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NON-AMERICAN “AMERICAN DREAM”. “LODZERMENSCH” MYTH AS A VEHICLE OF WORK ETHICS

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1. The background of the paper. Workplace cultural capital – a bridge between business ethics and literary myth

The aim of the presented paper is to show, based on case study of Central European cultural archetype of “Lodzermensch”, how analysis of provincial pro-entrepreneurial myths can enrich the problematic of work ethics and simplify its dissemination through cultural capital.

I adopted the definition of the myth by Michel de Certeau (1900/ 2008: 135), which defines it as a “fragmentary discourse connected with varied dealings of some society, which express them in symbolic way”.

I compare this way of understanding the myth, with already classical research of Michelle Lamont (1992) considering workplace cultural capital. This author, using Bourdieu's conception of the definition cultural capital during the analysis of business phenomenon, showed that both French and American executives tacitly expect that their employees would behave in the certain ways and profess special values, which construct the morality of work. These two dimensions behavioral and axiological create the workplace cultural capital. For those people who do not possess such capital (although officially they are not mentioned at any stage of the recruitment process) it is very difficult or maybe impossible to be promoted or even survive at the workplace in the System of Western capitalism.

2. Work Ethics in the Context of Workplace Cultural Capital

The behavioral aspect of workplace cultural capital is represented by such principles as being punctual at work, being dressed appropriately for interviews, or courteous manners in relation to clients and superiors.

On the other hand, work ethics (as an axiological dimension) within the presented concept, in reality, comes down to the beliefs of a particular employee that allow him to answer the existential question “Why do I work?”. According to William Lockhart (2002), whose publication became the main intellectual inspiration for this article, in the American version of the axiological dimension of workplace cultural capital, there are two alternative aspects. The components of employees' success are both ascetic and in the form of expressive moralism.

The first one is a contemporary, secularized form of the traditionally understood Protestant work ethos and results from a belief developing since the beginning of Protestant Reformation. This being that work, just like a prayer, brings the human being closer to God. Today in many cases, God's place is taken by persons' own growth potential. Ascetic moralism can be brought down to the thesis: “I work because my work is the way of my personal development”. A derivative of this approach is a moral directive “Avoid sloth and don't be focused on material enjoyment, but instead - save and invest in future profits.” “Material pleasure and leisure should be avoided. Instead of this the better option is reinvestment of assets and thrift for future profit”

Expressive moralism also has religious roots. Lockhart (2002) alongside other authors, places its origin in the conception formulated by American Protestant preachers' teachings from the turn of the nineteenth

and twentieth centuries, deriving inspiration from European Romanticism as well. They praised, that natural for human soul (given by God) is the need for play and pleasure. From this perspective, economic activity is aimed at securing the basic necessities of life. It is considered not only desirable but inevitable too. On the other hand economic activity which is devoted to the pursuit of wealth or emanating from a desire to outdo one's peers is regarded as undesirable. The goal of making money is no longer simply a multiplication of profits but of welfare as well. In a modern version, also for people who do not share religious beliefs, expressive moralism means "I work to have more fun and pleasure". I leave the discussion aside of whether the problem of the genesis of both types of moralism should be related only with Protestant culture, as it is not part of the paper. The author's point of interest is more focused on the parallel between the conception of the expressive moralism and the "otium" - the idea borrowed from ancient times, by European Renaissance creators and thinkers. This is widely discussed regardless of interlocutors' religious beliefs. It was about performing a useful activity resulting from an attitude of personal independence. The concept of "otium" was adopted in the Polish language by Wespazjan Kochowski, who used the poetic translation of the term "non-idle idleness". People during Renaissance times discussed widely the problem whether activity like this is considered work. Today the "otium" category comes back for example by "Slow Down" movement ideology (Laskowska – Otwinowska 2010), while in the management area, the author proposes to regard it as a sign of its present "flow" phenomenon together with its contribution to motivating, coaching, innovation and other similar issues (Csikszentmihalyi 2003).

Moreover both of the moralisms have recently been placed closely to the psychological research on work attitudes. Ammy Wrzesniewski proved that among representatives of practically every profession¹ it is possible to distinguish people who treat their work activity mainly as an occupation from those who see it as a way to pursue their careers and those who are guided by their "calling" (Seligman 2003). Content wise, the term "career" corresponds with ascetic moralism, or "calling" - with expressive². And the "occupation" attitude is a clear psychological operation, of a different than described, type of work ethic, which comes down to the belief "I work because I have to". As it shows, it's shared by the employees, but it is not (!!!) a component of the workplace cultural capital. With this kind of attitude an individual finds it difficult to assimilate or even to keep up with the Western market.

Lokhart (2002) warns about excessive idealism, pointing out that even in the USA numerous middle (and upper) class people can assume, that all adults have the workplace cultural capital. This is an illusion. The cited author, postulates that teaching the skills connected to workplace cultural capital can be initiated through training focused on the practical aspects. Nonetheless, Lokhart (2002) concludes, that work ethics is a form of described capital.

Remembering the restrictions of Lokhart (2002), it's not difficult to notice the importance of both ascetic and expressive moralism as cultural foundations of development in capitalism. With the exclusion of subtleties, which I leave for the disputes of economic historians, it can be suggested without a high-risk, that the first type of work ethic supported especially the European version of the eighteen and nineteenth century capitalist system, and the other one, its contemporary American form, somewhere during the turn of the nineteen and twentieth century.

I propose to accept both of the moralisms as axiological content of the „American Dream” myth. What I am trying to prove is that it was not only dreamed but effectively accomplished far from the USA, independent from American influences and implemented before receipt of global recognition. The foundation of the mentioned timid thesis, is at the moment a contributory reinterpretation of the „Lodzermensch”³ myth, which was born on the province of globalization, on Polish territory, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

¹The research on Prison Guards, successively carried out in Poland, under my guidance (using experimental translation of Wrzesniewski's questionnaire) shows that also in this occupational group mentioned diversity of attitudes towards work does exist.

²The weakness of the technique proposed by Wrzesniewski is that clearly it does not distinguish those with the "calling" from workaholics.

³ The term „Lodzermensch” is genetically connected to people, who developed business careers in Lodz (Łódź), an industrial city on the today's territory of Central Poland, created in the nineteenth century on the wave of modernization processes. For long years, until the outbreak of World War II, Lodz has been a multicultural city with a large population of Poles, Jews and Germans.

I reinterpret the content of the myth *in the spirit of workplace cultural capital*, reaching to belles-lettres and memoirs, using the thesis of an American economist, a researcher of the history of Economics, but also a Professor of Rhetoric - Deirdre McCloskey (eg 2001), that nothing like the work of writers helps to understand and "calibrate" economic reality. Moreover it is true in the reference to the ethical aspect of this reality.

3. "Łodzermensch" – Provincial Myth of Work Ethics

Years ago Feliks Koneczny (1921: 579) wrote: "The native Polish capitalism has not been born yet". The Polish historian adopted a very broad, culturally common, and at the same time strictly financial, understanding of capitalism. He meant the situation, where money was "not only the end of the enterprise as a profit and activity, but so it would be conversely the beginning, as a tool for gaining further increasing profit (Koneczny 1921: 578).

Cited theories of Koneczny historically appeared and continue to appear in the work of most Polish economic historians regardless of their ideology or methodology. For example recently Jacek Kochanowicz (see Kochanowicz and Marody 2010), a participant of European Comparative Studies on Economic History, recalled the research of Witold Kula (1955) and his coworkers from the fifties of the twentieth century, carried out under the pressure of Stalinist censorship. According to Kochanowicz, the result of these studies, which despite being created during the time, did not support dogmatic Marxism, are still relevant today and show that even in the eighteenth century, on the Polish territory "the traces of any capitalism where difficult to find" (Kochanowicz and Marody 2010: 39). Further, the cited historian writes about a social group of inhabitants of pre-Partition Poland, which quickly assimilated the values and practices of capitalism⁴. Naturally, we are referring to Jews. Kochanowicz (see Kochanowicz and Marody 2010) clearly excludes them from the group of pioneers of capitalism in Poland, emphasizing rather cultural differences of this community. This is a shame. Koneczny (1921: 579) recognized this problem much earlier and more consequently:

„The native Polish capitalism hasn't been created, so the Jews became our capitalists".

It is worth reiterating that later (especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth century) a similar role was played on the Polish territory by another national group – Germans. The fact that German settlers were important promoters of the development of modern economy, especially in the times of August III, still hasn't taken root in common historical awareness, even among readers of historical works. This again is one of the basic premises of the attempts undertaken over the years to reinterpret the myth, or rather the anti-myth, of Saxon times⁵ (Bartkiewicz 1998; w zakresie rozwoju myśli ekonomicznej Skoczyński 2010 za Skrzypiem 2000). Following the specific quintessence of the cultural description of the German significance in modernization of the Polish territories, which Stanisław Wąsilewski (1962/2010: 314) assigned to Ksawery Drucki Lubecki, the Minister of the Treasury in the Kingdom of Poland⁶, on the pages of his famous book "Polish life in the nineteenth century"⁷, is an interesting example of the borderline between belle-lettre and historical journalism. This is therefore a publication particularly predestined for the creation of myths:

"One hundred and fifty thousand laborers came from Germany, and despite the objections raised that this could be dangerous for the future, I believe that the import of a professional craftsman will contribute to Polish industrial prosperity, and newcomers will slowly assimilate."⁸

⁴At the beginning of this fragment Kochanowicz (see Kochanowicz and Marody 2010) states that Jews were a "potentially capitalistic" social group on the Polish territory. But his further characteristic of this group clearly allows omitting the adverb "potentially".

⁵In the Polish historiography the reign of the Saxon dynasty (late XVII and XVIII centuries), which preceded three Polish partitions (1772, 1793 and 1795), leading to the fall of the country, are generally rated very negatively.

⁶Kingdom of Poland – deficient surrogate of the Polish state, after the partitions, which was formed during the Congress of Vienna and existed for 15 years (1815 – 1830).

⁷This publication was prepared by Wąsilewski mostly during the interwar period but was updated after the war only to finally come out much later, several years after his death. In fact, the quote is a fairly loose interpretation of the actual speech of Lubecki. Wąsilewski, for example, significantly overstates the number of German settlers.

⁸The paper concerns the existence of „Łodzermensch" myth in Polish culture, therefore all quotations from belle-lettres are interpreted according to Polish original citations or translations to Polish.

Lubecki's parliamentary speech concerned the establishment of industrial Lodz, and it was one of the first elements of this type of rhetoric, which in time will create the "Lodzermensch" myth, describing specific types of businessmen from Lodz, mainly of German or Jewish descent⁹. As mentioned, this myth has been developed and disseminated by belle-lettres (especially Polish and Jewish) and memoirs (mainly written by German authors or authors of German descent). Journalism played a big part in the preservation of the myth. The Jewish "Lodzermensch" face clearly "shines through" the pages of this paper, probably because of the distinctive tones of Yiddish literature, which was its artistic carrier. An important task for the future is to appreciate the German importance in the creation of this myth and Polish reinterpretation as well, which so far was mainly burdened with negative connotations¹⁰.

Doubts as to whether the "Lodzermensch" myth can be attributed to Polish cultural tradition are dispelled by findings of researchers of the history of literature. On one hand, it is worth quoting Piotr Wandycz (1992/1995: 23), who by presenting the history of Central and Eastern Europe to a Western reader, and by looking for specific traits of the region, found reasons to make the following cognitive and very radical statement:

"Another rather unique feature of Central East Europe as far as the scale is concerned, was the presence and interaction with the local people of the Germans and Jews" (Wandycz 1992: 7).

On the other hand, while modern Poland, which was saturated with Sarmatian ideology, had not developed native, post-entrepreneurial patterns. However, during the birth of capitalism, it was precisely this cultural eclecticism, tolerance, and openness to foreign influences, which became a strong magnet for businessmen from different countries, reemphasizing again, Jews and Germans in particular (for features of traditional Polish culture mentioned here see eg Maliszewski 2010 and Mincer, 2009). The afore mentioned concept of multiculturalism, formulated and applied with success in Australia by Jerzy Zubrzycki, assuming, inter alia, that the division of labor is a stronger social bond than a common origin, is a modern use of the experiences of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Pakulski 2011).

The insights of Laura Quercioli Mincer (2009: 437), allows one to "dot the i's and cross the t's" on the issue of Polishness of the "Lodzermensch" myth - the author of the essay on Yiddish literature, which was included as an integral part of the "History of Polish Literature" written by Italian experts on the subject:

"The necessary premise for the presence of this chapter in the book on the history of Polish literature is the assumption of the open character of Polish culture, as the expression of a dynamic society, able to accept the multiplicity of beliefs and faiths. From this perspective, the Polish literature in Hebrew and Yiddish is a part of the Polish writing: because of the kinship of topics, characters, landscapes, and referrals to the same historical events. Finally, because of the cultural matrix of the authors, generally, both Jewish and Polish or Jewish in its characteristic polish variant (according to Polish translation by M. Wozniak) ".

Nothing stands in the way of considering the "Lodzermensch" myth as an expression of the experience of mainly Jewish and German entrepreneurs, but "in a typical Polish" variant of these experiences. And the clash, often extremely involved, should be treated not only as an expression of ethnic problems, but also as a testimony of the struggle of Polish culture to face the challenges of capitalism.

Multiculturalism of the briefly described myth¹¹ does not preclude that to its popularity contributed a Polish writer. The writer mentioned is Władysław Reymont and his novel "The Promised Land". The most common interpretation of the said novel sees the book as a dark image of a Lodz businessman. This approach seemed also suggested by Reymont himself in a letter to John Lenartowicz from 1896:

"The growth of the city, fortunes, doing business at the American pace, the psychology of crowds coming to prey, their mingling and diffusion, and shaping in one type of so-called Lodzer Mensch, the impact on the whole country, of this aspirator, the polyp which is Lodz. (quoted in *Lodzermensch* ...1998: 32).

⁹I omit that Wayslewski attributed to Lubecki, suggestion on the assimilation of foreigners in Lodz, which requires separate attention. Clearly, in the quoted context it was just presentism.

¹⁰ It was Andrzej Wierzbicki from the Institute of History, in Polish Academy of Sciences, who brought to my attention the "cultural disproportions" of this essay.

¹¹More on "Lodzermensch" see first monographic issue of the monthly "Tygiel", 4-5, 1998, devoted to this matter. The discussed cultural matrix is analyzed, by some historians but usually in its negative connotation.

Krzysztof Wozniak (*Lodzermensch* ...1998) proposes to distinguish two versions of the "Lodzermensch" myth. The literary, usually negative, which describes the character as a degraded person, who betrayed his own roots, and serves only two values: success and money. The second version is a collective memory of the Lodz workers, who attribute to "Lodzeremensch" quite different characteristics, above all - hard work, resourcefulness, as well as social sensitivity, expressed for example by taking care of workers' districts, pharmacies, schools, nurseries and similar institutions.

However, the literature, and especially Reymont's form of the myth which allows a diverse reading, was also not only filled with negative judgment. For example, Monika Adamczyk-Grabowska (see *Lodzermensch*...1998: 89) understands the message of "The Promised Land" as follows:

"diverging from tradition (...) leads to unhappiness, or even to destruction, but on the other hand, stopping it artificially or preventing change is impossible."¹²

The earlier quoted Reymont's letter corresponds well with this interpretation: "The growth of the city, fortunes, doing business at the **American pace** (emphasis T.O.)". So maybe it is worthy to treat "Lodzermensch" myth as our local, peripheral equivalent of the "American Dream"? Besides, such a suggestion already has some indirect empirical support. Persistently promoted by Szewach Wiess, the need for reconstruction of international careers of Jewish immigrants from the Polish territories (especially enthusiastically formulated recently by the same author in "Rzeczpospolita": "The Jews from Poland conquered the world!"¹³) has found its partial implementation in the work of Andrzej Krakowski (2011), which is devoted to the significance of the members of this community in particular, in Hollywood developments, and also from the management side, including innovation. The first of these researchers even attempted to distinguish the group of character traits giving the Polish-Jewish immigrants competitive advantage over the other groups, in building the "dream factory". Krakowski (2011: 13) mentions a better education in comparison to other nations who see America just as an opportunity for improved living conditions as follows; attributed survival skills and ability to adapt to new conditions, searching for the opportunities unnoticed by the competition are more important than family ties (eg Surnames); humanism and humanity, manifested through philanthropy when fortune has already been acquired; the ability to take risks, associated with joyless prospects of returning to the place of birth ("no one was waiting, at most the service in the tsarist army and the subsequent repressions"); empathy derived from experiencing various atrocities and giving them, kind of naturally, the status of creators, and also the fact that "(...) in spite of everything, they always felt patriotic and proudly reminded the world where they came from. It's a shame that there was no reciprocity". Krakowski (2011) proposed an operational description of the competence of "Lodzermensch" (verified by the international competition), reflecting a certain type of entrepreneur, who obviously did not have to be associated with Lodz.

However, this city attracted people, especially those with the mentioned abilities, which perhaps helped its growth, or at least at some point created an alternative to emigration. So I suggest going back to the source meaning of the myth.

Jerzy Grochman (see *Lodzermensch*... 1998), a descendant of factory owners, looks at "The Promised Land" from the angle of "American Dream", although without using that term. He draws attention to the fact that Reymont's "Lodzermensch", despite everything, is also an efficient "businessman"¹⁴. As to the myth itself, in his opinion, it was created through the generalization of the experience of Lodz businessmen¹⁵, usually not people of Polish origin, characterized by a certain ability to initiate business and diligence, described as local patriots, and in relation to the country – loyal at the most. Grochman (Spodenkiewicz 1998: 37) completes this description with a realistic statement that "some of them happened to be swindlers".

One cited author enriches Reymont's image of "Lodzermensch" by adding information on cultural (patronage) and philanthropic activities of this group. In his memories, of his own Lodz family with

¹² Adamczyk-Grabowska (see *Lodzermensch* ...1998) attributes a similar meaning to the novel "The Brothers Ashekenazi"

¹³ Israel was born in Poland. The interview with prof. Szewach Wiess by Piotr Zychowicz, "PlusMinus", supplement to "Rzeczpospolita", 24-25.09. 2011, P16.

¹⁴ Literally Grochman (see *Lodzermensch*...1998) talks about two faces of „Lodzermensch" in Reymont's work, where one is a „capable businessman".

¹⁵ Grochman (see *Lodzermensch*...1998) proposes to classify foremen and officials as „Lodzermensches". I omit this issue requiring separate attention.

German roots, he brings up an example of Misses Treker, who was a type of "evangelical honesty, reliability in everything, through and through" (Spodenkiewicz 2006: 74¹⁶). He also expresses the belief that, in general, among his relatives - Protestants – the ethos of Gospel was very much alive. At the same time, Grochman rejects Weber's thesis about the Protestant origins of capitalism, pointing out that this way of doing business was born in Catholic Florence, and its second center was Catholic Belgium (Spodenkiewicz 2006).

A well-know Polish industrialist, on the pages of his memoirs left an interesting testimony on the German "branch" of "Lodzermensch" from their glory days, the beginning of the World War I, - Andrzej Wierzbicki (2001: 187, cited memory concerns 1915):

"The first thing we saw was the utterly Polish face of Lodz. If a part of industrialists in Lodz, who came from Germany before the war still felt sentimental about their fatherland, the military occupation policy had completely eradicated them. It was from the very beginning, consistently and relentlessly striving to destroy the Polish textile industry, a future competitor of the German industry. They understood that the victory of Germany meant destruction for them, and sympathized unreservedly with Polish society. As experienced organizers and administrators, they developed extensive activity in the local Citizens' Committee."

Radically different, journalistically generalized the "Lodzremensch" type was described twenty-two years later by Joseph Mackiewicz (2002: 77, quoted from reportage originally printed in "Słowa", 1937, 53):

"Lodzermensch, intentionally written by me in Polish, is a special type, if not a race. Lodz, which emerged so recently, originally consisted of several German families. Local residents – the Poles wandered there after the Germans. Later, the Russians began to invade, the people, who understand business. Then, of course, the Jews arrived. From this mixture, came into being a type of man predestined to live for money. You could say: internationalist, cosmopolitan, if he manages to go abroad, pacifist in business, supporter of Rydz-Śmigły¹⁷ in the cafe, and unionist at work - this is Lodzermensch."

The quoted words represent a fairly large set of explicitly negative opinions about "Lodzermensch", coming from many authors, in different periods, whose opinions I hereby omit¹⁸. According to the proposed theory, from the beginning of this paper, an interpretation of these statements can be seen an expression of Polish fear of the challenges of capitalism.

If the evaluating layer of Mackiewicz's text is not taken into account, it is clear that it also preserves certain competencies of the representatives of the myth, such as international orientation, the ability to adapt to a "career" abroad (cf. eg the previously mentioned successes of Polish Jews in Hollywood), and - which is a novelty not recognized by previously cited authors - pacifism in the business.

Fortunately, Mackiewicz's column is not the last literary image of "Lodzermensch". In 1935 the translation of the novel, written nearly twenty years earlier, by an Austrian writer Joseph Roth - "Hotel Savoy"¹⁹, was published in Poland. The author, who repeatedly visited and liked our country presented the multicolored profiles of the Polish Jews living in Lodz at the turn of the century. Even taking a quick glance at some of them, allows seeing different faces of "Lodzermensch".

Boolmfield, the owner of the hotel embodies a certain version of the fulfilled myth. He no longer lives in Lodz, just visits it from time to time, like the awaited Messiah.

"- Don't you know Mr. Bloomfield?" – wonders, one of the characters of "Hotel Savoy" - Bloomfield is a child of this city; he is a billionaire in America. The whole town calls: "Bloomfield is coming!" I spoke to his father, as I talk with you now, I guarantee you with my health that it is true (Roth 1924/2002: 29, according to Polish translation by I. Berman).

¹⁶ I kindly thank Mikołaj Katus for bringing to my attention the memories of Grochman (see Spodenkiewicz 2006) and getting me a copy.

¹⁷ Edward Rydz-Śmigły (1886-1941), Marshal of Poland since 1935, hallowed by a political cult before the World War II.

¹⁸ A part of them cited by some participants of the „Lodzermensch – history and myth” discussion, which was organized and published under the same title by the editors of „Tygiel Kultury” (1998, 4-5: 28 – 38).

¹⁹ I kindly thank Daria Trela, Ph.D. student at University of Warsaw, Faculty of Polish Studies, for her help with the study on „Hotel Savoy” for the purposes of this paper. However the level of my interpretation should not burden her.

Febus Böhlaugu is “doing business” on the spot, de facto managing the Jewish capital of Lodz and during the absence Bloomfield wielding the finance. He is indeed a man of success, which he does not admit. Stingy even towards relatives, constantly complains about the lack of cash. His exaggerated complaints, however, are also a testimony of the extraordinary sensitivity of the “Lodzremensch’s” soul to the pulse of the economic situation in both macro-and micro dimensions.

"Business does not run well in these times" - says Böhlaugu, worth emphasizing here is that he is talking about the era of prosperity in Lodz before World War I - "When I was little I was getting a bagel with poppy seeds for half a kopeck, bread now costs ten kopecks, children – knock on wood - grow up and need the money, Alexander would like to receive a daily allowance "(Roth 1924/2002: 12, according to Polish translation by I. Berman).

And finally, there is Abel Glanz – a petty saver, who connects artistic and financial sense. He is a Prompter in a small theater, dreaming of becoming a director, and until then - trades currency. He is a frequent guest of Febus Böhlaugu. He talks about his "way of life" very realistically, while summarizing one of the important, if not the most important features of “Lodzermensch’s” mentality:

"It is not easy to trade currency (...) You have to risk your life - this is the Jewish destiny (..) This is an enchanted matter" (Roth 1924/2002: 37, according to Polish translation by I. Berman).

By and by, it is obvious that the quoted passage formally uncovers the soul of “Lodzermensch” - or perhaps especially - his poorer relatives. It is about the ability to voice slogans of universal dimension, which have the quality of wisdom, and naturally concluding descriptions of everyday struggles in the reality of the free market. Not only in small towns, as Slominski wrote, but also in the richer Lodz, where a shoemaker was often a poet, a watchmaker (or currency trader) a philosopher²⁰.

In addition, to the mentioned exemplary individual characters of the novel, "Hotel Savoy" preserved also the atmosphere of the street in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Lodz. It was filled with people of the mentioned types, differed by financial status, and achieved successes, but united by a common way of thinking and actions in the free-market reality. Let's quote a part of the main character's thoughts that best captures the atmosphere of those times and realities:

"I kept roaming around, I saw black groups of fleet Jews in kaftans, I heard loud whispers, greetings, energetic expression and long speeches - pens, percentages, hops, steel, coal, lemons, all of this was fluttering, thrown out of from the lips in the air, aimed at the ears" (Roth 1924/2002: 10, according to Polish translation by I. Berman).

It's not surprising, that "Hotel Savoy" is now a "literary artifact" of Lodz's Festival of Many Cultures. In this context, it is hard to resist the dream that the cited novel will once have a similar role at a conference or in daily academic education dedicated to the identity of Polish business.

After years, particularly the "German face" (though not only German) of “Lodzermensch” was revived on the pages of Charles Dedecius' (2008) memoirs, "European from Lodz", as he called himself. As a quoted translator and essayist, he comes back to the beginning of nineteenth century and prosperity of Lodz, after the Government of the Kingdom of Poland included the capital of the region to the group of industrial cities. Due to the excellent natural conditions favoring the production of textiles, the described area quickly became a place of settlement for many entrepreneurs from different regions of Germany and today's Czech Republic. As an example Dedecius (2008: 18) mentions Meyer, Scheibler, Biederman, Eistert, Schweikert, Heinzl, Konderaman, Horak, Kohn, and Poznanski, "who, over the time, built a whole lot of small and large workshops and factories, contributing to the unprecedented prosperity of the city". German writer, who himself comes from a family of a city government official, and was watching "typical Lodzermensch's" from a close (but still some) distance, outlines their balanced portrait. At the same time, showing the accurate sense of what, culturally speaking, is entrepreneurship, and even more generally - widely understood business. Dedecius on one hand, does not hide his admiration for the dynamism and momentous actions of Lodz industrialists, he understands their desire of getting rich, which also favored the development of the city; on the other hand, he is aware of the unavoidable pathologies coexisting with the described processes. This resulted in the creation of probably one of the most beautiful, and yet realistic, synthetic depictions of “Lodzermensch” myth.

²⁰ See poem by A. Slonimski *Jewish Towns Elegy*.

"Some started from a loom and fifty years later, they were masters of the industrial empire, employing thousands of workers. They lived in palaces like princes, built housing estates, maintained schools, churches, theaters, hospitals, founded artistic and musical associations, made their way to fortunes worth billions, which was of course with the benefit for the city. The golden era of Lodz has begun, a former village and later the second largest city in Poland, after Warsaw. Lodz appears to be telling this story fondly. But of course, wherever there are so many big factories and palaces, there must exist misery and lawlessness" (Dedecius 2008: 18, according to Polish translation by S. Lisiecka)".

It is hard to escape the impression, undoubtedly requiring an expert analysis, that the Dedecius' sentence about a career of the village, which has become so attractive to foreign entrepreneurial immigrants that it has quickly grown to the status of a local metropolis, can be treated as a specific metaphor for the general participation of Poland in the processes of modernization.

Dedecius, who came from a German-Czech family, during his Lodz childhood had friends, who were representatives of those two nations, but also among the Jews and the Poles. It is the intercultural trait of "Lodzeremensch" (a feature which seemed to be shared by characterized "type" and the rest of the described citizens of the city), which according to the diaries of the cited author, was the primary determinant of Lodz during the interwar period and earlier years.

Isaac Bashevis Singer characterizes Jewish entrepreneurs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in a similar manner. However his characters rather work in Warsaw or in small towns (the brother of Nobel laureate took a liking for Lodz), but the certain features of economic activists representing the Polish Jews seem to be so "locally universal" that I allow myself to include them in the literary terms, broadly, in this case even archetypal captured legend of "Lodzermensch".

Maks Mordche, a wealthy Jewish businessman from South America in character from the novel "Scum", which is set in the early twentieth century, after the death of his son, and because of other personal problems, seeks solace in returning to Poland. To the question of assistant rabbi from Warsaw "Would your business be good here?" – He answers without hesitation: "My business is good everywhere." (Singer 1991/1992: 73, according to Polish translation by L. Nicpan).

Somewhat earlier, in the years of relative economic prosperity of the Congress of Poland, takes place a different novel of a cited Nobel Prize winner. "The Estate", which begins with the hope expressed by Daniel Kaminer, who is a dying supplier of the Russian garrisons and expects his grandson Sasha, will take on his business.

"Daniel Kaminer has long realized that Sasha knows the life and the people and has a nimble tongue. It is possible that he shows talent for business. The grandson took after the Kaminer family." (Singer 1969/1997: 9, according to Polish translation by I. Wyrzykowska).

Moreover these hopes are fulfilled, soon after the death of the doyen of the family. "It turned out, that the boy has a truly Jewish business sense. He learned everything so quickly which has astounded people" (Singer 1997: 10, according to Polish translation by I. Wyrzykowska).

On the pages of the same novel Singer also captured another feature of the myth of the Jewish entrepreneur, that is - the tension between the efficient adoption of the market rules. Also, the attachment to Jewish tradition, which in "The Estate" is marked as a characteristic for Hasidic abnegation of material matters.

This tension, sparkling with diverse colors of Judaist religious variants, is also preserved in the literary mythology of small Jewish towns (shtetls) against the trend present on the pages of the novel, which puts the provincial towns of unsullied tradition in opposition to monstrous urban environments that only rush for profit.

A more precise statement of how some of the elements of the "Lodzermensch" myth which was raised in a fairly large, industrial city, can also be applied to small businesses in small towns, requires a separate analysis in the future²¹. However, basing only on a preliminary hypothesis, I notice, that even a quick glance at the characters inhabiting these two literary territories shows that the mentality of the

²¹ The awareness of this issue and its problematic I owe to Marcin Wolniewicz from the Institute of History, in Polish Academy of Sciences.

entrepreneur or small-town merchant does not have to be substantially different from the classical psyche of *Lodzermensch* with the obvious difference in the standard of living. Moshe - Avrum, the owner of a small shoemaking business and father of the Plock protagonist of Symch Symchowicz's novel "Stepchild on the Vistula" which is full of obvious autobiographical references, painfully experienced the advent of bad times, difficulties of supporting the family, paying apprentices, and enforcing debts. The grief overcomes the shoemaker, who becomes aggressive towards his wife. When the tension disappears Moshe - Avrum has an idea, - after a specific, mentally performed, "analysis" of the local market - he decides to open a restaurant. This initiative brings the expected profit, but makes it very difficult for the whole family to celebrate Sabbath. The discomfort becomes one of the factors causing his daughter to immigrate to Palestine. But not only the living conditions motivate Moshe - Avrum's entrepreneurial activity. When winter comes, slowing down the development of the restaurant, the father of the protagonist of "Stepchild on the Vistula" goes back to work as a shoemaker. Of course he did it in order not to waste money earned during the summer, but "besides, he did not like to sit on his hands (...). The main purpose of the whole bustle was to kill the winter inactivity, and earn a few extra zloty" (Symchowicz 1994/2005: 78 - 79, according to Polish translation by M. Domanski). A similar "decompression of risk", a bit earlier, in another town (Ukrainian Voronki) was undertaken by the father of another character, of a different autobiographical novel, "The Great Fair" by Sholem Alejhem, Reb Nachum Wewik, who "was considered the richest man in the town (...). He was a property owner, supplied beets to the sugar factory, leased the local post office, traded grain, transported loads by berlinkas (boats) on Dnieper, cut trees, and traded oxen, but he drew his main income from the store with a workshop" (Alejhem 1989: 30, according to Polish translation by M. Friedman). As Bal Machszowes pointed out, the portrait of Menachem Mendel, "Luftmensch" sketched by Alejhem embodies an even more archetypal Jew - multi-entrepreneur "stockbroker yesterday, matchmaker today, forest merchant tomorrow, insurance agent the day after tomorrow (...). He lives a feverish dream" (quoted in Belis-Loegisem 1989: 20). However, because of fidelity to the cited literary narrative, it must be admitted that Mendel turns out to be an entrepreneur who is far from achieving a sustainable business success.

Returning to the canon of the myth, this is the human figure of a businessman inhabiting a relatively large industrial city on the Polish territory in the nineteenth century. It is valuable to stress that also in this version, the unconstrained adoption of market rules by Jews did not "sentence" them to self-evident success. Here probably lies the main difference between the "*Lodzermensch*" myth, and the "American dream". If the reader refers to the literature describing the situation after World War I, when the Polish independence caused the closure of Russian markets for "*Lodzermensch*" products, he/she can see that the drama of those who failed thickens and becomes social. Undoubtedly one of the most moving symbols of this occurrence is the image closely linked to the deep crisis of the city, the death of an entrepreneur, described by Israel Joshua Singer on the pages of the novel: "The Brothers Ashkenazi":

"Lodz broke down (...) The King of Lodz Max Ashkenazi, tried along with the city to come back to life but the strong convulsions were ones of a very sick man, as if shimmering, flickering candle's before going out. Nothing could be put back together from the broken pieces of the Ashkenazy's kingdom. It cracked and broke together with the city, just as it was born with him."

The dynamic inclusion of Jews, along with those living on the Polish territory, in the process of modernization has resulted in, what it is worth recalling, the radical "escape from the ghetto."

"Regardless of all the other consequences, the modernization process also brings Jews closer to integration with the rhythm of universal history. It becomes clear that they have never been excluded, but now, their relationship with the Jewish world has strengthened greatly" (Prokop-Janiec 1998: 13), as emphasized in the introduction to the new Polish edition of "The Brothers Ashkenazi".

The dynamic "escape from the ghetto" which carried larger experience baggage of capitalist entrepreneurship than the one of other inhabitants of the Polish territories (except, of course, Germans) in the context of the interplay of other conditions, and recollections of which greatly exceed the subject matters of this paper, brought well-known, dramatically difficult problems to the relationship of Jews and their non-Jewish surroundings. I choose to only signal this issue, citing the voice of Gregorz Krzywiec within the discussion on the book of "Chauvinism in Polish. The case of Roman Dmowski", recently

published in "Midrasz"²², stressed, that the economical conflict between the nascent in the late nineteenth century Poles, and already settled Jews, was one of the main factors of the popularity of ND²³. It also seems, that the full analysis of bad relations between Poles and Jews before the Holocaust drama is impossible without producing the materials in Yiddish, at least those belonging to the Jewish Historical Institute, which were not yet the subject of scientific analysis recently mentioned in press by the Director of the Institute – Paweł Śpiewak²⁴.

However, economic Polish-Jewish relations did not have to be all bad. This paper remains within the issues of the myth, in order to highlight the mythical "potentials of minority" that creates a model of conflict relations between representatives of different cultures in the widely understood business. Let the example of Mr. Malczyk, who supports a poor Jewish child called "Gilgul", a Polish customer of the protagonist's father in a Symch Symchowicz novel, "Stepchild on the Vistula", to be an example of the mentioned content:

"Malczyk was a building contractor, and after a long summer day's work he liked to sit for hours in Moshe – Avrum's restaurant, over a pint while chatting with anyone who turned up. He was well conversed with the Old Testament recognized and respected Jews - people of the Covenant, from which Jesus came, and liked to speak of them. He sympathized with "Gilgul", and several times took him to the barber for a haircut and often bought him food "(Symchowicz 1994/2005: 65, according to Polish translation by M. Domanski).

It might be worthy to reinterpret the "Lodzermesch" myth under the appeal, delivered on a different occasion by Christian Krause:

"History can not be turned back. However, the consequences which we are ready to draw from it for our present and for the future of our children, are a new challenge for us."²⁵

In this perspective, the essence of considerations regarding "Lodzermensch" may relate to the following reflection by Dedecius (2008: 354 - 355), suggesting that the myth mentioned should be read as a tale, grown on the Polish territory, of an effective businessman more or less aware of the tension between the "human factor" and the struggle for profit, who without a doubt knew how to meet the challenges of globalization²⁶.

"I owe being brought up in coexistence and cooperation with people of different nationalities, different religions, different origins and different views, to my Lodz school education. To Lodz, the city of my youth, I owe having the right attitude towards work, to daily duties and responsibilities. (Even now, I cannot stand bad work and idleness – in me). Furthermore, there is also the invaluable experience of camaraderie, the joy of life, and "non-idle idleness"²⁷ (according to Polish translation by S. Lisiecka).

4. Not Just History. Not Only Literature. Conclusions for Contemporary Business Ethics.

Of course, questions arise about the "benefits" that interest in the "Lodzermensch" myth can give in the context of contemporary business ethics. The issue of globalization underlines one of the potential benefits within reach of nineteenth-century pro-entrepreneurial myths. The works of leading economic history researchers such as Kevin H. O'Rourke, Nial Ferguson or less known Barry Eichengreen, have established that in some aspects, the maximum level of globalization, understood according to modern criteria, took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was halted by the outbreak of World War I. The role of imperialism in the "first shot" of globalization remains an issue of dispute (Booth

²² „Midrasz” – cultural Jewish magazine in Poland, currently published.

²³ The quoted opinion was published in „Głos z Sali”. That kind of discussions are in itself mythogenic. Here, I do NOT raise the issue of historical justification of this opinion. ND mentioned in this context is understood as the National Democracy, Polish right-wing political movement active from the latter nineteenth century.

²⁴ The term Jew stops being a pejorative association. Conversation between Mazurek and Paweł Śpiewak „PlusMinus”, supplement to „Rzeczpospolita”, 26.11.2011. From: <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/365403,760279.html> [08. 01. 2012].

²⁵ Part of the sermon delivered by Christainsen September 8, 2002 in Świdnica. He was then president of the World Lutheran Federation, quoted by Adam Bujak's album (2007). *World heritage. Poland on the UNESCO list*. Cracow: Biały Kruk, p 249.

²⁶ It is worth recalling that "Lodzermensch" as a type of businessman, was formed and experienced its "golden age" during the first wave of globalization, which is considered by far the strongest.

²⁷ Unexpected for me, Dedecius' (2008) indirect suggestion that category of "otium" should be included in the "Lodzermensch" myth is interesting enough that it requires a separate discussion, exceeding the size of this paper, which has a very draft nature. I plan to take up this discussion in the future.

and Rowlinson 2006). It is worthy to emphasize again that "Lodzermensch" as a specific model of businessman has been formed and experienced its "golden age" during the first wave of globalization, which is considered the strongest to date. Ethical issues carried by the literary narrative of the myth may prove to be important also today, as an example we are reminded of the tension between the requirements of the pursuit of profit and respecting religious values, or the related imbalance between the cosmopolitan nature of the practices of modern capitalism and the need to root in local traditions. After all, it is not only in Huttingtin's opinion that now one of the main problems of intercultural management is a problem with a strong ethical charge.

Therefore, it is valuable to perform comparative studies of cultural archetypes, similar to "Lodzermensch", but from different countries, regions and civilizations. The activities and views of Antoni Gaudi are examples of such objects of study. They combine fidelity to local identity, along with the universal values of Catholicism and fraternity with culture of a market. The Taiwan version of guerilla capitalism, according to Danny Lama and Cal Clark (1994) grew from the soil of cultural values of Taoist activity of the economic "tigers of Anatolia", who enliven the Turkish province, drawing from the diverse traditions of Islamic culture. Maybe the African civilization, and especially its family and neighborhood collectivism, vitality and sensitivity to the rhythm created, probably in the oral tradition, specific, unknown to the West, pro-entrepreneurial myths, which do not lack the ethical charge. These hypotheses will be presented slightly more expansively at the Congress by my younger colleagues Monika Strocka, Piotr Gołaszewski and Lars Derlich in the paper: "Provincial Antecedents of the "Good Work Project" and Good Practices for Contemporary Business Resulting from These Antecedents."

The adoption of this research, especially in the latter exemplary cases, would undoubtedly help theoreticians and practitioners of business face the "postcolonial thinking" syndrome. This phenomenon, which is particularly visible in Africa, also applies to other "provinces" of modern capitalism, such as "new" Member States of the EU, including Poland. "Postcolonial thinking" is a category that a Polish-American Slavic studies professor from Rice University in Texas suggested to apply not only in literature but also as an analysis of the political situation in Poland. In this context "postcolonial thinking" has to do with the adjustment of activities of one nation to the actions of bigger and more powerful countries (hegemony). This type of an approach, in the underlying example, refers to situations where smaller countries do not bring forward their ideas/suggestions and do not articulate their own interests. It is a clear example of a leader and follower relationship. The follower always waits for the leader's approval. The rupture of such a way of thinking by politicians that represent given countries is a very important step towards normalcy that has to do with the democratic concept of 'fair game'.

It is not difficult to find unethical practices in intercultural business resulting from post-colonial thinking. As an example, we can take the case completed a few years back concerning lobbying against the President of Lafarge, who was sued by the Poles, and members of the company board. As confirmed by the verdict of the court (and the French lawyers), the mentioned President used phrases like "big shit" to describe four of the Poles, while also speaking sarcastically of the "Polish logic of thinking" or "the Polish intelligence". He asked the Financial Director to calculate the cost of maintaining his own private home, sarcastically stating that the Director could also mow the front lawn.

It turns out that under the foundation of the aforementioned symptoms lie the "post-colonial thinking" stereotypes, formed by a lack of historical knowledge of, among others, modern businessmen from Western countries. The following statements and examples given by two British historians, illustrate the situation very well:

"Before twelve million Africans were kidnapped to be slaves in the New World, the main victims were the Slavs, who gave their name to slavery²⁸. Hunted by Romans, Christians, Muslims, Vikings and Tatars, they were exported all over the world. Slave came to mean foreigners (...) More recently, when Slaves found themselves ruled by tyrants and saw no hope of escaping, some gloomily concluded that there must be something in the character of Slavs which dooms them to being enslaved. This is false reasoning, pretending that what was happened had to happen" (Zeldin 1995: 7 – 8).

²⁸The thesis, quoted by Zeldin, is now seen by historians and philologists as scientifically unjustified. However it reflects well the average colloquial thinking of a "Western man".

"The image of Eastern Europe as some sort of a strange creature was formed, because nothing was known about it and as if there was anywhere to learn from. I remember times when I was studying at Cambridge, then teaching at Oxford. Back then, something like the historical study of Poland, Czech and Hungary did not exist at all. The history of Eastern Europe appeared only as part of so-called Soviet Studies and was important only as far as it concerned the history of the Soviet Union (...) and to change this, you need a lot of time and effort. The image of the Polish plumber, who steals the work of the locals (...) is part of that tradition. Today there is more to it. Additionally we have the Western fear of globalization, of an uncertain tomorrow, porous borders, relocation, and competing with new economies. Opening to the East is in the Western view, a part of this series of events²⁹."

The compilation of the above statements does not necessarily require comment and it also applies to business problems outside of Eastern Europe.

The literary origins of the myth of "Łodzermensch" also point to the usefulness of literature as a learning tool of cultural capital, including its inherent ethical content.

In Conclusion, I hope that my fragmentary study of axiological layers of the non-American "American dream" will be helpful in the development of intercultural education and training on workplace cultural capital.

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²⁹Tony Judt, after Newsweek Internet archive. "Europe". Available at: <http://www.newsweek.pl/> [2007]

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