friendship with his Czech teacher, Żywny. The friendship is well depicted in the charming memoirs of Franciszek Maciejowski, published by Wójcicki (1858, Vol. III, p. 262):

Chopin lived in very close friendship with my brother Ignacy, who served in the former Polish army as an officer of artillery and ended his life in France, in the city of Caen. I remember that we both used to visit Chopin, who was busy finishing the composition of a concert, which he was going to play soon after in Vienna. He played some excerpts to us on his piano, which was neither mahogany nor walnut, just plain pine. We listened, enchanted. Now, my brother (when he was a functionary in Warsaw Criminal Court) travelled with Chopin several times during winter holiday. The last time, as my brother informed me in his letter of July 17, 1829, they went to Vienna together with Alfons Brandt, a medical doctor who died a couple of years ago here in Warsaw, and this is when they visited the Bohemia.

In Prague they visited a scientist, already famous at that time, Václav Hanka, and since they were both of a merry disposition, he liked them immensely. As a proof of their friendship, Hanka asked them to write something in his diary as a keepsake. So they took his diary with them to their flat: my brother Ignacy wrote poems of the ancient brotherhood of Poles and Czechs, and Chopin composed a suitable mazurka. They gave the diary, where they so neatly wrote the notes and the verses, back to Hanka, who was very glad of it and kept saying that he had never seen anything of this sort in a diary. I enclose the notes for the mazurka; about the poems, I can only remember two verses of the second part of one stanza:

The whole world knows that Czechs
And Poles have always been brothers.

What was Chopin's hierarchy of values, what he considered to be virtue and what happiness of man was according to him, can be deduced from his evaluations of other people and from the reflection of his own personality: how he behaved, what he reproached himself for.

It was all described in detail above. However, let us now put it all together and risk putting it in order «for Chopin».

1. GOOD

Good — is a positive value.

Let us single out values — positive as well as negative — natural, economic, public and mental values.

Natural goods: these are most of all the vital goods — life, health and physical fitness, as well as the hedonist goods: pleasure and satisfaction.

Economic goods: wealth should be singled out here.

Public values: first of all, these are communicative goods, like fairness and truthfulness, as well as referential goods, like modesty and forbearance, and political goods — freedom and the ability to influence.

Finally, mental goods: these are most of all intellectual features, like knowledge and prudence; moreover, emotional goods — cheerfulness and openness, and volitional goods — courage, composure and persistence. Among these values, the positive communicative, referential and mental values constitute virtues, and their negative equivalents constitute flaws; virtues and flaws are sometimes called «arethical values».

One should add moral values to all the mentioned categories of values, as they are in a way superstructured over them, as moral values, and especially positive moral values or moral goods, are inherent to those of our deeds whose intention is to bestow others with one of those extra-moral goods.

Let us call arethical and moral goods «ethical goods».

What was the order of extra-moral goods according to Chopin?

Among the vital goods, he prized the one which he himself lacked: health. As he wrote in a letter of March 27, 1839, to Grzymała:

God give you good humor, health and strength; these are so necessary.

Ten years later, in a letter of April 13, 1849, to Solange, he even wrote:

You cannot have it all in this world; so be content with the greatest bliss, which is health.

However, being alive and fit was precious only to the extent to which they served moral goods.

He appreciated wealth, and therefore: economic goods, and there were periods in his life when he was wealthy.

Among political goods he appreciated freedom more than the ability to influence others. Freedom meant for him also maximum privacy, which Paris offered to him, more so than Warsaw.

However, it is hard to say with confidence what was his private *summum bonum*: his extra-ethical greatest good.

2. VIRTUE

Let us now analyse Chopin's outlook on ethical goods, that is: arethical and moral.

Out of communicative virtues, Chopin appreciated fairness as well as truthfulness, although not without certain objections. However, he considered referential virtues, modesty and forbearance, to be more important. Incidentally, he was in full possession of all of them.

Chopin also appreciated intellectual virtues: knowledge, and most of all — prudence.

It seems that Chopin preferred emotional virtues, cheerfulness and openness, to intellectual virtues, and especially preferred volitional virtues; among them he appreciated composure and persistence more than courage. There was in it an anti-romantic trait of the axiology Chopin believed in, even though he did not always observe it: in Romanticism, courage was more important than composure and persistence, as well as melancholy and misanthropy instead of cheerfulness and openness.

What was Chopin's attitude to moral goods?

There is no doubt that they were at the top of his axiological hierarchy.

3. HAPPINESS

In a letter of September 18, 1830, to Woyciechowski, Chopin writes:

People often call a damaged coat, an old hat etc. a misfortune.

Then does owning a whole coat, a new hat and “so on” make one happy?

Władysław Tatarkiewicz, a valued expert on felicitology, identified happiness as long-term satisfaction with life as a whole. Chopin was of a similar opinion.

What, according to him, was needed to achieve such satisfaction?

Good health.

A loving family; one's own.

Living in a free country, with unlimited freedom to travel anywhere in the world.

Having devoted friends.

Devoting one's life to creative work for others.

Appreciation of the fruit of this work.

Was Chopin happy in this sense?

He had devoted friends, he did creative work and the wonderful fruit of his work earned the great esteem of people. He was not healthy, he did not manage to start a family and he did not live to see a free Poland. He was only partially happy. Therefore he was, to use his own term, happy-unhappy. He was content, but only sometimes: not always. He could have been pleased, but only with a part of his life, not with his life as a whole.

Yet, can anyone ever achieve more than that?

Chopin never harbored any illusions in this matter. In a letter of September 4, 1830, to Woyciechowski, he wrote:

Not always are you content; perhaps only a few moments are supposed to give joy so why abandon the illusion, which cannot last very long anyway.

PART IV

ARTISTIC PRINCIPLES

1. CONSIDERATIONS

The term “aesthetics” is used in various meanings, often significantly different from each other. “Aesthetics” is what we call, on the one hand, a certain scientific DISCIPLINE which concerns aesthetic values, on the other hand, a certain SET OF VIEWS on these values. Here, the matter will be about aesthetics in the latter sense category: x ’s aesthetics is a set of x ’s aesthetic views; Chopin’s aesthetics is a set of Frederick Chopin’s aesthetic views.

Aesthetics as a set of views (e.g. accepted in a given period, by a given group of people or a given person) is divided into two kinds, depending on how it is reconstructed: let us call the two, after Władysław Tatarkiewicz, “explicit aesthetics” and “implicit aesthetics.” X ’s explicit aesthetics is a set of views displayed by x , that is, expressed in oral and written statements. X ’s implicit aesthetics is a set of views «contained» in x ’s works. In the case of the latter we would usually say that the implicit aesthetics consists of a certain set of values represented in the works (rather than a set of views). However, it can be assumed that whenever one achieves value v in his works, so often he believes that value v should be achieved. When reconstructing a set of values executed in x ’s works, at the same time we reconstruct a set of x ’s convictions about what is aesthetically valuable.

The “discipline of aesthetics” was roughly defined above through the characteristics of its domain: as a discipline which involves aesthetic values. If this definition is to be free

of a vicious circle structure, we still have to establish what esthetic values are — without any references to the notion of AESTHETICS. We will not go into the history of semiotic functions the term or controversies over its scope. We agree here with Władysław Tatarkiewicz, who claimed that many aesthetic terms are summative terms, that is, such that its scope is a sum of a few sub-scopes. “Esthetic” — means: concerning beauty or art; “esthetic value” is beauty or a component of beauty — or (any) value of a work of art.

Chopin did not write any systematic aesthetic treatises. On the basis of the surviving *Esquisses pour une méthode de piano* one can imagine how the treatise would have been written (Chopin 1993, p. 48):

1. A separate (abstract) sound does not make music, just like a separate word does not make a language.
2. Many sounds are needed to make music.
3. Between any two sounds one of them is higher and the other one lower.
4. In order to record music on paper, one needs to use lines laid out according to the pitch.
5. Since the relationship between sounds indicates which one is higher and which one is lower, one can imagine infinitely high or infinitely low sounds.
6. In the multitude of sounds we find a range in which the vibrations are the most audible to us.

What strikes us is how to the point, concise and accurate these formulations are — no sign of *quasi*-theoretical «mysticism». Let us remember: Chopin had the need to express his thoughts in a precise way, in speech as well as in music. When he was composing, he looked for each phrase for a long time. When he was speaking or writing, he took his time to find the most suitable phrases. But when he found them — they were the most accurate phrases and words. Here he was following Elsner’s example, who wrote about

himself in connection to the publication of *Rozprawa o rytmiczności* (Elsner 1818, p. 2):

Although in the long period of research on music and rhythmic, the latter of which a poet has at his disposal, thanks to the Polish language, to beautify poems in a musical sense, I tried to comply with Horace's principle of *nonum prematur in Annom*, I nevertheless believed that one needs even more time to explicate the issue with such intelligibility, ease and accuracy which would satisfy a connoisseur and a reader. Thus I confess that I would not have attempted to have this dissertation published if I had not been repeatedly called to do it.

Chopin's aesthetic treatise would surely belong to analytical aesthetics — one could say (if the word did not have negative connotations for some), «positivist». It would only refer to things perceptible to scientific knowledge.

Which views would be presented in the treatise can be partly reconstructed from on the basis of Chopin's explicit aesthetic remarks, scattered — apart from the *Esquisses* — in his letters, and from recounts of the people who were in direct contact with him.

Chopin's implicit aesthetics is outlined by his works: the values he achieved in his musical pieces.

Chopin's aesthetics is, most of all, the aesthetics of music. We know little of his views on other domains of art; unfortunately not many of his drawings have survived to this day; the accounts of his public acting are also scarce (although on the basis of some witnesses' accounts we can assume that Chopin was highly talented also in these fields).

One has to remember that in the field of music Chopin actually represented two different arts: he was both a composer and a pianist. We should devote our attention to both of these components individually. Sadly, Chopin's pianist skills are only known from descriptions; in his times it was impossible to preserve musical performances for posterity through recording. However, there remain the recordings of Raoul

Koczalski, a disciple of Karol Mikuli, who was said to have played in a style which was exceptionally «Chopin-like».

Let us try to reconstruct Chopin's views on art in general and his remarks on art criticism, and then — the «world of values» of Chopin—the-pianist and Chopin—the-composer.

2. CREATOR

Chopin considered music art along with painting, sculpture and architecture. He wrote ironically about the English people's attitude to the former in a letter of October 21, 1848, to Grzymała:

Here [i.e. in England] art is painting, wood-carving and architecture. Music is not an art and is not called art, and if you call someone an artist, the English would immediately think: a painter, an architect or a wood-carver. Whereas music is just a profession, not an art, and no one will call a musician an artist, because in their language and tradition it is different from art, it is a profession.

Chopin drew a thick line between art and craft as well as between high arts and applied arts. In the domain of music it was visible in his clear distinction between artistic music and music e.g. for dancing. He sometimes performed the other kind. However, in a letter to his family, of December 22, 1831, he stressed the fact that his new mazurkas are “unfitting for dance” ANY MORE. In his opus pieces, that is the ones which he wanted to sign with his name and leave to the future generations, he only included examples of artistic music.

What was Chopin's attitude to the arts he himself did not practise?

There are contradictory records of his attitude to painting. On the one hand, according to Mrs. Sand, he was not familiar with arts other than music. In her accounts, he valued his friend of the later years of his life, Delacroix, as a person rather than a painter. Chopin's letter of August 30,

1846, to Franchomme, seems to confirm this, as he wrote about Delacroix:

He is an artist worthy of the highest praise — I spent some wonderful moments with him. He loves Mozart and knows all his operas by heart.

Chopin valued Delacroix for his personality and... his musicality. However, it is possible that Mrs. Sand's ironic statements on the topic are what they are because Chopin did not admire her own artistic output. Admittedly, he wrote with approval about some of her texts, but he valued them for the theme (Mickiewicz) rather than their literary value as such.

On the other hand, we know from his letters that painting made a great impression on Chopin. In a letter to his parents he described in detail his trip to an art gallery in Vienna (unfortunately the description did not survive) and in another letter he mentioned that he went to the gallery in Dresden twice. He wrote about it in a letter of September 12, 1829, to Woyciechowski:

The gallery is marvellous.

In a letter of November 14, 1830, to his family, he noted:

I did not go to see anything again in Dresden except for the art gallery; it's enough to see *Grüne Gewölbe* once, but I saw the picture gallery again with great interest. If I lived here, I would go there every week.

So Chopin had to value painting after all. Perhaps he was unacquainted to some degree with art contemporary to him: romantic art.

Chopin's attitude to romantic literature was ambivalent. According to Mickiewicz, Chopin made deliberate references to it in his works. He cultivated friendship with Mickiewicz himself and he valued his works very highly (*Dziady*, *Ballads*,

Pan Tadeusz). However, he disliked Słowacki's works (incidentally, the feeling was mutual). Chopin's literary tastes were thus explained by Iwaszkiewicz (1955, pp. 153 and 105):

The realism of *Pan Tadeusz* suited him, he did not understand Słowacki. He to laughed up his sleeve over Towiański and his disciples. He treated romantic authors with reserve. [...]

He made intentional references to romanticism in literature: "... That crossbow! — how Romance!"

Chopin was widely regarded as a typical romantic artist. Indeed, there were quite a lot of romantic features in his attitude and personality, although he just naturally had them and did not acquire them under the influence of some «ideological» impulses. As Władysław Tatarkiewicz wrote, it was a parallel, rather than causal, relationship (Tatarkiewicz 1963, p. 737):

It was a kind of a parallel relationship [...] of his moral attitude, his outlook on life, the world, arts [...]. The core of the parallelism was that the philosophy of Chopin's times, and not only one that was relatively closer to him, was just like his music, characterised with grandeur, creativity, inspiration, new ideas. It might be the only thing they had in common, but it is quite a lot nevertheless.

It is worth remembering, however, that he accepted only some features of romanticism. A large part of its musical «ideology» was foreign to him, e.g. monumental, «fantasy», programme music in the sphere of composition, and pure, empty virtuosity in the sphere of execution. This is how Iwaszkiewicz commented on it (1955, p. 153):

Chopin's materialistic scepticism made him approach with distrust all that was mystic, fantastic, blurred in romanticism.

Chopin was not very familiar with the «metaphysical» aesthetics of romanticism. What is more, many of Chopin's

statements prove that his largely rational attitude to reality (which did not interfere with his great sensitivity) would not let him accept this aesthetics. One has to agree with Władysław Tatarkiewicz, who writes (1963, p. 737):

Even if he knew [it], the philosophy contemporary to him had to be largely unfamiliar to him.

Chopin possessed many features of a stereotypical artist of his times. He was unusually sensitive, he lived in exile and missed his country and his family terribly, he was in love several times but all his relationships ultimately ended badly. Finally, he was terminally ill and struggled with his disease throughout his life with almost superhuman effort. Yet, did Chopin really fit the stereotype of a romantic artist in every respect? A romantic artist is a person who is, most of all, guided by inspiration, who creates in a surge of emotional frenzy, closed to the world. Was Chopin this kind of artist?

Many of his contemporaries believed so. For example, Mickiewicz wrote (Pigoń (ed.) 1958, p. 209):

Chopin speaks with passion and gives us Ariel's [*scil.* angel's] view of the world.

What did Chopin himself think of it? He did not question the importance of inspiration, but he added (Chopin 1949, p. 310–311):

There are moments for every artist when inspiration drops and pure mind's work begins. When you take the notes in your hand, you can even point your finger at such places. What matters is to have as much inspiration as possible and as little work as possible. [...] If an elaborate work looks like an improvisation, the impression you will make is the greatest. This is why you have to note down all your inspired ideas immediately. You know yourself it is not easy as they can disappear in a flash. And then

you have to remember them with great precision. In short, you see, I deal with catching the slightest shadows of inspiration and they, scoundrels, slip away like fleas.

This is why an artist needs such features as patience and persistence in seeking perfection, combined with the knowledge of one's own shortcomings. Cecylia Działyńska related Marcelina Czartoryska's comments (Działyńska 1926, p. 4),

Moral qualities: dependability, persistence in working, caution, subtlety, and most of all, being strong-willed, are of great consequence here.

Striving for mastery and the awareness of his predisposition was manifested, among other things, in the fact that Chopin confined himself to composing (almost) exclusively for piano. This is what he wrote to Potocka (Chopin 1949, p. 310–311):

I know my limitations and I realise I would make a fool of myself if I aimed and placed myself too high without the necessary skills. They keep pestering me to write symphonies and even operas, and various other kinds of compositions; they would like to make me a Polish Rossini, Mozart and Beethoven, all in one.⁷ And I laugh silently and think that you have to start with small things. I'm only a pianist; if I'm worth something, that is good; greater ones will come after me, ones who will see music in a wider perspective; with them, Polish music will develop and flourish. I think it is better not to do a lot, but do it as well as I can, than to try to do it all, badly. I will always adhere to this principle. [...] I don't even see myself as the John the Baptist of the Polish music, but I would like to live to the day when one comes. I just want to write and leave behind the base of what is truly and fundamentally Polish, and teach to reject false Polish values. Maybe I will succeed somehow.

⁷ This was probably an allusion to H. Heine's words, who wrote in a correspondence from Paris to *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 256), "Chopin is a genial musical poet, whose name deserves to be mentioned only together with Beethoven, Mozart and Rossini".

He did not write any great symphony or opera which would probably bring him greater fame in his lifetime and which he was expected to compose. He probably did not find out that in Vilna, in 1848, a première of the first version of *Halka* by Stanisław Moniuszko took place — as it turned out, the real “John the Baptist” of Polish operatic music. Poland had to wait for more than half a century for the real “John the Baptist” of Polish symphonic music. That proved to be Mieczysław Karłowicz, who started his great and tragically disrupted symphonic work with the poem, *Powracające fale* [*The Returning Waves*], Op. 9, in 1904. It was probably no accident that in the same year Karłowicz published *Nie wydane dotychczas pamiątki po Chopinie...* [*The Yet Unpublished Souvenirs of Chopin...*]

Chopin additionally justified his choice — limiting himself to piano compositions — by his inability to gain adequate experience in the area of larger forms and a greater number of instruments, that is, the ability to hear his own symphonic or operatic attempts. It is perhaps worth mentioning that other Polish composers in the 19th century, when Poland was under occupation, faced the same problems. Some even claim this to be the reason why none of the Polish symphony composers realised their potential fully. Chopin wrote in a letter of December 14, 1831, to Elsner:

To become A GREAT COMPOSER, one would need immense experience, which, as you taught me, one gains not only through listening to others but above all by listening to performances of one's own pieces.

With the perspective enabled by two hundred years distance, we can certainly say that Chopin made the right choice.

3. PERCEPTION

One should include Chopin's opinions on art criticism in his general aesthetic views.

Chopin kept his distance from music critics. He realised that secondary issues determine critics' judgements. In a letter of June 20, 1826, to Białobłocki, he wrote:

The audience in Warsaw, which is used to Rossini's light songs, will praise the first performance, not out of their own conviction, but rather following the opinions of experts, because Weber is praised everywhere.

One might get an impression that Chopin, knowing his own worth (and even genius), did not count on the critics to judge his compositions fairly. Norwid captured this idea in a fitting metaphor: they had to wait for “a late grandson” — and they saw it happen.

People close to Chopin stressed the fact that Chopin was very far from flattering the critics and he avoided all kinds of advertising. Admittedly, there was a period when Chopin recognised the need for «meeting high society», which could have given him good press. He wrote ironically in a letter of the middle of January, 1833, to Dziewanowski:

I entered the high society, I mingle with ambassadors, princes, ministers, and I do not even know how on earth it happened, as I did not ask to be here. It is the most useful thing for me now, for this is where good taste is supposed to form: you immediately have more talent if you were heard in the English or Austrian embassy; you play better if you are Princess Vaudémont's protegee.

He was aware of the fact that an artist's success depends on many factors — apart from talent, he needs a patron. Success also depends on the choice of repertoire. In his letters of May 13, and June 2, 1848, to Grzymała, he wrote:

There [in the London Philharmonic Hall] you have to play Mozart, Beethoven or Mendelssohn, and although the directors and others tell me that they had already played my concertos there, and with success, I would rather not, since nothing may come out of it. [...]

I do not want to play in the Philharmonic Hall, as it will not bring any money, only a lot of trouble: one rehearsal, and a public one, and you have to play Mendelssohn to be hugely successful.

In a letter of November 22, 1848, to Solange, he did not hesitate to give her the following advice:

Your husband's sculpture, even a most beautiful one, has to be praised a lot in order to be pronounced beautiful. Then it is enough to say that it is his work, and it will be admired by all. First of all, it has to be appreciated by the great princes and peers of England.

Critics generally valued Chopin highly, but there were exceptions. Chopin commented on some critical remarks in a letter of March 7, 1830, to Woyciechowski:

Now I can feel it stronger than ever: one who could accommodate all tastes has not been born yet.

He also knew that reviews were sometimes written by dilettantes and they have little to do with «music reality». The following event, described in a letter of April 10, 1830, to Woyciechowski, is illustrative of this:

Dziennik Urzędowy [*The Public Journal*] also devoted a few pages to my eulogy, but also published such well-meant rubbish in one of the issues, that I was desperate until I read the reply in *Gazeta Polska* [*The Polish Gazette*], where they most rightly withdrew the other one's overstatements.

German critics treated Chopin's compositions with reserve. Chopin remembered in his letter of November 9, 1830, to his family:

The Germans were surprised by my playing at the rehearsal: "Was für ein leichtes Spiel hat er", they said, and nothing about the composition. Even Tytus heard them say that I "can play, but not compose".

Ignaz Moscheles was prejudiced against him. He wrote about Chopin in his *Notes* in 1833 and after Chopin's death (Czartkowski & Jeżewska, pp. 331 and 336):

In my free time I often play Chopin's etudes and other compositions in the evening; there is great appeal in their originality and a taste of national motives, but my thoughts, and then my fingers, struggle with some harsh, non-artistic, difficult-to-understand modulations; the whole piece often seems too sentimental, inappropriate for a man and a well-educated musician. [...]

He was not a classic musician, he did not leave behind any great musical pieces, but he was in possession of remarkable qualities: feeling, sensitivity and originality.

Chopin's most fervent critic was a German, Ludwig Rellstab, who wrote a malicious comment about his *Nocturnes*, Op. 9 (Czartkowski & Jeżewska, 1957, p. 447):

Wherever Field smiles, Mr. Chopin makes sneering faces; when Field sighs, Mr. Chopin groans; when Mr. Field shrugs, Mr. Chopin makes faces; when Field adds a pinch of root spices to a dish, Mr. Chopin sprinkles everything with bucket-loads of Cayenne [*scil.* Turkish] pepper.

He also passed his judgement on Chopin's etudes (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 447),

Whoever has crooked fingers, he will certainly straighten them playing these etudes; those who have straight fingers, on the other hand, should be careful and avoid playing them.

It is hard to believe now that anyone would present such an opinion in earnest. We can count it as some kind of a victory of Chopin's music that a few years later Rellstab changed his mind and appreciated Chopin's compositions.

Also Schumann's attitude towards Chopin's compositions was specific; incidentally, it developed in the opposite

direction of Rellstab's. For the longest time the German composer wrote only the best reviews, and his attitude towards Chopin's compositions was best reflected in the frequently quoted words: "Gentlemen, hats off — this is a genius!" (as a commentary to *Variation*, Op. 2). However, Chopin's later compositions were a mystery to Schumann, and their assessment was varied. Although he remained greatly impressed by Chopin's work, he wrote very harsh reviews. He wrote about the finale of *Sonata in B-flat minor* that it is devoid of melody and joy, that there is something off-putting to it, and even — that it was not music any more.

Liszt invariably assessed Chopin's work positively, stressing, among other things, Chopin's «thematic» musical creativity (1852/1960, p. 48):

It is certainly not a trivial thing, that Chopin's ability to put each theme in turn in any possible variation it could appear in; he can extract the whole splendor and glory as well as a hidden sadness.

Mrs. Sand echoed his words, writing with exaggeration which was so characteristic to her in a letter of May 28, 1843, to Delacroix (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 96):

Chopin composed two gorgeous mazurkas [*scil.* from Op. 50], which are worth more than forty romances and express more than all the literature of the century.

CHAPTER XI. PERFORMANCE

1. SELF-ESTEEM AND TESTIMONIES

1.1. IN HIS OWN EYES

Chopin was aware of his «shortcomings» as a pianist. He wrote about it with characteristic detachment in a letter of December 13, 1831, to Elsner:

I could not see in my eye that log which prevents me from aiming higher today.

However, generally he had a high opinion of himself as a pianist.

After coming to Paris (where he met all the famous pianists of his time) he wrote openly — in a letter of November 18, 1831, to Kumelski — that only Friedrich Wilhelm Kalkbrenner clearly surpasses him:

I am very close to Kalkbrenner, the first pianist of Europe, who you would surely get to like. (He is the only one whose shoes I am not worthy to kiss.)

But Chopin remembered with some satisfaction — in a letter of December 12, 1831 — that Kalkbrenner made a mistake in his presence:

Mr. Kalkbr[enner] was astounded [by my *Concerto in E minor*] and immediately asked me if I am by any chance Field's student, that my playing

is Cramerian and my strike is Fieldian. [...] It made me happy in my soul, [...] and even more so, when Kalkbr[enner] sat down and began to play, and wanting to show off in front of me, he made a mistake and had to stop playing! But you would have to hear him when he started again; I have never even been able to imagine anything like that.

Let us remember that Chopin lived and worked in the times of great virtuosos. He also had a lot of admiration for them. He listened with admiration to Paganini (to whom he devoted one of his pieces, *Variations*), he was entranced by Kalkbrenner, writing in a letter of December 12, 1831, to Woyciechowski:

If Paganini is perfect, then Kalkbrenner is his equivalent, but of another kind entirely. It is hard to describe to you that calmness of his, that magical touch — incredible balance and mastery visible in each one of his sounds — he is a colossus treading on Herz, Czerny, etc., and at the same time, also me.

We know that Kalkbrenner proposed Chopin a three-year study with him. We also know that Chopin's family and Elsner intervened and in the end Chopin did not accept this offer. Anyway, Kalkbrenner soon became aware of Chopin's great talent. How much he valued Chopin (as a pianist and a composer), still many years later, is visible in his letter of December 25, 1845:

Dearest Chopin! I would like to ask you a great favor: my son Arthur intends to play your beautiful *Sonata in B-flat minor* and would very much like you to give him some advice, so that he could fully understand your intentions. You know how I adore your talent and I do not think I even have to express how grateful I would be for this great favor I am asking for my little urchin.

He valued Kalkbrenner even more than Liszt, although when commenting on the latter, he showed him great respect. He wrote in a letter of June 20, 1833, to Feliks Wodziński:

I am writing not knowing what my pen is scribbling, as at this very moment Liszt is playing my etudes and brings me beyond the realm of reasonable thought. I wish I could steal from him his way of playing my own pieces.

This is what he wrote about a pianist, his rival, Thalberg, in a letter of December 26, 1830, to Matuszyński:

The ladies like him, he adds *piano* with the pedal and not his hand, he plays decimas just like octaves, he has diamond shirt buttons.

It is worth noting that Chopin assessed other instrumentalists, as well as singers, in a similar manner. In the latter, he valued most of all the beauty of the tone of their voice and emotionality apart from their technical skills. He wrote about his “ideal”, Gładkowska, in a letter of August 21, 1830, to Woyciechowski:

Gładkowska lacks little. She is better on a stage than in a concert hall. I am not talking about her acting, which is superb, I have to admit, but about her singing, if not for her F-sharp and G sometimes, she would be the best of her kind. Her phrasing would delight you, her modulation is excellent, and although her voice was shaky at the very beginning, later she sang very boldly.

He also raved about Parisian singers. In a letter of December 12, 1831, to Woyciechowski he wrote:

You cannot imagine how wonderful that Lablache is! They say that Pasta lost, but as for me, I have not seen anything more sublime. She only manages Malibran with her wondrous voice, and she sings like no other! Marvellous! Marvellous! Rubini is an excellent tenor, he sings real, not with a falsetto, and he sometimes does quick passages for two hours (but sometimes he uses the vibrato for too long and makes his voice shake on purpose, and apart from that he trills without end; admittedly, he gets the loudest applause for that).

However, his opinion on Sabine Heinefetter included in a letter of December 26, 1830, to Matuszyński seems to be the most significant:

The kind of voice I will not get to hear again anytime soon — everything well sung, each note precisely timed; a clean, flexible portamento — but it was all so cold that it almost froze my nose off.

1.2. IN THE EYES OF OTHERS

What did Chopin’s listeners used to say about his playing?

There remain quite a few of these accounts, and moreover, they are exceptionally univocal, which lets us suppose they are not false. At the same time, these descriptions leave us with only a vague impression of what Chopin’s playing was really like. Perhaps this was one of the reasons for his reserved attitude towards other people’s judgements, which Schumann described on September 12, 1836:

He listens reluctantly when you talk about his pieces.

One has to remember there were a few embodiments of Chopin—the-pianist. He showed the public a different aspect of himself during large public concerts, of which he only gave about thirty during his lifetime (among these: 5 in Warsaw, one respectively in Duszyniki and Wrocław, 3 or 4 in Vienna, one in Munich, 12 in Paris, 3 in London, one in Rouen, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh), and a different aspect — during small, «private», concerts, when he played for high society, first in Warsaw and then in Paris.

The fact that he almost completely ceased to give public concerts in large concert halls was probably connected to one of his concerts in Paris, the only one which ended in failure, in 1835, if we do not count his first public concert in Warsaw, which Skrodzki remembered many years later (1962, pp. 114–115):

We still remember [...] Chopin's first concert, which left the audience indifferent. The Great Theatre was empty, most people present got the tickets for free or were his close friends or acquaintances.

It is a fact that since 1835, Chopin practically resigned from giving concerts and focussed on composing. The other reason for Chopin's reluctance to perform in large concert halls and in front of big audiences was that he was tremendously self-critical and a perfectionist in interpretation. This is why he suffered from stage-fright before each performance and he was irritable (of which we have reliable accounts, since he wreaked his anger on his surroundings).

It is clear that Chopin had never liked large audiences. He performed in public because this was the requirement of his profession. His great sensitivity made him feel overwhelmed by the hundreds of onlookers. One can guess that the 19th-century audiences behaved in a somewhat less civilised manner during a concert than a contemporary philharmonic audience. Chopin's attitude to concerts is revealed in Mrs. Sand's words from a letter of April 18, 1841, to Grzymała:

He does not want posters, he does not want programmes. So many things scare him that I suggested that he played without any candles, without an audience and in front of a mute piano.

Chopin's words, noted by Liszt, confirm this (1852/1879, p. 119):

I am no good with publicity — the auditorium intimidates me, I suffocate in the breath of the crowd, curious looks petrify me, strange faces compel me to keep silent.

In later years he gave smaller concerts, specially organised by the owner of a piano factory, Pleyel. This is what Chopin wrote about preparations for one such concert in a letter to his family, of February 11, 1848:

The tickets were sold out a week ago, and all of the tickets cost 20 fr. each. The audience is signing up for a second one (which I had not thought about). The court demanded 40 tickets and they only wrote in newspapers that I may give a concert and my impresario got messages asking for reservations from Brest and Nantes. I am surprised by such emprossement [zeal] and now I have to play at least to have a clear conscience, even though I feel that my playing is worse than before. [...] There will be no posters or free tickets. The concert hall is comfortable and we can fit in 300 people. Pleyel keeps making fun of my silliness and will decorate the stairs with flowers, as an encouragement. I will feel at home here and my eyes will meet almost exclusively familiar faces. I already got the piano which I am going to play on.

He was completely consumed with playing and giving concerts exhausted him mentally and physically. After a concert it took a long time before he regained his strength and before he could make contact with the «outside world».

Chopin gave concerts for his closest friends almost until the end of his life, when he was strong enough. We know how much these concerts mattered for the people near him from their own accounts. Marquis de Custine wrote to Chopin in 1837:

Please save your strength for your friends: the possibility of listening to you is sometimes the only consolation in the face of those difficult days that are to come; only art, the way you feel it, will manage to bring together people divided by harsh reality; people love and understand each other through Chopin.

Also, Chopin's students remembered that he played the most beautifully during the lessons.

Critics and music lovers agree in their opinions that Chopin was one of the best — if not the best — pianists of his time. Schumann wrote in a letter of September 14, 1836, to Heinrich Ludwig Dorn (Sydow (ed.) 1955, Vol. I, p. 286):

[Chopin] played loads of etudes, mazurkas and nocturnes for me, all of it unrivalled. The mere sight of him by the piano is moving.

At the same time, it was stressed that he was very different from all the contemporary virtuosos. The difference found its expression in the comparisons of Balzac, Heine and Moscheles (Tomaszewski 2010, pp. 98, 89 and 86):

You cannot judge Liszt before you get to hear Chopin. [...] The Hungarian is a demon, the Pole is an angel. [...]

Apart from [...] [Liszt], other pianists do not count except one: Chopin, the Raphael of the piano. [...]

[Chopin] does not make use of any of the orchestral effects assumed by the German school; he acts like a singer focussed on expressing feelings.

2. FEATURES AND PECULIARITIES

What did the «angelic» and «Raphaelite» qualities of Chopin's play consist of? How did Chopin incorporate poetry in his playing?

2.1. «MODESTY»

First of all, Chopin avoided any kind of empty virtuosity, which was manifested in excessive, and especially clownish (implying: Liszt's) gesticulation, exaggeratedly showing off one's technique, etc. In his opinion, the «content» of the music should be delivered through its sounds and not visual effects.

Critics called his manner of playing «modest» for a reason. *Wiener Theaterzeitung* of August 20, 1829, wrote (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 107–108):

His manner of playing, as well as his compositions, [...] are characterised with a sort of modesty, thanks to which one gets an impression that this young man does not really wish to seem great — even though he overcame such difficulties, which even here, in the land of piano virtuosos,

would be striking — but with an almost ironic naivety he tries to engage the gathered audience with mere music as such.

The article in the *Powszechny Dziennik Krajowy* [*Universal Polish Daily*] of March 19, 1830, keeps the same spirit (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 116):

His modesty was always hidden behind a greater or lesser splendor of harmony, depending on the need. It seems like his playing spoke to us: it is not me, it is the music!

This remained true for Chopin's whole life. Charles Gavard wrote the same thing in his letter of April, 1848, to James F. [?] Hall (Sydow (ed.), Vol. II, p. 240):

Chopin is very modest. [...] Publicity scares him.

It seems certain that Chopin was born with an amazing, so called, technical ease. He was self-taught to a large extent. Żywny, his piano teacher, was not considered to be an outstanding tutor. However, certainly his great contribution was to notice his student's extraordinary talent and let him develop on his own. Reviewers admired the technical aspect of Chopin's playing, although they stressed that he never exhibited it. Surely then there was nothing in Chopin's playing to give rise to complaints about his technique. On the other hand, Chopin himself was aware of certain shortcomings (e.g. of a relatively weak fourth finger). At the same time, he knew that he could conceal these shortcomings by submitting to his instinct. (Certainly many pianists know the feeling — when his heart leads the way, his fingers follow more willingly...) That Chopin's technique was subject to inspiration — seems clear from a statement included in a letter of December 12, 1831, to Woyciechowski:

Meanwhile [Kalkbrenner] convinced me that I can play beautifully when I am inspired, and poorly when I am not — something which never happens.

2.2. «GENTLENESS» AND «TIMBRENESS»

However, it was not the technical aspect of Chopin's playing which aroused the greatest admiration among the listeners. The extraordinary qualities of his playing were, to a larger degree, based on the subtlety and beauty of the sound. Let us quote in turn *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* from Leipzig and its account of the concert in Vienna on September 1, 1829, an opinion of critics from *Gazeta Korespondenta Warszawskiego i Zagranicznego* [*The Warsaw and Foreign Correspondent Gazette*] (Franciszek Salezy Dmochowski), *Powszechny Dziennik Krajowy* on March 19, 1830, and a correspondent of *Flora* from Munich on August 30, 1831 (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 109, 116 and 154),

As an executor [*scil.* performer, Chopin] surpasses even Hummel in the subtlety of feeling and the elegance of taste; even if he did not match him in technique and balance of tempo, then he is unmatched by all the others.

The veritable gentleness of his strike, the unsurpassable technical proficiency, his perfect dynamic shading which comes from the deepest feeling, the continuity and rise of tones, a rare clarity of interpretation [...] let us recognise an artist in this [...] virtuoso, who [...] appears in the musical scene as one of the brightest meteors. [...]

The character of Mr. Chopin's style in composition is soft and delicate. [...]

Apart from the great proficiency, the delightful gentleness of [Mr. Chopin's] playing was immediately apparent, as well as a characteristic method of highlighting motifs.

Paying attention to the beauty of the tone was «in-born» for Chopin and he consciously recognised it as a priority even when he was a young pianist. It was tied to the specific requirements for the instruments he played on. As early as 1828 he wrote in a letter of August 12, to Elsner:

I lack one thing only, which all the beauty of Duszniki cannot replace, that is a good instrument. Imagine that there is not one good piano here, and the instruments which I saw, gave me more distress than pleasure.

Only in Paris did Chopin learn about Pleyel's instruments, which he loved, as they satisfied him more with the quality of their sound. Liszt remembered (1852/1879, p. 146):

[Pleyel's] instruments were Chopin's favorite because of their somewhat subdued, silvery sound and the softness of the keys.

Chopin himself spoke simply of Pleyel's piano: "It has my sound" (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 143).

Chopin was often criticised for the gentleness and transience of his tone. A reviewer in *Wiener Theaterzeitung* wrote after a concert on August 20, 1829 (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 107):

His strike, however graceful and steady, has little of that brilliance which our virtuosos ordinarily show already in the first few bars.

Chopin's comment — in a letter of August 12, 1829, to Feliks Wodziński — was as follows:

It was a common objection that I played too softly, or rather too delicately for those used to local artists banging on the pianos. I expect a similar objection in the newspaper, especially since the editor's daughter hammers on the instrument terribly. That is all right; after all, it's impossible not to have any objections, and I'd rather hear this one than if they said that I play too heavily.

Following his concerts in Warsaw he wrote in a letter of March 27, 1838, to Woyciechowski:

Mochnacki in *Kurier Polski* praised me in excess, especially the *Adagio*, and then advises more energy. — I guessed where the energy lives and in

the second concert I played on a Viennese instrument, not on mine. Well, what applause, what praise that each note was perfectly played and that I played better on the second one than on the first one, to speak nothing of the uproar after the bows, and people demanding a third concert.

Neither did he like the heavy, loud playing of other pianists. He wrote in a letter of August 26, 1829, to his family:

I happened to meet Pixis on his stairs. — I listened to him play his Fugues for about two hours. [...] He plays nicely, but I long for something better (quieter).

What Chopin really cared about was the «timbre» of play. Delacroix wrote about it (1932, Vol. III, p. 99):

My dear, small Chopin rebelled against the method in which the effect of the music depends to a large extent on the tone inherent to particular instruments.

What Chopin meant is that there is NO ONE piano timbre, but that one can «conjure up» MANY different timbres from the instrument by striking the keys in an appropriate manner. The students certify that Chopin was able to demonstrate to them twenty different ways to strike, which in effect gave twenty different variations of tone in a given sound. These ways varied, from “flying” over the keyboard with “velvet fingers”, which Henrietta Voigt wrote about (*Diary*, 14 September 1836; see Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, pp. 254–255), and the famous “thundering” (Chopin’s own expression from a letter of December 26, 1830, to Matuszyński). Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger called it “the art of almost legendary nuance” (1987, p. 147–148). *Le Pianiste* wrote about it after a concert on February 22, 1835 (Eigeldinger 1987, pp. 165–166):

Chopin’s talent [...] is so subtle, so full of inconceivable nuances, that only a sensitive and trained ear is able to catch them.

2.3. «SPIRITUALITY»

Finally — the most important aspect of Chopin’s playing was emotional saturation of his performances. In that, he was a true disciple of Elsner, who wrote in a letter of November 27, 1831, to Chopin:

Playing an instrument, even the most perfect, [...] is in itself thought to be only a means of expressing feelings in the field of music.

One of the first people who paid attention to it was Mochnecki. He wrote in *Kurier Polski* from March 29, 1830 (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 118):

[Chopin’s] execution was full of feeling and expression, it overcame even the greatest difficulties with ease, so that the listener was unaware of them; combined with a beautiful composition, it had to engage the audience in the performance.

Chopin’s playing was “full of feeling and expression”, touching and moving — but not overly affected (Kleczyński 1979, p. 59). The kinds of feelings he conveyed were clear for his listeners. There is proof of that in the words of Marquis de Custine in a letter of 1837 to Chopin, in *Gazeta Warszawska* of 18 March 18, 1830, and in the account of Voigt (*Diary*, September 14, 1836) (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, pp. 114–115 and 254–255):

You have reached the peak of suffering and poetry; the melancholy of your pieces penetrates the heart more deeply; the listener is lonely together with you, even among the crowds; it is not a piano any more, it is — a soul, and what a soul! [...]

Mr. Chopin possesses all the qualities characteristic of a piano virtuoso in the highest degree: the power, the fluency and, above all, the feeling — constitute his greatest advantage; each striking of the keys is for him an expression of his heart. [...]

An intriguing man [i.e. Chopin], and his playing is even more intriguing. He made a singular impression on me. The over-sensitivity

of his playing is contagious for an absorbed listener — I honestly held my breath.

One of the sources of the emotional saturation of Chopin's playing was his imagination, which affected him strongly when he was playing his own pieces.

The images he envisaged sometimes became nightmares. We know from Mrs. Sand's recount that they appeared during their stay in Majorca (Chopin was then composing *Scherzo in C-sharp minor* and *Ballad in F major*). The fact that there was no exaggeration in the writer's account is supported by Chopin's own words in a letter of September 9, 1848, to Solange, about the performance of *Sonata in B-flat minor*:

I was going to start playing a march, when suddenly I saw horrible apparitions coming out of the half-opened piano; one evening I saw them in Chartreuse. I had to go out for a while to pull myself together.

3. RULES AND GUIDELINES

Also Chopin's didactic recommendations say a lot about his play. Chopin — first burdened with social duties and a teacher's responsibilities, then bedridden — did not manage to give a fully organised shape to his pedagogical ideas. Therefore one has to do it for him at one's own risk. After all, it is not a hopeless project: whatever remained from *Esquisses*, you can complete to a large extent with statements made by Chopin himself and his students, and he taught more than a hundred. Some of them made notes during the lessons, others described their impressions in memoirs. In the eyes of his students Chopin was an excellent teacher, and lessons with Chopin were popular not only because it was fashionable to be his student. They simply were, even though Chopin, normally so calm and gentle, sometimes went berserk during lessons with less gifted students. Chopin's student — and his friend's wife — Zofia

Rosengardt-Zaleska, noted in her *Pamiętniki [Memoirs]* (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 13):

During a lesson he occasionally had "wild, unpleasant, bad, angry moments, in which he broke chairs, stamped his feet" (such lessons were called "*leçons orageuses*").

Thus we have a sufficient foundation to reconstruct the principles — and some detailed tips — of Chopin's pedagogics.

There are eight of these principles. Let us call them in turn: the "principle of methodical training"; the "principle of didactic optimism"; the "principle of technical adequacy"; its two specifications: the "principle of superiority of anatomy", and the "principle of optimal motor skills"; also the "principle of textual precision"; the "principle of stimulating intuition", and the "principle of fortitude".

Here is the substance of these rules, formulated by Chopin and his students.

3.1. THE PRINCIPLE OF METHODICAL TRAINING

In *Esquisses* Chopin says to a piano student (1993, p. 42):

Excellent lessons of the piano were given to you. You were taught to read the great masters, to love Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, but you often feel beautiful music better than you can render the mood with your fingers. So now, with that thought in my mind, I give you a rough outline of that mechanical work, which has become so lifeless in our times, out of the lack of consideration.

He goes on to specify this thought (1993, pp. 91, 85 and 86):

The major obstacle which one comes across in one's musical development is undoubtedly the stupefying use of all kinds of exercises accumulated with no principle, no method and no justification. [...]

Before giving the [technical] principle, it is vital to consider a few introductory issues which explain it; the issues rest on both the anatomical analysis of the hand and the tradition, which one can find in the fingering of the old masters. [...]

I never doubted the power of patient and persistent work, even if it followed the wrong path. However, the balance, the calmness, which arises from a complete submission to consistent rules cannot be achieved otherwise. There always remains something uncertain, some kind of unrest, in a talent developed the untruthful way.

This is exactly why Chopin was opposed to mechanical training. He told his students to listen intently to the tone of the instrument — he demanded from them to be fully focused on what they are playing; Chopin himself — as listeners attest — always played with full concentration. Józef Brzowski note in his *Dziennik* [*Diary*] from the years 1836–1837 what Chopin looked like when he was playing (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, pp. 212–213):

It is hard to believe how strongly in his [*scil.* Chopin's] face, inspired thought was reflected: pale, with sparkling eyes, absent, you could say he was dreaming in some magnetic dream.

One of his students remembered that Chopin advised him to play in the dark, so that no stimulus from the outside would distract him (Działyńska 1926, p. 5):

If you can play some piece more or less by heart, practise at night, in darkness! When your eyes cannot see the notes and the keys, when everything disappears, this is when the sense of hearing is revealed with all its sensitivity, this is when you can really hear yourself, notice every flaw, and the hand gets bold and sure, which it would never get if the player kept looking at the keys.

He was also opposed to sustained and exclusively mechanical practice (he was outraged with the suggestions to

occupy himself with reading a book while practising). Practice should have the pianist's undivided attention (Chopin 1993, p. 112):

Exercises should not be exclusively mechanical, on the contrary, they require the student's whole intellect and will.

Kleczyński stressed that Chopin often told his students to practise *piano* (Kleczyński 1879, p. 48):

Frequent resorting to playing *piano* in order to avoid the heaviness of the hand constitutes one of the most characteristic and one of the best features of Chopin's method.

It is worth adding that Chopin was opposed to practising for hours on end. We learn from a letter to his father that Chopin himself practised relatively little. Mikołaj Chopin wrote to his son on November 27, 1831:

You know I have done all I was supposed to in order to support your talent and help to develop it, and that I never contradicted you in any way; you also know that you devoted little time to the technique of playing and that your mind worked more than your fingers. When others spent more time in front of the keyboard, you rarely spent more than one hour on playing somebody else's pieces.

He probably spent the remaining time playing his own compositions. He advised his students to play three hours a day but, let us repeat that, engaging their intellect, imagination and will. Also, in these three hours they should find some time to play Bach every day.

3.2. THE PRINCIPLE OF DIDACTIC OPTIMISM

Chopin's methodology was in principle, so to say, «optimistic». On the one hand, Chopin tried as hard as he could to make his students, when they were talented enough,

believe in their abilities as performers. On the other hand, this «methodological optimism» had a theoretical foundation related to the «piano mechanism». Chopin wrote in *Esquisses* (1993, p. 40):

Because art is infinite within its limited means, one needs to limit teaching of art to only teaching through the means, in order to practise it infinitely.

In this brief and, at first glance, somewhat enigmatic phrase, Chopin expressed a conviction that, just like a finite number of sounds can be put by a composer in a series (compositions) in an infinite number of ways, it is also enough for a pianist to learn a finite number of performance «grips» in order to achieve an infinite number of interpretative effects with their help.

3.3. THE PRINCIPLE OF TECHNICAL ADEQUACY

The substance of the rule of technical adequacy is a principle of choosing the means that are adequate to the aim. Chopin writes (1993, pp. 40 et 42):

[You needn't learn to] walk on your head when you want to go for a walk. [...]

Because intonation results from tuning, the piano is free from one of the greatest difficulties encountered during the study of other instruments. Therefore there remains only the study of certain positions of the hand on the keys, so that one can achieve the best possible quality of sound with ease, one is able to play long and short sounds, and also, one can achieve unlimited proficiency.

The technical aspect of playing — that is, as they called it then, the mechanism of the piano — was treated as a tool by Chopin. It was the sound effect which was always important to him, not the way it was achieved. As Princess Czartoryska said — in the accounts of Działyńska (1926, p. 6):

It is the result that matters — Chopin used to say — the aim, the impression made on the listener, rather than the way the impression was achieved. You can just as well be dumbstruck by some unexpected piece of news when you hear it spoken loudly and eagerly, or whispered straight into your ear.

In his approach to “the mechanism of the piano” Chopin consciously referred to Muzio Clementi who, being not only a composer and a teacher but also a constructor, had an instrumental attitude to these issues.

Respect to the Clementi's school was inculticated by Chopin in his students. What one of them, Thomas Tellefsen, wrote, could be treated as a reminiscence of Chopin's opinion (1993, p. 87–88):

Clementi's *Gradus* is the most remarkable didactic piece I know. [...]

It is true that Clementi, being a pianist, combines the beauty of the sound with clarity, vigor and brilliance, and he possesses these features to a higher degree than all his rivals, which of course induces me to opt for his method.

I admit that after Clementi I notice a growing decadence connected to the lack of method and principles; the most important questions are left to coincidence in teaching, the tradition changes and in the end vanishes. To find this tradition, make it understandable, and most of all, disperse any doubts in a student's mind for him to focus on the conscious and calm work, it would all be a task for a good teacher.

3.4. THE PRINCIPLE OF SUPERIORITY OF ANATOMY

The principle of superiority of anatomy adds some details to the previous principle. Chopin specified it so (1993, pp. 60, 74, 76 and 60):

Thanks to the fact that intonation is provided by tuning, the difficulty of playing the piano — thanks to the keyboard, which greatly assists the hand — is much less than we imagine. Obviously, it is not about the

musical feeling, or the style, but a purely technical aspect of playing, which I call “mechanism”. [...]

It seems to me that a well formed mechanism consists in the skilful swell of a sound of beautiful quality. For a long time, tutors acted against nature, exercising the fingers in such a way that they gained equal strength. Considering the fact that each finger was formed in a different way, it is better not to destroy the charm of the touch of particular fingers, but on the contrary: to develop them. [...]

Just as one should make good use of the shape of the fingers, one should also use the remaining parts of the hand, like the wrist, the forearm and the arm. [...]

There is no enough admiration for the genius who contributed to the construction of the keyboard in such accordance to the shape of the hand.

Accepting the anatomical individuality of the force of the fingers did not mean, however, that Chopin resigned from perfecting their autonomy. Kleczyński wrote (1879, p. 48):

Chopin CONTINUOUSLY stressed the importance of THE FREEDOM OF PLAYING AND THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE FINGERS in his teachings.

3.5. THE PRINCIPLE OF OPTIMAL MOTOR SKILLS

We read about the principle of optimal motor skills in *Esquisses* (1993, p. 88):

The old rule says that one should move as little as possible; it is excellent but — as it is with all rules — too absolute. Since for people music is characterised with the most movement of all arts, it would be strange if a performer, recreating that movement, did not himself move. Immobility (*immobilia*), recommended for a student at the beginning, often corresponds to excessive stiffness. There are some movements which are simply necessary as they add charm to the performance.

However, Chopin’s students were not allowed to make any unnecessary movements: he did not allow for any

ostentatious behavior or simply showing off. The pianist was only an executor of an idea and he was not supposed to come «before» the performed piece. Chopin did not like performance mannerisms either.

3.6. THE PRINCIPLE OF TEXTUAL PRECISION

Chopin considered absolute faithfulness to the notation to be an important feature of good piano playing even with respect to phrasing; let us remember that these were times when the approach to the score was much more flexible than today. Działyńska related (Chopin 1993, p. 123):

RELIABILITY, that is, recreating every dot, every pinpoint, every musical sign, as if you owed them to somebody — and you couldn’t depart from it in the slightest degree.

Mikuli added (Chopin 1993, p. 114):

Incorrect phrasing made him use the following simile, which he repeated often and with pleasure: “It is as if somebody recited a speech in a foreign language, remembered with difficulty, not only without observing the natural number of the syllables, but also stopping in the middle of words. Also a pseudo-musician reveals with his barbaric phrasing that music does not constitute a natural language to him, but rather a foreign, incomprehensible tongue. He will be forced to resign from making any impression whatsoever on his listeners, like a speaker with his discourse.”

Chopin paid faithful attention to the rhythmic-metric-agogic marks.

Although the idea of “Chopin’s *rubato*” tends to come up, and also Chopin himself used this term, Chopin’s students stress that he was strictly opposed to *tempo rubato* — understood as loose approach to the rhythm. Chopin’s *rubato* is an even tempo in the accompanying part and some freedom in the melodic part. As Lenz noted, Chopin used to drum

this idea into his students' heads (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 417):

The left hand should be the conductor [and keep the tempo]. It may not shake nor hesitate. Do what you want and what you can with the right.

As we learn from Mikuli's accounts (Chopin 1993/1995, p. 98), a metronome always stood on Chopin's piano in his salon.

3.7. THE PRINCIPLE OF STIMULATING INTUITION

Chopin believed the use of imagination — musical, but also extra-musical — to be a contributing factor in good piano playing. We can find proof of it in the fact that he suggested to his own students some images, which were supposed to help them extract the essence of a performed piece. According to Kleczyński, Chopin suggested to his student — while playing his *Etude in A-flat major* — to imagine a shepherd, who sought shelter from a storm in a grotto and is playing the flute while listening to the wind from the outside. He compared a fragment of *Sonata in A-flat major* by Weber to a flight of an angel. In turn, during one of his lessons he described the «dialogue» from his own *Nocturne in F-sharp minor* as a conversation of a tyrant with his subject, who is asking for something.

Chopin did not tolerate «spiritless» playing on the part of his students. He encouraged them (Kleczyński 1879, p. 75):

Invest all your soul in it! Play it as you feel it!

This is reminiscent of Potocki's comment (1813, p. 3):

It is not enough to stir the ear and to occupy the eye; one has to operate on the soul and touch the heart while communicating with the mind.

Also Mikuli remembered that Chopin advised him to analyse the performed pieces in view of the course of feelings

they were to express. Recreating this course was the key to a successful interpretation. Incidentally, Chopin used to send his students to lessons of musical forms (to Henri Reber) and advised them to listen during singing lessons for ways to perform ornaments by singers. It was, in his opinion, the best way to understand what *legato cantabile* is.

3.8. THE PRINCIPLE OF FORTITUDE

Observing these rules obviously requires a strong will. Therefore Chopin — last but not least — expected pianists to continuously work on the adequate features of personality: developing “moral principles”, as he used to call them.

These were: perseverance, caution, the ability to focus, and above all: the readiness to «forget yourself» in the performed art. Marquis de Custine commented once (1843, Vol. I, p. 331):

Music can make you forget everything.

Chopin could paraphrase these words into: Forget about everything if you want to give yourself to music.

1. STANDARDS

1.1. THE PROCESS OF COMPOSING

Let us first observe what views on musical compositions are included in Chopin's explicit aesthetics.

Chopin spoke little and reluctantly of his own compositions. However, he declared numerous times that he was aware of the worth of his own compositions. Therefore Iwaszkiewicz was not entirely right saying (1955, p. 208):

Each true artist treats almost all of his own work with disdain and is rarely satisfied with what he achieved.

The former — probably yes; the latter — not necessarily. It is not true especially when an artist has a clear vision of how he wants to create. Chopin certainly had such vision. Mrs. Sand noted aptly (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 329):

Chopin speaks little and rarely about his work, but when he talks about it, it is with an admirable exactness and certainty of judgement and aims.

On the other hand, Chopin's process of composing was tedious (unlike e.g. that of Mozart, who was compared to him, and who wrote practically without crossing out).

He composed in front of the piano. The starting point for Chopin was improvisation, which he gradually

developed and put into a «formal framework». He experimented with many versions of the same fragment. The traces of hard creative work and hesitation as to the final solution can be found in the preserved manuscripts. Whatever he wrote, he put it aside and let some time pass before he assessed it. At times he sent three different versions of the same fragment to different publishers (this is what happened to *Nocturne in B major*, Op. 61, No. 1, sent in three differing versions to Leipzig, Paris and London). Was it only a question of absentmindedness or extreme indecision? Or perhaps Chopin simply wanted to somehow preserve all three versions, considering them to be equally good.

He wrote about his irresolution as a composer in a letter of October 11, 1846, to his family:

I am playing some, I am writing some. There are times I am content with my *Sonata with a cello*, then at other times I am not. I toss it in the corner, then I pick it up again. I have three new mazurkas; I do not think I will [indecipherable word] with old holes, but deciding about it needs time. When you are working, it seems good, as otherwise you would never write anything. Only later are there afterthoughts and you either accept or reject it. Time is the best critic, and patience is the best teacher.

1.2. COMPOSER'S ARTISTRY

Chopin consciously wrote relatively little, however, he did his best to only release masterpieces. He would never have chosen quantity over quality. He hated any kind of bungling and mediocrity. He never composed on commission, never exclusively for profit (although composing and giving lessons, apart from the few concerts he gave, were his only sources of income). The traces of his negotiations with publishers, who apparently were not aware of what they were publishing, can be found in correspondence. A fragment of a letter of October 18, 1841, to Fontana is significant:

I know I am not selling well. But tell him [*scil.* Troupenas] that if I wanted to make a profit on him or deceive him, I would write 15 lame things a year, which he would buy for 300 each and I would have more income. Would that be more honest?

The outcome of his work as a composer is (one could say: merely) ten hours of music. But perhaps it is the best ten hours ever written.

A few facts indicate that Chopin valued his mature pieces more than youthful attempts. The reason why he preferred playing new rather than «old» compositions might be that playing them was a kind of advertising. But also with his students later in his life he played recent pieces. With Miss Stirling, one of his last students, he played several dozen of his compositions, none of which were from the early period.

1.3. IDEALS AND ANTI-IDEALS

Chopin's aesthetics was revealed, among other things, in his attitude to other composers and their compositions. In the area of explicit aesthetics, some of Chopin's judgements can be reconstructed on the basis of his assessment of other composers' work. In the area of implicit aesthetics, his attitude towards other artists can be revealed in who Chopin claimed to be his role model and whose ideas he used while creating his own compositions. It is striking that there are almost exclusively German composers on this list. Chopin did not leave anything to doubt here. Lenz heard him say (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 413):

There is only one school in music, namely: German.

Characteristically, while Chopin's judgement was at that time very strict, and at times even merciless, he gradually became more lenient with time, perhaps under the influence of his progressing illness. He himself wrote about it in a letter of August 18, 1848, to Fontana:

I have become so forgiving that I could listen to [Wojciech] Sowiński's *Oratory* with pleasure and not die.

1.3.1. JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH AND GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL

Let us start from Bach, since the worship of Bach was perhaps the most characteristic trait of Chopin. He wrote in one of his letters to Potocka (Chopin 1949, p. 309):

Bach will never get old. The construction of his pieces is like geometrical figures, ideally built, where everything has its place and there is not one redundant line. [...] If any époque turns away from Bach, it will prove its shallowness, stupidity and corrupt taste.

The admiration for Bach was planted in his mind by Żywny, and later it was established more firmly by Elsner. Today we are allowed to say that it was their great contribution. It is hard not to hear the inspiration of Bach's preludes and fugues in Chopin's *Etudes*, rather than in the practice pieces created in Chopin's times. We know Chopin played Bach often and advised his students to play Bach's pieces. Before a public concert he spent some time alone practising Bach's pieces instead of his own compositions which he was going to play.

The following passage of Chopin's letter of August 8, 1839, to Fontana relays Chopin's reverence for Bach:

Since there is nothing to do, I am sitting and making corrections to Bach's Paris edition: there are not only "*graveur's* mistakes", but also mistakes authorised by those, who supposedly understand Bach (which is not to say that I understand better, but I feel I can sometimes guess).

His student, Emilia von Timm, remembered (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 149):

Bach was an absolute priority for Chopin.

Indeed — Friederike Müller–Streicher recounts that Chopin once played 14 preludes and fugues to her from memory, and when admired, he simply replied (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 384):

Cela ne s'oublie jamais. [It's something you do not forget.]

We know less about how familiar Chopin was with Händel's works. Only one note was left in a letter of September 20, 1828, to his family:

Händel's oratory, *Cäcilienfest*, is closer to the ideal which I have formed [of great music].

It is supplemented with Felix Mendelssohn's recount from a letter of October 6, 1835, to his family:

Just before he left I received Händel's works, which filled Chopin with a truly child-like joy; they are indeed so beautiful that even I could not get enough of them.

1.3.2. JOSEPH HAYDN, WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART AND LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Chopin's attitude to the Viennese classical musicians was full of respect, although of a different kind. He valued them all, Haydn as well as Mozart and Beethoven. This is how he described differences between them to his friend (and a lay person in the domain of music), Eugène Delacroix (1932, Vol. I, pp. 190 and 284):

Experience endowed [...] [Haydn's last] pieces with perfection. [...]

As he said, where [...] [Beethoven] is obscure and seems to lose his unity, the cause is not his supposed originality, somewhat wild, which is honorably attributed to him, but rather the fact that he deviates from age-long rules; Mozart never does that. Each of the parts has its own rhythm which, in integration with the other parts, creates pure harmony.

He often expressed his admiration for Mozart, who he was compared with at the beginning of his career. Józef Cichowski wrote in *Powszechny Dziennik Krajowy* of March 25, 1930 (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 120):

Mr. Chopin, bestowed with great genius, can be compared only to Mozart.

Chopin wrote to Potocka with exultation (Chopin 1949, pp. 310–311):

Oh, Mozart, Mozart — just think about him. Shove all Mozart's work into his life — just think, how much work and brilliant music his short life held. How many great pieces he wrote by my age; how small I am in comparison to him. To be honest, he embraced all that is called musical creation, and I only have the keyboard in my pate...

When he stopped in Salzburg on his way to Paris, he did not fail to visit Mozart's house; incidentally, he noted when remembering his stay in Salzburg, that he saw, in the church of St. Peter, a memorial of Johann Michael Haydn, Joseph's younger brother, "the father of religious music", in the church of St. Peter (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 53).

Note that both Chopin's and Mozart's music is characterised by melodious tunes and a naturalness of composition, which is difficult to explicate but is perceptible in their works. It is characteristic that Chopin regarded Mozart's works (not Beethoven's, as was commonly thought) as an announcement of romanticism (let us add: Chopin's romanticism).

Liszt's opinion prevails; he claimed that Chopin valued only Beethoven's lyrical works while he treated his monumental pieces with disregard. Chopin's statements do not support this claim. However, we know that e.g. Chopin was greatly impressed by Beethoven's works which he listened

to. He considered the opera *Fidelio* to be a masterpiece. This is what he wrote about his impressions of a performance of the last trio by Beethoven in a letter of October 20, 1830, to Woyciechowski:

I haven't heard anything equally great for a long time — Beethoven mocks the whole world there...

Most probably the dramatic mood of Chopin's scherzos has its source in the character of some of Beethoven's scherzos. It is worth noting that Chopin was an excellent performer of Beethoven's pieces. Delacroix wrote in a letter of August 19, 1846, to Frédéric Villot (Sydow (ed.) 1955, Vol. II, p. 397):

Chopin wonderfully played Beethoven to me — it was worth more than all the theories.

1.3.3. LUIGI CHERUBINI, GIACOMO MEYERBEER AND FRANZ SCHUBERT

After having met Cherubini, a musician revered by many at that time, in person, Chopin made a snide remark about him in a letter of December 14, 1831, to Elsner:

These gentlemen are like dry dolls, who you can only look at with respect.

Apparently, the feeling Chopin had for Meyerbeer's opera, *The Prophet*, was consternation (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 323).

Liszt relates Chopin's opinion on Schubert (1852, p. 151):

Although he admitted that some of Schubert's melodies had some charm, he was reluctant to listen to some other tunes, as they were too harsh for his sensitive ears.

1.3.4. FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY AND ROBERT SCHUMANN

His attitude to Mendelssohn and Schumann, who are now considered to be the most prominent composers of the first half of the 19th century along with him, may seem somewhat surprising. Chopin knew them both in person, and their relationships were good but probably not friendly. As we mentioned before, Schumann as a critic supported Chopin greatly, especially initially. However, Chopin was not a fan of Schumann—the-composer. A story told by Mathias is telling proof of that (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 391):

[One] day I noticed the first edition of *The Carnival* by Schumann with a decorative lithograph on the title page, lying on [Chopin's] bedside table. When my father asked him what he thought about this piece, Chopin answered with such indifference, as if he only studied it briefly. It was in the year 1840, and *The Carnival* was written in 1834. [...] It seemed that Chopin [...] had no desire to learn it.

And let us remember that Schumann put a musical reference to Chopin in one part of *The Carnival*.

Also, he did not recommend playing Schumann to his students. His student, Camille Dubois, made a list of all the pieces done in Chopin's lessons and added a significant comment: "Schumann — *strictement rien*" (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 149).

He and Mendelssohn had one thing in common: being a «romantic classic». However, Chopin spoke of Mendelssohn's output with reserve. He said ironically that, for example, in England you had to play Mendelssohn in order to be liked. Mendelssohn's attitude towards Chopin was also favorable, but not without some sarcasm. He wrote in a letter of 23 May 23, 1835, to his mother (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 249):

At present Chopin is the best of pianists; [...] he plays the way Paganini plays the violin.

Both of them [i.e. Chopin and Hiller] suffer from a Parisian mania of despair, an exaggeration of feelings, therefore they do not care for tact and moderation in music.

1.4. PROTOTYPES OF GENRES

The influence of other composers, some of whom are now forgotten, is visible in Chopin's output. In fact, we are able to indicate the source of each form he practised: polonaise — Elsner, Karol Kurpiński and Weber; waltzes — Lanner; etudes — above all Bach and Clementi; preludes — Bach again; impromptus and ballads — Schubert; nocturnes — Field; scherzos — Beethoven (for whom they were still parts of the cycle of sonatas), sonatas and concertos — Hummel, Chopin's friend and Haydn's and Mozart's follower. We also have to count Szymanowska among the composers who inspired many of the forms practised by Chopin. Incidentally, she was Field's Moscow student; Field, in turn, remained under the influence of Clementi. Since Field was a Russophile, he was against his Polish «imitator», and also for Chopin meeting Field «face to face» was a disappointment. Only mazurkas and ballads were inspired by sources outside of the realm of «professional music»; Chopin's mazurkas were inspired by folk music and the idea of ballads was taken from literary ballads by Mickiewicz. This is essential since Chopin stressed the importance of his mazurkas and ballads. Schumann wrote in a letter of September 14, 1836, to Dorn:

I got a new *Ballad* [in G minor] from Chopin. It seems the closest to his genius, though not the most genial of his works, and I told him it is the closest to my heart out of all the things he has created. He was silent for quite a long time and then he said forcefully, "I am glad, because also I like it best of all; it is dearest to my heart".

One could say that mazurkas — and, to some degree, ballads — were Chopin's speciality. This is where he gained the name "Mazurka", which Liszt used.

1.5. PIANO «MINIMALISM»

As we mentioned before, Chopin chose not to write an opera. However, he was a great fan of the opera. There are many recounts of opera performances in his letters. He included the reminiscence of Mozart's *Don Juan*, which he saw when he was still in Warsaw, in his variations (those same ones which prompted Schumann to call him a "genius"). Another opera which made a great impression on him was Meyerbeer's *Robert the Devil* (not only because of the music, but also because of the scenery and the way it was staged). Actually, all opera performances he went to made a great impression on him. We can find traces of it in his letters. It is possible that this fascination with the opera contributed to Chopin's «minimalism» in playing the piano.

One of the most significant philosophers of the 20th century, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, was once revealed by some of his students to be unfamiliar with some texts on contemporary philosophy which one had to know and refer to at that time. He said:

If you want to write something wise by YOURSELF, you should stop reading OTHERS.

It is probably also true for art: relying on other artists paralyses one's own creativity.

Chopin was encouraged to write an opera mostly by his only teacher of composition: Elsner. Elsner's influence on Chopin was unquestionable, although the teacher served the function of providing encouragement rather than being a role model. Elsner noticed genius in Chopin and, what is perhaps the most important, did not prevent him from developing. On the contrary, he attempted to liberate and develop all those skills which determined his greatness. He wrote in a letter of November 27, 1831, to his student:

When teaching composition, one should not dictate formulas, especially to the students whose talent is obvious; let them find out for

themselves, so that they have a chance to surpass themselves. [...] An artist who always takes inspiration from whatever surrounds him will only amaze others with what he has inside him and through perfecting himself.

Chopin exchanged cordial letters with Elsner until the end of his life; in them, he showed great respect for his teacher's output. He wrote with self-irony in a letter of December 14, 1831:

In 1830, although I knew how much I lacked and how far I was from equalling you in any way, I could think, if I dared: when my skills get near his at least a little more, if not *King Lokietek* [the title of one of Elsner's operas], then maybe at least some *Duke Laskonogi* or other will come out of my imagination.

In the end, he did not compose any *Laskonogi*. He attempted to justify it all his life. He revealed in one of his letters to Potocka (Chopin 1949, p. 309):

There are only few of those geniuses who can feel all the instruments and are able to extract everything from them. I know of only two: Bach and Mozart. [...] I am best with the piano.

2. BEAUTY

There are a few categories of aesthetic values, namely: formal values (connected with the structure of a work of art), workshop values (connected with the artist's contribution to a work of art), telic values (connected with the functionality of a work of art), creation values (connected with the context of a work of art), and thematic values (connected with the sense of a work of art).

Which values from the above categories did Chopin's works «embody»?

There is in Chopin's compositions symmetry, concord and harmony, even though Chopin was ready to abandon

them when it served certain THEMATIC values. Then we find in them a BROKEN SYMMETRY. This is visible in almost all aspects of Chopin's output. For example: the starting point of the tonal aura of Chopin's pieces is the major-minor system; however, it was common for his works to contain fragments of ambiguous tonality (labile) and strongly modalising fragments. Chopin's melodies «break away» from the stiff outlines of bars and from the symmetrical periodical structure; sometimes they abound in unexpected twists and modulations — at other times they surprise with, for example a drastic limitation of ambitus. Chopin's facture — not much different from the standard in the notation — astounds with distinctive differences in execution, although it introduces only minimal changes in comparison to the original — like lengthening the intervals between the sounds of the accompaniment. The existing traditional formal structures (such as the form of the sonata, rondo or variation) were gradually abandoned by him in favor of the structures that were more characteristic to him, which were subordinate to the expressive layer of the pieces, although they drew from tradition.

There is mastery, artistry and moderation in Chopin's works. This does not mean that one would be unable to find a lesser piece in his output (though there are no bad ones). There is no monumentality bordering on showing off. Chopin's great works are indeed «great», not monumental. Apart from them, there are miniature or even lapidary pieces, although equally elaborated. Chopin is called “the poet of the piano” for a reason.

There is also novelty in Chopin's pieces, although it is never an aim in itself: it always serves the «musical content». Chopin himself indicated two examples of such innovations in his output — one could say, vertical innovations, connected to the function of the accompaniment, as well as horizontal innovations, connected with the function of the finale (Chopin 1949, pp. 309–310):

In my written work the beauty often lies in the accompaniment. [...] For me, the accompaniment and the melody always have equal rights, and often the accompaniment has to be in the foreground. As for finales, which so far have been pointless, tasteless noise, even with the greatest ones, like Beethoven, those are different in my works. Just as it is in an interesting love story, where the last chapter is often the most interesting as it resolves the plot, also I try to create my finales as logical resolutions of the work. It often happens that the importance of my piece lies in the last few bars. I do not mention it to the pianists who perform my rubbish, since whoever is smart enough, he will figure it out, and those who only have quick fingers and feather in their heads will not get it even if you shove it down their throats.

Music historians who view music history from the perspective of «development», have no doubts that Chopin brought a lot to it in terms of harmonics, form, instrumental facture, treatment of national music, etc. And yet, Chopin was far from presenting himself as an avant-garde musician, that is, from creating musical devices for the sake of pure creation. He only attempted to find an adequate way to reflect his musical ideas.

Finally, there is a wide spectrum of characteristic content in Chopin's works.

3. CONTENT

3.1. THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC

In Chopin's *Esquisses* there are more than a dozen terms to describe what music is (one gets the impression that he could not decide which term to use).

First there is simply (1993, p. 48):

The art manifested in sounds is called music.
[Music is] the art of putting sounds together.

Yet later Chopin insists that music is not merely “putting sounds together”, but rather an expression of one's thoughts (1993, p. 48):

Expressing thoughts through sounds.
The art of expressing THOUGHTS through SOUNDS.
THOUGHT expressed through SOUNDS.

Chopin claimed that music is not only a collection of signs, but is also a language. He stressed that music and language are parallel (1993, p. 48):

The unidentified (undetermined) word of men is a sound. An unidentified language [–] music.

A word is born from a sound — a sound before a word. A word [– is] a kind of modification of a sound. We use sounds to make music just as we use words to create a language.

We can presume that this belief had been instilled in him since his youth. Elsner wrote (1818, pp. 6 and 9):

There is no [...] doubt that, just as music is elevated to its highest degree of perfection when its spirit is poetic, also poetry attains that highest degree when its form is musical; [that poetry], which is intended to sound beautiful, and moreover, its words are sequenced metrically and rhythmically, through which a poet, so to say, comes to a musician's aid. [...]

It is no secret that the affinity of music and poetry is so close that each intelligent artist who practises one or the other and deeply cares about the essence of either, cannot fail to notice the perfection, which both of these arts share. The influence of poetry upon music and music upon poetry is so important that one of these arts cannot be adequately and satisfactorily explained without considering the other.

In other definitions Chopin pointed out that music is a specific expression of emotions, feelings and moods rather than thoughts (convictions) (1993, p. 48):

[Music is] an expression of our FEELINGS through sounds.
It is a manifestation of our EMOTIONS in sounds.

At the same time, we know Chopin's pieces to be compositions of absolute music, that is, as it is usually called, asemantic music — devoid of content. Then should we suspect there is a discrepancy between Chopin's explicit and implicit aesthetics? Or perhaps in some sense Chopin's music is a language and performs the functions which Chopin ascribes to music?

3.2. THE SEMIOTIC FUNCTIONS OF SYMBOLS

In order to answer these questions, let us introduce several conceptual distinctions.

An object is a sign of something when it performs a semiotic function — a semantic or pragmatic one. First of all, the functions performed through the expressions of natural or artificial languages: names and sentences, fall into the category of semantic functions. We would say that, for example, the name "Frederick Chopin" performs a designating function, as a designate — Frederick Chopin — is conventionally assigned to it. Thanks to that we can refer to Chopin with the name: "Frederick Chopin". The name: "Polish composer" also designates Frederick Chopin, since we are able to point at him with this name; we can also truthfully predicate the name: "composer". We can do it since the name: "composer" connotes the features which were in fact inherent to Chopin. Linguistic convention assigns also some correlates to compound expressions. For instance, the sentence: "Frederick Chopin had fair hair" states occurrence of a certain state of affairs (we would say that the sentence performs an stating function); incidentally, it is a true sentence, as Chopin indeed had fair hair.

Thanks to the semantic functions of a natural language, we can communicate knowledge about the world to each other: we indicate objects, we make statements about them, we pass information. This function is not performed by musical pieces «by themselves». We say that semantic functions connect the signs directly (that is, without the «help

of the user) with their correlates. Naturally, this happens thanks to certain conventions, which the users helped create. However, the signs subsequently become independent of the conventions.

Language expressions and other signs also establish some pragmatic relationships, that is, relationships whose arguments are the users of the signs. Expression is counted as one of the main pragmatic functions performed by a sign to the users (senders and recipients). A given sign expresses an experience of a user (*scil.* a sender), when the sign is a symptom of that experience. Symptoms of feelings can be present in the sign of those feelings with or without the sender's awareness of the fact.

Furthermore — evocation, that is, the arousal of certain feelings in someone by something, is also one of pragmatic functions performed by the signs. Suppose an object invokes a feeling in us, then for us it is a sign of that feeling.

Finally — a mimetic function, performed by iconic signs, that is, signs similar to their correlates, is distinguished in semiotics. However, let us note that the mimetic function (*scil.* the iconic function) is not a variety of any semiotic function mentioned above, but rather it is «used» either to point at something (i.e. it occurs together with the designation), to express something (i.e. it is connected with expression) or to evoke something (i.e. it is fulfilled within the evocation).

3.2.1. EXPRESSION IN MUSIC

Let us now consider what kinds of signs are encountered in music and what semiotic functions are performed by musical pieces and their parts.

Let us first state clearly that without additional conventions which bind certain musical structures to their extra-musical meanings, musical pieces do not perform any semantic functions. Those additional conventions are sometimes encountered in music. Relevant examples would

be: adding programmes to instrumental pieces, which was common in Chopin's times, or creating a list of leitmotifs of a musical piece, connected with ascribing to them some extra-musical senses.

This is not the case with pragmatic functions, which musical pieces can perform without any additional conventions.

Firstly, a musical piece might be a sign of a composer's experiences, which can be manifested in his composition intentionally, unintentionally or against the composer's intention. Let us consider a composer creating a certain idea-composition. Let us then assume that he *WANTS* to express some of his feelings in it — e.g. happiness, despair or longing. He composes his piece in such a way that the recipient of the audio version of his idea «understood», grasped, what the composer was feeling. Let us stress once more that the situation, when a composer *WANTS* to express his experiences in his composition, should be distinguished from the situation, when they are expressed *UNINTENTIONALLY*.

Secondly, it happens that a musical piece evokes some experiences of a listener. They could be some e.g. memories, associations, thoughts and emotional experiences in the end. Here is a characteristic statement uttered by Władysław Tatarkiewicz (Tatarkiewiczowie 1979, p. 176):

I do not react to music [...] with concentration. The reason for that lies not only in the ephemeral nature of this art, but also in my own lack of competence. However, dreaming remunerates it for me. Music is for me a question of rhythm and dreaming; but this is a lot. Out of the classic composers, Chopin (of course!) gives me the most of it.

Let us assume that a composer wants his piece (in realisation) to evoke certain experiences in the listener. The composer, when writing the piece, does not have to feel these emotions at all; it is enough that he *KNOWS* how to evoke them. Naturally, some doubts may arise as to whether

it is indeed impossible to separate expressing feeling from evoking them. On the other hand, it seems possible that the same piece may simultaneously express the composer's experiences of some kind but evokes feelings of a different kind. There exist musical pieces which consist of two layers: when the feelings evoked by the piece cover the expressed experiences, but do not erase them.

Yet, it turns out that it is impossible to reduce emotional «meanings» included in musical pieces simply to expression and evocation. Sometimes we interpret a piece as an expression of certain experiences which, as we learned before, are not shared by the author. On the other hand, we do not always experience joy when we listen to «cheerful» musical pieces, even if we know that joy is «somehow» contained in them. This is why we have to draw a clear line between, for example, the feeling of sadness evoked by a musical piece, and the conviction that a musical piece is supposed to express or evoke sadness.

Notice that the experiences expressed or evoked in everyday situations are particular experiences, e.g. the sight of a friend we have not seen in a long time gives us (our) pleasure, which we express through (our) smile. The emotions and moods present in music are of a slightly different character — they have certain traits of universality. Joy present in a musical piece is not «somebody's» joy. It is joy «in general». The omnipresent sorrow in Chopin's musical pieces is not (or at least it is not exclusively) Chopin's sorrow, but rather a universal one.

Musical pieces include such emotional content that the listeners may feel the emotions like their own. In this way music, which is a carrier of universal emotions and moods, expresses and evokes particular emotions of its creators and in its recipients. This is what Marian Przełęcki writes on the correspondence of emotional structures with musical structures (1997, p. 224):

There exists a certain correspondence between the structure of sounds and the emotional states, which gives this structure — particular motifs

and themes as well as whole musical pieces — a certain emotional quality. It is proven by a striking compatibility of descriptions of these qualities, formulated by listeners with an understanding of music, and especially — by professional musicologists. The emotional quality of a given structure of sounds and its emotional flavor seem to be inherent to its musical form, and designated by its musical shape.

How do composers manage to include emotional content in their musical pieces? The means of expression at a composer's disposal seem scarce, compared to the means available to other artists. Music expresses and evokes feelings through sounds, qualities of sounds, structures of sounds and qualities of these structures — that is, through various musical elements. At the same time it seems that the mean used to express and evoke emotions in music is imitation: musical processes imitate the processes of emotional life. The similarity between music and the elements of emotional life are at the same time difficult to explicate and intuitively felt. Iwaszkiewicz wrote (1955, p. 86):

For Chopin, music is an expression of emotions. [...] It is not only an expression — it is a picture of emotions.

However, it is necessary to retain one reservation here. It is not the case that each musical work — as a whole — illustrates an emotion, or an emotional process. Let us note that the construction of most musical pieces is based on the principle of symmetry. Feelings and moods — in their processes — do not have such symmetrical structure. Feelings and moods can be assigned to particular fragments of musical pieces, to complete motifs, melodies, or a sequences of chords. But also the form of Chopin's works — especially the mature ones — seems to be a projection of an emotional process. It is enough to analyse the development of Chopin's themes in the ballads and the change of expression in the themes of the mazurkas in their subsequent variants.

Moreover, in Chopin's «late» works, the formal structures are less and less symmetrical. Instead they are developmental.

The surprising element is that there is such a multitude of moods which music is able to express and evoke, despite the surprisingly small number of means at a composer's disposal. After all, music is a certain arrangement of sounds, and sounds have only three basic parameters: duration, dynamics, pitch, and one complex parameter: timbre. The answer to the question of how it is possible brings an observation that musical processes reflect, in a way, whatever is happening in our minds. Thoughts pass through our minds slowly or quickly, and sometimes with breakneck *prestissimo*. Sometimes some unexpected thing happens in our psychical life — like an unexpected chord or a sudden dynamic change. Let us consider an example which is perhaps characteristic of Chopin: his nocturne — «night» — mood. It is created with subdued music, relatively slow and melodious, with a characteristic chord accompaniment — while the «peace and quiet» of the night is interrupted with sudden, dramatic moments (especially in the middle parts of Chopin's works). There are several varieties of this nocturne, «night», mood: there are «elegiac» nocturnes (like *Nocturne in G minor*, Op. 37, No. 1) and «erotic» (like *Nocturne in D-flat major*, Op. 27, No. 2). But there are probably as many emotional shades as there are Chopin's nocturnes — and nocturne-type works (which are some of the preludes, etudes and fragments of bigger compositions).

3.2.2. EVOCATION IN MUSIC

The scope of feelings possible to express and evoke through musical pieces does not end with emotions, feelings and moods. The composer can also create certain associations, that is, representations of certain objects and ideas. Again, it is done by using some purely musical means.

Let us consider, for example, how a composer can evoke a representation of the homeland. He can do it through

the use of a melody or a rhythm reminding the music of his homeland. He could quote a fragment of a melody associated to his country in his musical piece. The scope of such means is very wide. Such composer's suggestions are obviously clear only for those who know the basics of their use. The rhythm of a mazurka will not evoke the image of Poland for those who do not know what Polish folk dance music sounds like.

Particular melodic structures also have a specific evocative power — thanks to the «significance» of particular intervals, still unexplained as to their genesis, but possible to grasp for a sensitive ear; also specific keys possess some evocative power. Władysław Strózewski described this phenomenon with incredible intuition and, at the same time, extraordinary simplicity, in the example of the compositions which are “pure Chopin”, that is, the *Preludes* (Strózewski 1989, pp. 52 and 58):

Consecutive preludes are adapted in a mysterious way to the language means included in particular tones — and [...] they implement these means almost perfectly. [...]

[Here are] the expressive [and aesthetical] qualities evoked in the *Preludes*. The dark mystery of *Prelude in A minor* reveals the nature of this kind of mystery as such, just as *Prelude in F-flat minor* reveals the nature of violence and pain, *F-flat major* portrays calmness and melancholic harmony, *B minor* portrays the essence of speed and flight, *A-flat* — the essence of calmness and strange bliss (probably portrayed in a remembrance or a dream rather than a straightforward «now», which seems to remind us of itself with a clock striking the hours?), and the last *D minor* with the essence of proudly facing fate, of heroism and resolution. [...]

The general character of the *Preludes*, despite the multitude of evoked emotional qualities, is filled with a mood of gravity. It is sometimes linked with the qualities of mystery and a certain «solemnity» (*Prelude in C minor*), severity, even dramaticity, and on the other hand: bliss, lyricism, calmness — but it never fades away. It does not disappear even

in those places where a happy or careless mood appears, which constitutes only some kind of a break on the route to its destination. The *Preludes* owe this overriding character to a large degree to their common musical substance, which rests on the sequence of seconds dominant in all pieces in the cycle.

It would be interesting to compare this diagnosis with the titles Mrs. Sand ascribed to all the preludes, as Solange confirms (Eigeldinger 1978, pp. 226–227). Unfortunately, it seems that the copy of the *Preludes* with the titles, which Chopin gave to Mrs. Sand as a present, did not survive to this day.

It is worth adding that feelings can also be built on associations. For example, a representation of Poland evoked by a quotation from a Polish song can evoke a feeling of longing in a Polish emigrant. Such feelings are also evoked by music, although indirectly (through associations).

3.3. PROGRAMMES AND ASSOCIATIONS

The above differentiations help to better explicate how Chopin understood the linguistic character of music.

Essentially, he was opposed to assigning any programmes to musical pieces or their fragments. Already in his childhood he realised that the «language of music» has its limitations. In a hand-made Father's Day card of December 6, 1818, he wrote (Helman & Skowron & Wróblewska–Straus (ed.) 2009, p. 44):

Dear Papa! Although it would be easier for me to express my feelings to you through music, in reality even the best concert cannot truly express my devotion to you, my dearest Papa. Therefore I have to use simple words straight from my heart, to pay homage to you and to express my feelings of gratitude and filial devotion.

This is why he consistently gave «generic» titles to his compositions. He was greatly angered when his English

publisher added titles to some additions of his works without Chopin knowing about it. He wrote about it in a letter of September 10, 1841, to Fontana:

If he lost money on my compositions, it must be because of those stupid titles he added in spite of my ban.

Also after Chopin's death there were attempts to add programme titles to many of his works, in spite of the fact that he forbade it. Only three of the suggestions caught on: *Etude C in minor*, Op. 10, No. 12, is now called "The Revolutionary Etude", *Etude in A minor*, Op. 25, No. 11, is called "The Winter Wind" and *Prelude in D-flat major*, Op. 28, No. 15 — "The Rainy Prelude".

Yet, one gets an impression that what Chopin wanted to avoid most of all was the «stiff» assignment of some meanings to his pieces, pigeonholing them in a narrow scope of connotation (as if one gave an indisputable interpretation to a poem).

At the same time, he consciously gave an expression to his experiences in his works and he included in them a certain set of emotions on purpose. In a few places — e.g. in a letter of May 15, 1830, to Woyciechowski, Chopin clearly describes the illustrative character of his works:

"Adagio" from the new *Concerto* is in E major. It is not supposed to be powerful, it is more romantic, calm, melancholic, it is supposed to give the impression of a pleasant glimpse of a place where a thousand dear memories come to your mind. — It is like a reverie in a beautiful spring time, but by the moon. This is why I accompany it with mutes, that is the violin muted with a kind of a comb, which clasps the strings and gives them a sort of a nasal, silvery little tone.

The evocative power of Chopin's pieces is confirmed in many written sources. The concordance of some of the descriptions is thought-provoking. Mieczysław

Tomaszewski collates them for *Sonata in B-flat minor* (2010, p. 661–662):

Despite the constant change of historical perspective the readings of the extra-sonic sense usually led to similar formulations, which could be reduced to a common denominator. For instance, *Sonata in B minor* heralds to the listeners a tragic message of the utmost importance from the initial sounds. In the opinion of F. Niecks (1888), there is "something gigantic" in this work, for L. Bronarski (1930), it is "an expression of tragic dread", whereas Z. Mycielski (1956), heard in it "a tragic and mighty note". "This is not how a piece with trivial content would start."

The emotional content of Chopin's works, despite its imprecise nature, is still clear for the listener, which is confirmed in the similar descriptions of *Scherzo in B minor* collected by Tomaszewski. The initial and final parts of the scherzo have been described as: "a sudden, fierce dash; screams hurtled at the sky" (Huneker), "a strong, freshly awakened passion" (Kleczyński), "passionate outbursts and malediction" (Hoesick), "ear-splitting screams of the extreme sides of the keyboard" (Jachimecki), "a bitter, desperate and stormy work" (Iwaszkiewicz), an expression of "passion, terror, rage, defiance" (Zieliński). In turn, the carol-like middle part has been described as melodies "truly heavenly in their character", shrouded with "an idyllic breath" (Kleczyński), "an idyll full of angelic sweetness" (Jachimecki), "a domestic melody, accompanying the intimate, familiar and purely Polish tradition of the Christmas Eve supper" (Iwaszkiewicz), a "gentle, loving, soothing" song (Zieliński). Let us add that earlier Schumann wrote about this scherzo in general (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 466):

What will solemnity look like if jest is hidden behind such a dark veil?

The unspecified — and at the same time, universal — content of Chopin's music is perhaps best described by Felicien Mallefille in a letter of 1838 to Chopin:

Dear Sir! On one occasion, during one of those evenings when you gave yourself fully to INSPIRATION, surrounded by the well-wishing chosen few — you played *The Polish Ballad*, which we love so much. No sooner did the spirit of melancholy bound to your instrument recognise those special hands, which have the power of endowing it with voice, and commence to express his latent torment, than we sank into a dreamy mood. And when you finished, we kept silent for a long time, thoughtful, still hearing the wonderful song, whose last note had long before died away into space. Then what did we all dream about and what thoughts were evoked in our souls by that melodious tone of your piano? I cannot answer this, since just like in clouds, everyone sees something different in music. I looked at our old friend, the Sceptic, who nevertheless kept his belief in love and art — he was sitting there, gazing straight ahead, with his head leaning to his shoulder and a sombre smile on his lips, and imagined that he was dreaming of garrulous springs and sad goodbyes exchanged on shady forest paths. I also saw the old Believer, whose evangelical speeches we listen to in respectful admiration — he was sitting with his hands on his lap, his eyes closed, his forehead creased, and he seemed to ask his forefather, Dante, about the mysteries of the Heaven and the fate of the world. As for me, hidden in the darkest corner of the room, I was crying, sending my thought after the fleeting images you conjured up before me.

What Chopin's compositions expressed was subject to change over time, together with his own evolving personality, in the direction of despair. Liszt wrote (1852/1879, p. 55):

[In] the last period of Chopin's creative output [...] the note of elegiac sadness looms over everything, and together with it, sudden fear, panic, melancholic smiles, violent fits of terror, brief moments of rest full of nervous twitches — well known to people who were suddenly trapped.

3.4. THE FUNCTION OF CATHARSIS

Some authors — supported by many theoreticians of art — ascribe the function of catharsis to their works: the function of the spiritual «purification» of the recipients, thus

preparing them for a spiritual revival. These aspirations were completely alien to Chopin. Although Słowacki, and many others, noticed this, he was wrong in thinking that this fact disqualifies Chopin's works.

3.5. THE POLISHNESS OF CHOPIN'S MUSIC

3.5.1. "A POLE IN HIS HEART"

Schumann, in his *The Carnival*, presents a quasi-nocturne as a symbol of Chopin's music. However, most fans and theoreticians of Chopin's music have no doubts that the most significant content of his music is not the «night», but Poland. Marquis de Custine put it in a characteristically refined phrase in a letter of March 6, 1838:

I found you, and with you your piano, flawless — without tones for tones' sake, with the thoughts you express outside of the instrument, since you play the soul and not the instrument. [...] Poland is miserable as a whole, but each of Her children has his own star, which recompenses them for the general misery.

Incidentally, Chopin himself shares with us an important suggestion in a letter of March 7, 1839, to Fontana, concerning — we can attempt to guess — the future of Poland:

You can look for an answer to your honest and true letter in the second *Polonaise* [in *C minor*, Op. 40].

It seems like the Polishness of Chopin's music was the distinctive quality which Schumann wrote about on December 4, 1838, and which he defended from the attacks of some music critics:

Chopin is unable to write something that you would not react to with a shout of recognition: "It's his!" after hearing seven or eight bars. His mannerism has been pointed out to him and it has been said that he was

not developing. But instead, we should be grateful to him. Is not it still the same original power which stunned and impressed you at first?

The patriotic significance of at least some of Chopin's pieces was obvious to all his listeners. Norwid put it metaphorically in his famous obituary of October 18, 1849 (1971–1976, Vol. VI, p. 251):

A Warsawian by birth, a Pole at heart, a citizen of the world by his talent, Frederick Chopin passed away from this world. [...] He could resolve the difficult equations of art with a mysterious proficiency — as he could pick wild flowers without shaking any dew or dust from them. And he could make them gleam like stars, meteors, not to say: comets, shining for the whole Europe — he could lighten them with the idea of art. He gathered the scattered tears of the Polish nation in one diadem of humanity, gathered into a diamond of beauty, a crystal of singular harmony. [...] He spent most of his life (the main part) abroad, living for his country. [...] He is everywhere — as he wisely stayed in the spirit of his homeland — and he rests in his homeland, for he is everywhere. [...] Kochanowski in *Sobótka* [*Balefires*] was the first one to exhibit folk poetry to the learned world — and Chopin did the same in music.

No wonder that Chopin's music was banned during the Second World War in the part of Poland occupied by the Germans.

The partitioned Poland was waiting for a «national composer», who would be able to present a musical portrait of his nation and his country — with high hopes. This feeling is expressed in Witwicki's letter of July 6, 1831, to Chopin:

Let it always be on your mind: nationality, nationality, nationality; it is almost a worthless word for mediocre writers, but not for a talent like yours. A national melody is like the national climate. The mountains, the forests, the rivers, the meadows have their own inner, native voice, although not every soul gets it.

In the expectation of Polish intellectuals of that time, national music was meant to be «grand» music — opera or symphonic music. Chopin fulfilled their dreams in a way they could never have foreseen. Already at the age of twenty one, Chopin wrote in a letter of December 25, 1831, to Woyciechowski:

You know how much I wanted to feel, and I partly came to the understanding of our national music.

It is obvious how accurate that «understanding» was — from the comments of people who evidently noticed the Polishness in Chopin's music. Norwid simply wrote: “And there was Poland in it...” (1971–1976, Vol. II, p. 144). As we remember, Schumann saw in it cannons hidden among flowers. Berlioz added (Czartkowski & Jeżewska 1957, p. 347),

[When Chopin played in “a circle of chosen listeners”], he became a poet who was singing the heroic love of the heroes of his dreams, their chivalrous joy and sadness of their beloved homeland, distant Poland.

According to Paderewski, “there was a voice of the national soul in Chopin” (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 17). According to Theodore Adorno (Tomaszewski 2010, p. 17):

The music [of *Fantasia in F minor*] reveals that Poland has not perished yet and that someday it will surely rise. [...] Your ears would have to be clogged for you not to hear it.

3.5.2. THE NOBLE AND FOLK TRENDS

The Polishness of Chopin's music has two aspects: noble–aristocratic and folk. It seems that Norwid had the first one in mind when he wrote about “Poland, the omni–excellence of history”, and the second one, when he mentioned “wild flowers”.

Chopin became familiar with the first trend during balls in Warsaw, which Liszt recounted in detail. The

source — and the manifestation — of the second trend was Chopin's fascination with folklore, present since his childhood. Wójcicki describes the characteristic situation (1858, Vol. II, p. 17):

When he was coming back home with his father one winter evening, [Frederick] heard a perky violinist who played mazurkas and oberek tunes at the inn. Stricken by their originality and expressive character, he stopped at the window and begged his father to stop, as he had to listen to the folk violin player. He stood like that for at least half an hour, when his father urged him in vain to go home. Frederick did not leave the window until the player stopped playing.

As Iwaszkiewicz noted, the genesis of this fascination had its roots in the Age of Enlightenment (1955, p. 41):

The spirit of Kołłątaj and Staszic is hovering above [all that], as they were the ones who first gathered a collection of Polish folk songs, and who inspired such people as Zorian Dołęga-Chodakowski, and later Krystyn Lach-Szyrma.

Also Chopin wrote plenty about his fascination with Polish folk music, for example, in *Kurier Szafarski*.

Yet is there a way to reveal how Polishness and patriotism find their way into his music?

Let us refer to Liszt's diagnosis, who cannot be denied good judgement in this case, together with a strong sense of intuition paired with his own experience in composing.

The starting point of the mentioned diagnosis is the following assumption (Liszt 1852, p. 36):

The fundamental features of personality of a given country's citizens are manifested in their national folk dances.

Let us accept this assumption, remembering that those features may obviously be manifested in different ways.

In the case of Poland, the national dances Liszt meant were the polonaise and the mazurka, and to a lesser degree — the cracovienne.

Let us note that the first represents the «nobility» and «aristocracy», and the second represents «folklore», although, as Liszt notes, the second is more universal than the first (1852/1879, pp. 688–690):

[Because] the mazur reigns [in Poland] in palaces as well as country huts.

A century later this diagnosis is seconded by Kotarbiński, who writes (1960, p. 394):

A harvest time song as well as a Christmas carol teem with the rhythm of the polonaise, and if the youth have the desire to dance, they will probably choose a mazur or something in a similar rhythm.

3.5.3. THE POLONAISES AND THE MAZURKAS

The concert versions of the polonaise were already composed before Chopin. What he introduced to this genre was, according to Liszt, “a more moving approach and new harmonic structures” (1852/1960, p. 48). We could risk adding: a more «refined» approach and structures, and at the same time — more characteristically Polish. Let us remember that Chopin was able to sense the «Polish note», as he had the opportunity to listen to it in monody solo versions and with accompaniment. Even experienced people, who were friendly to Chopin, such as Norwid, did not grasp this aspect of Chopin's works from the very beginning. Norwid admitted in a letter written at the end of 1845 to Antoni Celiński (1971–1976, Vol. VIII, p. 18):

I greatly value CHOPIN, but OGIŃSKI's polonaise has more truth for me, and I could say that I can feel its roundness “IN MY HANDS”, as Adam [scil. Mickiewicz] says.

Liszt saw the specific character of the polonaise as a musical genre mostly in the «imperious» and at the same time, «courtly» rhythm. Even now it is easier to «notice» these features in couples dancing the polonaise in their slow steps and wide bows, and «hear» them in the music, than to describe them precisely.

No wonder then that Liszt uses the language of metaphors and similes to «explain» the specific rhythmic character of the polonaise (1852/1879, pp. 42, 27–28 and 32):

It was certainly not a banal and senseless promenade around the room; it was a procession. [...]

The polonaise [...] shakes and thrills us with its grand rhythm, shakes off all the numbness. It contains the noblest traditions of old-time Poland. What strikes in them is the unbending firmness combined with gravity — which apparently had been an inherent feature of the greatest people in this country. [...] The polonaise exudes a calm and prudent force and seems to show those Poles from the old times, like in the pictures preserved in the chronicles: broad-shouldered, robust people, sharp-witted, deeply religious and immensely serious, but at the same time full of courtesy and gallantry. [...]

[The polonaise] was [...] one of the rare, exceptional dances whose aim was, above all, to focus our attention on men, push them to the forefront and arouse admiration for their beauty, gallantry, their stern and courtly posture. (Do not those two adjectives: “stern” and “courtly” describe the Polish character well?...)

That rhythmic «imperious spirit» and «gallantry» is additionally stressed by the characteristic polonaise melody and harmony. Again, to explain it figuratively, the melody is «fanfare-like» and the harmony is «clear», as opposed to cantabile melody and labile harmony, filled with “bold dissonance”, as in some typical mazurkas. This is how Liszt described this difference (1852/1879, pp. 60–61 and 109–110):

As for expression, Chopin’s mazurkas differ greatly from the polonaises. They have a distinctly different character. They represent a completely different

world, in which there appear subtle, subdued and changeable colors instead of rich and vibrant ones. [...] Only there [in Poland] the full scope of pride, tenderness and robust verve specific to this dance can be captured. [...]

There is great diversity of themes and moods in very many mazurkas. In some, the clink of spurs can be heard. [...] In others, there is a kind of subdued fear: restlessness, a premonition of love.

These words also contain Liszt’s opinion on the rhythmic character of mazurkas, which, according to him, was manifested in «sturdiness» and «exuberance» — as opposed to the polonaise. However, as Moniuszko first noted, the formal evolution and the *sui generis* individuality of Chopin’s mazurkas is worth stressing. Moniuszko wrote in a short but important text, “W odpowiedzi J. I. Kraszewskiemu” [“In Response to J. I. Kraszewski”], published in 1857 (1857, pp. 61–62):

I was never deceived by the simple name of MAZURKA, given [by Chopin] to the deep thought of a POEM enchanted in those few bars of music. [...]

Chopin was only responsible for himself, for the beauty of HIS soul, the pain of HIS heart, the music of HIS feelings — sung through his genius. [...]

Chopin started by drawing from folk music. No wonder that with time, when he departed from that source, the folk character slowly faded and changed from frequently used material to an exclusive element in his works. There survived only one copy of the last MAZURKA which was based on the first one. [...]

Compare the first and the last and only then will you know which direction the master intended to go and where he ended up.

This evolution also concerned the «content». At first, oberek «mood» was prevalent in the mazurkas. Heller wrote in 1827 (*O Chopinie* 2010, p. 42):

Chopin [...] dallied with his art, controlled it, charmed the listener with an inborn exuberance of Polish rhythm and tunes.

Later the melancholic mood took over.

According to Iwaszkiewicz, the musing and tender character of these melancholic mazurkas is connected to the influence of the Ukrainian *etnos*, the influence being twofold (1955, p. 98):

It was natural in those times that [in Warsaw] one was exposed to Ukrainian songs, the Ukrainian dumka and the Ukrainian dance — directly through the landowners from the Eastern part of Poland, who came to Warsaw with their Ukrainian servants. [...]

Through the landscape and the songs of the Land of Hrubieszów Chopin approached the very essence of the mood he presents to us [...], of a gloomy song of «hired workman» from beetroot plantations.

Not wanting to belittle this comparison, which Iwaszkiewicz turned our attention to only because he himself came from the heart of Ukraine (he was born in Kalnik, near Kiev), let us add that the main source of Chopin's «reverie» and «tenderness» was in the heart of Poland: in his mother's native Kuyavia region, and in the local version of the mazurka: the kuyaviak, as well as in the «dumka» songs from the Land of Dobrzyń. Luckily, one of them was noted by Oskar Kolberg, who travelled in the Land of Dobrzyń a few years later than Chopin (incidentally, Chopin suggested that he visit this region) (Kolberg 1969, p. 78):



Let us compare it with *Mazurka in B minor*, Op. 33, No. 4:



The most striking melodic similarity can be found between bars 5–8 in Chopin's piece and bars 7–8 and 11–12 of the Dobrzyń dumka. Also other analogies in the melody can be detected. In the first two bars of the dumka, we have a melody in the ambitus of the octave and the characteristic abrupt falling fourth, repeated in bar 4 — after a falling scale motif. In Chopin's «kuyaviak-type» mazurka, there is also the ambitus of the octave, and the key elements of the melody are pure intervals: rising fourths in tact 1 and falling fifths in tact 2. In one place (tact 12), Kolberg noted a «plaintive» singer; in Chopin's piece, there are more places which present this characteristic trait — the «plaintive» places are the ones where mordents (bars 1, 3, 5 and 7) and appoggiaturas (bars 2 and 4) were used.

The motif of a falling fourth is incidentally very characteristic of Chopin — it is noticeable also in *Mazurka in G minor*, Op. 24, No. 1, and in *Mazurka in G-sharp minor*, Op. 33, No. 1.

3.5.4. SONGS

It is commonly stressed that all Chopin's pieces belonging to the category of vocal lyricism have Polish texts. However, the

language is not the most important, but rather the content of these lyrics is. Their choice is not accidental in these terms.

They express Chopin's beliefs in a poetic form — the fact that love, life, death and homeland were in the centre of Chopin's attention. They fall into two natural categories: in Chopin's Warsaw period, idyllic and romantic lyricism is predominant, whereas in the Paris period, melancholic and patriotic lyricism is more common.

3.6. "THE SPIRIT OF THE NATION"

What does the Polishness of Chopin's music mean in general?

Sometimes it is obvious, and the composer's allusion is clear. This was the case with the concert in Vienna which Chopin described in a letter of August 12, 1829, to his family:

Yesterday, after the concert, [the director] squeezed my arm hard and he told me [...] to take another Polish theme; I chose *Chmiel* [*Hop*], which thrilled the audience, who was not used to such songs. My spies from the stalls vouch that people were jumping on their benches.

He is talking about a very old, pentatonic Polish wedding song, performed by a choir during traditional wedding rites, when the bride had to dance until she dropped — with all the guests — a dance called "pillow dance":



The allusion is obvious in the case of *Scherzo in B minor*, with the only evident quotation of all Chopin's works: the beautiful Polish Christmas carol, "Lulajże Jezuniu" ["Sleep, Baby Jesus"], which appeared in written sources as early as the 18th century. It, somewhat processed and developed, appears in the middle part.



In this context, the extreme parts of the *Scherzo* gain in importance: their moving drama, and at times, «scream» (in the finale) is spontaneously interpreted as an expression of longing and defiance (which could be the equivalent of *Album Stutgarcki* in music).

However, in the most «Polish» of Chopin's works, mazurkas, there are no clear allusions. They are far from simple imitations of folk dances which Chopin came across in his Warsaw youth. The Polishness of Chopin's mazurkas is imaginary: it is manifested in the specific rhythm, accentuation and tonality. This is why Chopin was angered by Oskar Kolberg's, Wojciech Sowiński's and Nowakowski's ineffective attempts in this area. This is what he wrote about Kolberg's songs with accompaniment in a letter of April, 1847, to his family:

Good will, not enough back-up.

He also wrote about Sowiński in a letter of December 25, 1831, to Woyciechowski:

If I ever imagined impostors or stupidity in art, my imaginings were never as perfect as what I am often forced to hear now, when I am walking around my room. My ears turn red — I would kick him out, but I have to show some consideration, or even be affectionate. [...] He [Sowiński] gets on my nerves the most with this collection of pub songs, senseless, with terrible accompaniment, written with no knowledge of harmony and prosody whatsoever, with contra-dance endings — which he calls a collection of Polish songs. [...] Just think how pleasant it is — when he sometimes grabs some piece of mine in which the beauty lies in the accompaniment — and he plays it in his vulgar, ribald, rural, Sunday-school mode, and I cannot even say anything, because he will not understand any more than he is able to grasp. He is like an inside-out Nowakowski.

He wrote even more bluntly about Henri Herz in a letter of May 28, 1831, to his family:

At the end of the concert Herz was supposed to play his *Variation in POLISH MOTIFS*. POOR POLISH MOTIFS! You would never expect to hear such Sabbath songs, called “Polish music” in order to lure some publicity. And then how to defend POLISH music? Speak a word of it and you will be taken for a lunatic, especially since Czerny, that Viennese oracle of all music delicacies, has not done a variation of any POLISH theme yet.

Then how to explain the fact that the real “Polish motifs” can be heard also in those of Chopin’s works which he did not comment on as to their Polish origin?

It seems that the more we know about Chopin, about who he was and what values he possessed, the more clearly we hear the Polishness of his music.

Chopin is one of those artists who deliver their system of values in their music. Karol Szymanowski captured this idea well (Szymanowski 1930, p. 134; 1923, p. 132; 1931, p. 138):

What poverty of imagination it would be to see in [...] [Chopin’s music] only wandering shadows and flashes of irrevocably bygone days!

Vibrant, flaring pride of noblemen’s robes and coats, the clink of knights’ swords — in the POLONAISES! The rustle of coarse, stiff yeoman’s homespun fabric, the lively patter of boots, the echoes of songs at the inn — in the MAZURKAS! And how often his music is forced into those frames, too narrow, too modest for his greatness! This music is not a memory of its author’s personal, painful experiences either, it is not a helpless complaint about the bitterness of grey days, nor is it even a black, sombre vision of the contemporary national mourning. [...]

The «Polishness» of Chopin’s work is undoubted; however, it does not rest on the fact that he also wrote polonaises and mazurkas (a misguided idea of folk music being the basis of his individual work!), in which an ALIEN idealist and literary content was often crammed, as I mentioned before. In the undisputed «musicality» of these pieces, he doubly surpassed his contemporaries: as an artist, he sought forms which stand apart from the literary-dramatic character of music, specific to Romanticism; as a Pole, he reflected in his works the essence of the contemporary tragic collapse of NATIONAL HISTORY, and he instinctively strove to catch the UNIVERSAL, deepest expression of his race. He understood that he could provide art with the most durable and truly Polish values only through its liberation from the scope of dramatic historical content. [...]

The «Polishness» [...] [of Chopin’s music], while it rises above some kind of simplified folk curio, characteristic to the so called «national» music, it strives for the heights of the purest transcendental expression of the very soul of our nation.

Since both of us are pianists, we have been playing Chopin's pieces for as long as we can remember, and we also knew some of the basic facts of his life. But only when we started to prepare this book, reading his letters, comments of his family and friends, and reconstructing the world of his values — this is when we really got to know Chopin — or at least as well as one is able to get to know a person who lived two centuries before. What we learned about Chopin and what we described here surprised us and made us happy for two reasons.

First of all, it turned out that Chopin was not only a genius composer (which we have always known about), but also: a sensible, righteous and honest man on the one hand and a sensitive and charming person on the other hand.

A genius with such features of personality is extremely rare.

Secondly, we discovered that we share many of Chopin's views. Like Chopin, we detest intellectual deception and pseudo-scientific babble. Just like him, we value mastery, moderation and good taste in art and we hate bungling, exaggeration and empty novelty. Like for Chopin, on the top of our hierarchy there is our Homeland.

The building in 3 Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, where the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Warsaw is, in which we both work, is located between the Church of the Holy Cross and the left wing of the Czapskis Palace, where Chopin's family lived in the last ten years of his stay in Warsaw.

This was the apartment from which Chopin left Poland — as it turned out — for good.

The windows of the Department of Logical Semiotics, where we both work, in the attic of the building in 3 Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, overlook the magnificent baroque cupolas of the Warsaw church of the Holy Cross.

In this church, merely a few dozen metres from where we work, lies Chopin's heart, which came back to Poland, brought here from Paris by Ludwika Jędrzejewiczowa, as was her brother's wish.

Whenever we are in our Institute and our room, we think of the time when Chopin was leaving Warsaw, and at the same time, we feel his presence—eternal, in spite of fate.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CONTAINED IN THE POLISH VERSION OF THIS BOOK

Abbreviations: ABr — Anna Brożek; ABz — Agnieszka Brzezińska; DPZS — Dyrekcja Państwowych Zbiorów Sztuki; FC — Fundacja XX Czatortowskich; JJ — Jacek Jadacki; JK — Jerzy Koralewski; LB — Leon Binental; LC — Laura Ciechomska; MFC — Muzeum Fryderyka Chopina; MJ — Małgorzata Józków; MM — Maria Mirska; MwŁ — Muzeum w Łowiczu; NIFC — Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina; SC — Sylwiusz Chrastina; SZ — Szczepan Ziarko; TH-L — Towarzystwo Historyczno-Literackie; TiFC — Towarzystwo im. Fryderyka Chopina; TJ — Tadeusz Jelinek; WTM — Warszawskie Towarzystwo Muzyczne.

LC collection — lost in 1939. LB collection — lost in 1939–1944. WTM collection — lost in 1942–1944. DPZS collections — lost in 1939.

1. *Everybody here admires the devotion you have shown to us [...] by coming to Karlsbad, which we will never forget* (Mikołaj Chopin, 15.12.1835). Market Square in Karlove Vary (Carl Waage, before 1850); Waage 1850 (c.).
2. *Even the best concert cannot grasp my devotion to you, Dearest Dad* (6.12.1818). Mikołaj Chopin (Ambroży Mieroszewski, 1829); from the former collections of LC; Binental 1930.
3. King Stanislaus Leszczyński in a medal from 1706; from the collections of JJ.
4. Utrata River in Żelazowa Wola; photo by JJ.
5. *Comte de Sabran [died], who I liked a lot, [...] who wrote pretty fairy tales, [...] and imitated some of Krasicki's tales* (11.10.1846). Ignacy Krasicki (Daniel Chodowiecki, the end of the 18th c.); Krasicki 1830.
6. His father's letter written to Frederick Chopin on September 14, 1835, on the way from Warsaw to Karlove Vary; from the former collections of LC; Binental 1930.
7. The grave of Frederick Chopin's parents — Justyna, née Krzyżanowska, and Mikołaj Chopin — in Powązkowski Cemetery in Warsaw (9–IV–1); photo by JJ.
8. *I finish by giving my most sincere thanks to your Mother again for remembering me kindly, her devoted servant, who also has some Kuyavian blood in him* (18.07.1834). Kuyavians (Jan Nepomucen Lewicki, 1841). [In:] Leon Zienkiewicz, *Les costumes du peuple polonaise*, Paris 1838–1841; from the collections of JJ.
9. *Write more often, for the sake of my old age and my devotion to you* (the end of February, 1838). Justyna, née Krzyżanowska, Chopin (Ambroży Mieroszewski, 1829); from the former collections of LC; Binental 1930.
10. The front page of Ignacy Krasicki's *Works* published in 1830 in Paris; Krasicki 1830.
11. His mother's letter written in the second half of February, 1848, in Warsaw to Frederick Chopin (*a* and *b*); from the former collections of LC; Binental 1930.
12. *I fear [...] that you might at some point frown at this heart which loves and respects you more than life itself* (15.12.1835). Ludwika, née Chopin, Jędrzejewiczowa (Ambroży Mieroszewski, 1829); from the former collections of LC; Binental 1930.
13. Frederick Chopin's letter written on June 25, 1849, in Paris to Ludwika Jędrzejewiczowa in Warsaw; from the former collections of LC; Binental 1930.
14. The title page of the first edition of *Krótki zbiór życia św. Weroniki* [*A Short Collection of St. Veronica's life facts*]

- (1841), written by Ludwika Chopin-Jędrzejewiczowa on the basis of the stories of Italian lives of saints, written by Filip Maria Salvatori; Chopin-Jędrzejewiczowa 1841.
15. An effigy of St. Veronica, put in the second edition of *Zbiór życia św. Weroniki* [*The Life of St. Veronica*] (1859); Chopin-Jędrzejewiczowa 1859.
 16. The title page of the second edition of *Zbiór życia św. Weroniki* [*The Life of St. Veronica*] (1859); Chopin-Jędrzejewiczowa 1859; from the collections of JJ.
 17. The grave of Ludwika Jędrzejewiczowa, née Chopin, in Powązkowski Cemetery in Warsaw (175-V-1); photo by JJ.
 18. *Us with the blonde Izabela* (18-20.07.1845). Izabela z Chopinów Barcińska (Ambroży Mieroszewski, 1829); from the former collections of LC; Binental 1930.
 19. The grave of Izabela Barcińska, née Chopin, in Powązkowski Cemetery in Warsaw (II-II-10); photo by JJ.
 20. *It's been 4 weeks since Emilia fell ill; she got a cough, started to spit blood; mother got frightened* (12.03.1827). Emilia Chopinówna (unknown author, c. 1826; watercolor and gouache on ivory); from the collections of MFC in NIFC; property of TiFC, No. inw. M/34.
 21. Emilia Chopinówna's grave in Powązkowski Cemetery in Warsaw (175-II-6); photo by JJ.
 22. *Although Mother was reluctant to let me go, it did not change anything; both me and Ludwika are in Żelazowa Wola* (24.12.1825). The mansion in Żelazowa Wola; photo by JJ.
 23. *Will you stay longer by my tomb, like those willow trees, remember? — the ones which display their bald heads* (18.08.1848). An old willow tree in Żelazowa Wola; photo by JJ.
 24. Saxon Palace in Warsaw, where Chopin family lived in 1810-1817, viewed from Saski Garden (Julian Cegliński, the middle of the 19th c.); Cegliński & Matuszkiewicz 1855.
 25. Saski Garden with an allegory of glory — the Chopins' walking area in 1810-1817; photo by JJ.
 26. *My Botanical Garden, that old alias [or] behind the palace, which the Commission had beautifully redone* (15.05.1826). Kazimierzowski Park, the former Botanical Garden of the University of Warsaw — the place where Frederick Chopin amused himself and walked when he was a student in the Warsaw Lyceum; photo by JJ.
 27. *You would never guess where this letter came from!... You might think that it's from the second gate of Kazimierzowski Palace* (24.12.1825). The right outbuilding of Kazimierzowski Palace, where the Chopin family lived in 1817-1827; photo by JJ.
 28. *Upstairs there is a room for my convenience* (27.12.1828). The left outbuilding of Krasińskis Palace in Warsaw, where the Chopin family lived in 1827-1837; photo by JJ.
 29. *His Majesty Tsar and King Alexander I in his grace presented him with a precious ring as a sign of His contentment, when Chopin was honored by being heard by the Monarch* (Mikołaj Chopin, 13.04.1829). Evangelical Church in Warsaw; photo by JJ.
 30. A view of Warsaw from the direction of the Prague district (Julian Cegliński, the middle of the 19th c.); Cegliński & Matuszkiewicz 1855.
 31. The dinning room of the Chopin family in Krasiński Palace in Warsaw (Antoni Kolberg, 1832); from the former collections of WTM; Binental 1930.
 32. The view from the dinning room of the Chopin family apartment in the outbuilding of Krasińskis Palace of the Church of Holy Cross and Staszic Palace; photo by JJ.
 33. Radziwiłłowski (Presidential) Palace in Warsaw, where Frederick Chopin gave his first public performance

- on February 24, 1818 (Fryderyk Krzysztof Dietrich, c. 1821); Lam (ed.) 1928–1930, Vol. III.
34. Radziwiłłowski (Presidential) Palace in Warsaw; photo by JJ.
 35. The Blue Palace, where Chopin used to play frequently in the Zamoyski family salon since he was 6 years old; photo by JJ.
 36. Potockis Palace, where Frederick Chopin used to play; photo by JJ.
 37. The Great Theatre in Warsaw (Alfons Matuszkiewicz, the middle of the 19th c.); Cegliński & Matuszkiewicz 1855.
 38. *The greatest blockhead would learn if taught by Żywny and Elsner* (19.08.1829). Wojciech Żywny (Ambroży Mieroszewski, 1829); from the former collections of LC; Karłowicz 1904.
 39. Wojciech Żywny's grave in Powązkowski Cemetery in Warsaw (12–II–20); photo by JJ.
 40. *If I hadn't been learning from Elsner [...], I would know less than I do now* (10.04.1830). Józef Elsner; Askenazy et al. 1901–1903, Vol. I.
 41. Józef Elsner's grave in Powązkowski Cemetery in Warsaw (Ludwik Piechaczek, before 1858); Wójcicki 1858, Vol. II.
 42. Józef Elsner's grave in Powązkowski Cemetery in Warsaw (159–V–1); photo by JJ.
 43. A copy of *Nauka harmonii* [*The Science of Harmony*] — *Anweisung zum General Baß* by Karol Antoni Simon (Poznań 1923, published by the author), which belonged to Frederick Chopin; from the former collections of WTM; Binental 1930.
 44. The organs in the Visitationist Church in Warsaw, where Chopin used to play; photo by JJ.
 45. *Every week, on Sundays, I play the organs at the Visitationist church, and they sing* (November, 1825). The Visitationist Church in Warsaw; photo by JJ.
 46. The main altar in the Visitationist Church in Warsaw; photo by JJ.
 47. Staszic Palace in Warsaw, the seat of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning in 1823–1832; photo by JJ.
 48. Samuel Bogumił Linde's bust (Jakub Tatarkiewicz, the middle of the 19th c.) from his grave in the Evangelical Cemetery in Warsaw (1–12); photo by JJ.
 49. Samuel Bogumił Linde's tomb (Władysław Walkiewicz, before 1858) in the Evangelical Cemetery in Warsaw (1–12); Wójcicki 1858, Vol. III.
 50. *I listen to Brodziński, Bentkowski and others who have any connections with music* (2.10.1926). Feliks Bentkowski; Askenazy et al. 1901–1903, Vol. I.
 51. *We had to write a note in his [scil. Hanka's] book devoted to special guests in the Prague Museum. Brodziński, Morawski etc. are already there* (26.08.1829). Kazimierz Brodziński's head — a fragment of the sculpture in the Visitationist Church in Warsaw (Władysław Oleszczyński, 1863); photo by JJ.
 52. Jakub Tatarkiewicz (self-portrait with his wife, Antonina and his son, Franciszek Ksawery); Jaworski 1975.
 53. Frederick Chopin's bust (Jakub Tatarkiewicz, 1850); from the former collections of WTM; Binental 1930.
 54. *I give my thanks to Mr. Skarbek, as mainly he was the one who encouraged me to give the concert* [August 11, 1829], as it was an introduction to a career (13.08.1829). Fryderyk Skarbek (Walenty Bułakowski, 1837); Lam (ed.) 1928–1930, Vol. III.
 55. *Szaniasio* [scil. Szaniawski], who is now a confirmed, ate collops and cabbage like, I am sure, no other Carmelite (26.12.1830). Józef Kalasanty Szaniawski (the beginning of the 19th c.); Lam (ed.) 1928–1930, Vol. III.
 56. Krystyn Lach-Szyrma (the middle of the 19th c.); Kraushar 1900–1906, Vol. VII.
 57. *I saw a most beautiful city, the ugliest views of which I hereby send in paper former* (10.08.1848). Edinburgh;

- photograph from the former collections of MM; Mirska 1949.
58. Stanisław Kostka Potocki (Johann Ferdinand Gottfried Krethlow, c. 1820); Kraushar 1900–1906, Vol. I.
 59. *Sowiński, that kind soul, in the hands of those rascals* (after 16.09.1831). General Józef Sowiński; Sokołowski 1907.
 60. *Would you be so kind as to kindly let me visit you at any hour convenient to you, for the sake of our old friendship and more recent neighbourly relations?* (Klementyna Hoffmanowa née Tańska, 1844). Klementyna Hoffmanowa née Tańska; Askenazy *et al.* 1901–1903, Vol. I.
 61. Kazimierzowski Palace in Warsaw, the headquarters of Warsaw Lyceum (since 1839) and the University (until now); in the foreground — students of both schools (Jan Feliks Piwarski, 1824); Kraushar 1900–1906, Vol. VI.
 62. The Kazimierzowski Palace; photo by JJ.
 63. A copy of *Wykład statyki dla użycia szkół wydziałowych i wojewódzkich* [*Lecture on Statics for District and Province Schools*] by Gaspard Monge (Warszawa 1820, Drukarnia Zawadzkiego i Węckiego), which Frederick Chopin received as a reward for his exam in the Warsaw Lyceum in 1824; an embossed, gilded dedication is visible on the original vermilion cardboard cover: MORIBUS ET DILIGENTIAE / FREDERICI CHOPIN / IN EXAMINE PUBLICO / LYCEI VARSAVIENSIS / Die 24. Julii 1824; from the collections of MFC in NIFC; property of TiFC, No. inw. M/381; Binental 1930.
 64. A coffee house at Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, where Chopin used to go (Alojzy Misierowicz, the second half of the 19th c.); Nowaczyński 1939.
 65. A house in Podwale Street in Warsaw, belonging to Józef Reinschmidt's parents, where a farewell party took place before Frederick Chopin went abroad in 1831; photograph from the former collections of MM; Mirska 1949.
 66. *Let me remind you of myself and thank you for the lovely songs* (Stefan Witwicki, 6.07.1831). Stefan Witwicki; *Encyklopedia krakowska* 1929–1938, Vol. XVIII.
 67. *Mochnicki, who praises me lavishly in Kurier Polski, and especially my "Adagio"* [from *Concerto in F minor*, Op. 21], *advises at the end to be more ENERGETIC* (27.03.1830). Maurycy Mochnicki (Antoni Oleszczyński, 1827); Kraushar 1900–1906, Vol. I.
 68. Western parts of Poland, incorporated into Austria, Russia and Prussia at the end of 18th century; *Królestwo Polskie* 1829; from the collections of JJ.
 69. A map of Sochaczew district (Józef Michał Bazewicz, 1907); Bazewicz 1907.
 70. Frederick Chopin's native land — the borderland of Mazovia, Great Poland, Pomerania and Kuyavia; *Królestwo Polskie* 1829 (fragment).
 71. A pond in Brochów; photo by JJ.
 72. The church of St. Roch in Brochów; photo by JJ.
 73. The main altar at the church of St. Roch in Brochów; photo by JJ.
 74. The baptismal font in the church of St. Roch in Brochów; photo by JJ.
 75. The organ in the church of St. Roch in Brochów; photo by JJ.
 76. *It is morning, [...], the air is fresh, the sun is shining beautifully, the birds are singing* (6.07.1827). The Main Square in Kowalewo; Mirska 1949.
 77. *So today [I am] in Płock* (6.07.1827). The panorama of Płock (Napoleon Orda, the first half of the 19th c.); from the collections of JJ.
 78. *I was [...] in Sanniki at the Pruszek family's place. I spent all my summer there* (9.09.1828). The palace in Sanniki, where Frederick Chopin stayed in 1828; photograph from the former collections of MM; Mirska 1949.

79. *At a musical gathering in Szafarnia [...] J. P. Pichon played Kalkbrenner's concerto* (19.08.1824). A manor built in 1910 in Dziewanowski family property in Szafarnia, with Frederick Chopin's memorial (Roman Dantan, 2001); photo by ABrz; from the collections of the Chopin Centre in Szafarnia.
80. *On the 14th of this month the hen was crippled and the duck lost his leg in a fight with the goose* (19.08.1824). *Kurier Szafarski* — a satirical magazine published by Frederick Chopin in Szafarnia — the «issue» of 16 August 1824; Opieński 1909.
81. Harvest festival (Michał Stachowicz, 1821, oil on canvas, 70 × 94); from the collections of Muzeum Narodowe in Warsaw, No. MP 2295; photo by Archiwum Foto MNW.
82. *Tomorrow morning we are going to Turzno and we won't be back until Wednesday* (26.08.1835). Działowski family's palace in Turzno, where Frederick Chopin played concerts in 1825 and 1827; photograph from the former collections of MM; Mirska 1949.
83. *I saw [...] Kopernik's house. [...] I saw the Leaning Tower, the famous town hall, inside as well as outside; it is a curiosity that it has as many windows as there are days in the year, as many halls as there are months, as many rooms as there are weeks, and it was built wonderfully in the gothic style. However, nothing beats the gingerbread* (the beginning of September, 1825). Town Hall in Toruń; photo by JJ.
84. *True, I have seen all the fortifications surrounding the city, [...] I saw the famous machine which carries sand from one place to another, [...] and apart from that: Gothic churches, built for the Teutonic Order, one of which [scil. St. Johns'] was built in 1231* (the beginning of September, 1825). St. Johns' cathedral in Toruń; photo by ABr.
85. *The gingerbread cakes made the greatest impression or alias filling on me. [...] According to the local custom of gingerbread bakers, gingerbread shops are corridors lined with firmly locked chests, in which lie sorted cookies, grouped into dozens* (the beginning of September, 1825). Traditional gingerbread from Toruń; photo by JJ.
86. Soon in Gdańsk (6.07.1827). Interior of Artus Court in Gdańsk (Johann Karl Schultz, after 1850); Schultz 1851–1867.
87. *Collegium Maius* of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow; photo by ABr.
88. Senatorial Tower in Wawel; photo by ABr.
89. Wawel (Jan Nepomucen Głowacki, 1836); Głowacki 1836.
90. *Cracow occupied my mind so I had little time to think about home [...] and you* (12.09.1829). Wawel from Vistula River; photo by ABr.
91. Brine in Wieliczka (Józef Fischer, 1843); from the collections of JJ.
92. The inside of Wieliczka Salt Mine (Ludwik Emanuel Hrdina, 1842); from the collections of JJ.
93. Lumps of salt from Wieliczka Salt Mine; from the collections of JJ.
94. *Mr. Indyk [...] gave us a room by the rock. [...] Exactly where Mrs. Tańska was staying!* (1.08.1829). View of Ojców (Fryderyk Krzysztof Dietrich, the 19th c.); from the collections of JJ.
95. Ojców is indeed pretty (12.09.1829). Maczuga Kraka [Crac's Club] Rock in Pieskowa Skała near Ojców; photo by ABr.
96. Having passed the city and the beautiful surrounding of Cracow, we told our coachman to go straight to Ojców (1.08.1829). Chopin visited, among other places, the Royal Cavern, “where King Łokietek was hiding from his enemies at the end of the 13th century, as folk tales say”. The exit of the Royal Cavern in Ojców; photo by ABr.

97. Pieskowa Skała near Ojców; photo by ABr.
98. *Woyciechowski wrote to me saying I should compose an oratory. [...] I wrote back, asking why he is setting up a sugar factory and not a Camaldolese or Observantine monastery* (8.08.1839). Remnants of the sugar refinery; in the background: a view of Poturzyn; photo by SZ.
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