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Neuroethics and the Politics of Historical Memory: Rethinking Polish-Ukrainian Relations Through Education

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Abstract: *This article explores the intersection of historical memory, national identity, and neuroethics within the educational paradigm, focusing on the complex legacy of Polish-Ukrainian relations. Against the backdrop of geopolitical tensions and historical traumas—such as the Volhynia massacre and the Soviet-era distortions—the study analyzes how educational institutions mediate collective memory and identity formation. By integrating neuroethical perspectives, the article highlights the cognitive and moral dimensions of historical education, emphasizing the importance of memory as a neurological and ethical construct. In a postmodern context marked by digital memory, value crises, and neurocapitalist influences, education emerges as a strategic tool for shaping socio-political consciousness. The authors argue that rethinking the politics of memory through neuroethics and critical pedagogy enables societies to transcend inherited narratives of victimhood and hostility, promoting reconciliation and cooperative futures. Methodologically, the study draws on discourse analysis, critical historiography, and educational theory to formulate new approaches for historical teaching that foster reflective citizenship and ethical awareness.*

Keywords: *neuroethics; international conflicts; globalisation; political crisis; historical arguments; educational paradigm.*

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1. Introduction

The process of nation formation is long-term and undergoes various tests. However, historical experience has proven that every nation requires self-determination. Therefore, modern society, in the context of the challenges of globalisation and integration, strives to preserve national identity. The relevance of the research is determined by the problem of worldview perception of life by people, as a result of which conflicts arise that lead to tragic consequences. The formation of an individual's worldview is accompanied by the acquisition of orientations in the process of life experience and the definition of values (Lazurenko, 2015). The process of acquiring values is mainly formed during education. Therefore, delineating the boundaries of national identity in the globalised world space requires a new approach and the formation of a new content of nation-building in the political context.

One of the problematic directions of defining national identity for Ukrainians is the analysis of Polish-Ukrainian relations regarding the regulation of the politics of memory in Polish-Ukrainian history (Vdovich, 2013). Considerable attention is paid to the characteristics of the historical politics of parties and organisations. This was a response to the so-called critical direction in Polish-Ukrainian historical science and journalism, whose representatives called for telling about history without embellishments, including the shameful pages of history, striving for its objective assessment in the name of truth, the triumph of universal moral values, as well as draw conclusions from history and not repeat the mistakes of the past.

To form the purpose of the article, it is essential to determine the peculiarities of the educational factor as a catalyst for intellectual development of the individual, as well as the formation of critical thinking, in particular, in one of the historical periods, which is in conflict. Education integrates cognitive and personal attributes of the student, as well as the results of technological progress, which is a factor in effective personality development. Thus, the disciplinary aspects of education are examined in the light of a critical analysis of the biotechnological human enhancement. Theoretical methods of inclusion and exclusion were used.

Today, various political forces accuse their opponents of constructing a negative image of Polish-Ukrainian history, exaggerating facts that make Poles and Ukrainians ashamed of their history, and creating a guilt and inferiority complex. The development of the current political situation, especially in the conditions of Russia's total war against Ukraine, shows close relations and support from Poland. Consequently, historical policy must aim to consolidate the Ukrainian state and promote a positive image. national history, draw the public's attention to historical subjects that evoke a sense of pride, and address the ancestors. An important task is to preserve the historical memory of the victims and suffering of the Ukrainian people, especially in the 20th century. Scientists should pay attention to uncovering the truth about the activities of the two countries in the context of cooperation.

Education defines an important human experience of history, in particular from a neurobiological perspective, effective in the formation of morality as a foundation for coexistence in a globalised society, where the dichotomy of "good and evil" and the need to renew value orientations are relevant. War reveals the critical role of selfless patriots is in the existence of the state, therefore, special importance should be attached to glorifying the heroes of the national liberation movement, fighters against the communist regime, and perpetuating their memory. These people should personify the morality and conscience of the Ukrainian people, serve as exemplars for current and future generations. Thus, the period of the National Liberation War led by Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, the period of ethnic cleansing during the Second World War, i.e., the "Volyn Massacre", and others are among the problematic perceptions for the Polish and Ukrainian people. Such problems need to be reconsidered as a postmodern aspect for the perspective development of allied activities between the two states. Therefore, for the realisation of the corresponding goal, it is most appropriate to analyse the problem in a neuroethical context.

The purpose of the research is to form favourable trends of memory policy in Polish-Ukrainian history in the educational paradigm.

2. Peculiarities of National Identity Formation in Historical Discourse

The existence of an independent sovereign state depends directly on the nation's self-determination. The formation of the Ukrainian nation took many years of historical evolution from the Tripillya culture to the formation of Kievan Rus, from Hetmanshchyna - the Cossack state, the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR), to the establishment of Ukraine. However, Ukraine's incorporation into the Soviet Union was unfavourable for the development of statehood, because the historical memory was falsified, which became a threatening definition of national identity. During the period of Soviet history, the phenomenon of cosmopolitanism, Zhdanovshchyna, Lysenkovshchyna - concepts that characterised the ideologisation of science, culture, that is, these phenomena indicated the replacement of culture with the ideology of communism and socialism (Nychkalo, 2008) were common. People believed in ideology and began to forget about national characteristics, which are always a factor in the loss of the foundations of statehood.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the problem arose of restoring historical memory and the representation of the main historical features of each nation for the development of the new state, and therefore for the establishment of national identity. In the creation of a new state, it is important to form an effective historical policy, a memory policy conducive to shaping national identity (Smotrych, 1973).

Thus, the formation of a sovereign state was the impetus for the intensification of the study of the process of nation-building, the definition of the foundations of national identity, and the settlement of relations with other states that had conflicting interests in the historical past. The problem for the creation of the state in Ukraine was not a systemic, but a situational formation of historical policy, which was built on the basis of conflation of the Soviet and Ukrainian perceptions of historical phenomena, facts, and events. This situation was caused by the lack of critical historical consciousness among the Ukrainian people. Soviet policy was aimed at denationalisation, so the Ukrainian people were deprived of a unifying narrative, especially as manipulative processes were involved in the language issue. Such processes intensified inter-regional and inter-ethnic conflicts and negatively affected the formation of the Ukrainian national identity, and impeded the consolidation of statehood.

The Soviet legacy had a negative impact on Polish-Ukrainian relations as well, since it is Soviet history that illuminates the conflicts between the two states in a negative light. Current Russian policy is also aimed at deepening the conflict situation in the perception of historical events between Poland and Ukraine, which had significant contradictions. For instance, the National Liberation War led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky, which in Ukraine is perceived as heroic, contributed to the creation of the state, while Poles perceive it as disgraceful. Another particularly contentious event was the "Volyn massacre", which for Poles is an act of terrorism, and for Ukraine is a response to pacification, polonisation, siege, etc.

This policy threatens our state. Therefore, it is necessary to build new political relations on the basis of the restoration of historical memory.

The crisis of value orientations of the new society is a manifestation of a person's experience of certain problems, that is, disappointment in the old narratives of the idea of mutual relations between people, social groups, and nations, especially in relation to the historical past and past conflicts between nations. Thus, in the conditions of a full-scale war of Russia against Ukraine, Poland became the closest ally and friend, which is a vivid example of the need to rethink the politics of memory in Polish-Ukrainian history and the formation of new relations. Therefore, neuroethics is one of the important aspects of research, as it creates grounds for analysing the human experience of socio-historical phenomena.

Consequently, the formation of national identity is a complex, long-term historical process that proved devastating for the Ukrainian people, as the struggle for independence lasted a long, grueling period with tragic consequences. Therefore, it is crucial to define new priorities in international politics and to reconceptualise the notions of "enemies" and "friends," re-examining

historical crises and establishing new perspectives, which are the basic meaning of the postmodern worldview.

3. Memory Politics and the Prospective Formation of Polish-Ukrainian Relations

The concept of historical memory has gained significant prominence within the social and humanitarian sciences. The history of its study goes back to ancient times, to the works of thinkers of Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Enlightenment. The theme of memory (*memoria interior*) as the basis of inner experience is understood as central by Augustine of Hippo in Book X of his *Confessions*. The holistic concept was formulated in modern times by the French sociologist of the Jürheim School, Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), who initiated a new scientific direction — the sociological study of memory. Halbwachs formulated the meaning of historical memory as a cultural, historical, and social phenomenon: the formation of individual memory and personal identity depends on the structure and content of the construction of collective memory. Pierre Nora (b. 1931), a representative of the third generation of the French *Annales* school, who introduced the concept of "place of memory", was the continuation of Halbwachs' research.

Historical memory plays an important role in the formation of a fully-formed personality in society, because without an understanding of the past, it is difficult to determine the future prospects of human development in society. Without historical memory, a person has no specific knowledge, cultural heritage, national characteristics, traditions, or customs. Therefore, it is difficult for her to perceive herself as a subject of social relations (Maksymchuk et al., 2018). The main function of historical memory is to preserve the experience of previous generations formed in the course of socialisation. An authentic understanding of one's own history is a factor of national identity and, consequently, an argument for the development of a successful state that preserves the achievements of the past.

Only a true nation can create and maintain its own state, for it has tremendous motivation. A true nation can survive only through an awareness of its collective identity in the past, present, and future. This identification of oneself within a nation must be good, that is, the perception of oneself is positive. It is historical memory that can emphasise events that are more important than others that are more current, and affect the future. Historical memory has the ability to recontextualise the events of the past and then, based on this realisation, to form a new worldview of oneself as a person, as a representative of a nation, as a public figure, which determines the postmodern view of the world.

The historical memory of the Ukrainians has a difficult experience, since the Ukrainians had no statehood for many centuries, and they tried to colonise and assimilate with other people. Therefore, history is evaluated differently, as people perceive the historical past depending on the factor of the influence of ideology on the individual. Significant attention is devoted to implementing historical policy focused on the establishment of relations between peoples, and, consequently, the identification of positive experiences for the formation of the historical past. The publications of historians, Bialokur M. (2009), have played an important role in their approach to this topic. Polish historians are also convinced that it is necessary to tell the truth about Polish history, to speak directly about the aggressive hostility towards Ukrainians, which existed in broad strata of Polish society.

Representatives of the so-called critical direction in Polish historical science and journalism consider it necessary to subject the past to constant reconsideration, to debunk national myths and stereotypes, to investigate the shameful pages of Polish history, in particular, the crimes of Poles against Ukrainians. They are convinced that patriotism should be based on a universal moral paradigm, seek an objective assessment, and reject nationalistic egocentrism. Everyone wants to be proud of their nation, but in a way that citizens of Poland are willing to openly discuss the negative pages of their past (Imel, 1998). History is not only a collection of opinions about the past. It is a teacher of life, a collection of moral truths and concrete lessons to be drawn from history and applied to current life so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past. This tendency can change and

redefine the future, and determine the main reference points and prospects for social postmodern development.

Contemporary society is confronted with a new version of capitalism - neurocapitalism. This was preceded by the repressive capitalism of the industrial age dictated that produced guilt and, as a result, the neuroses that psychoanalysis emerged to treat. People have been overtaken by the desire for self-realisation and improvement, which is why modern post-industrial and creative neurocapitalism is characterised by other diseases, such as depression and dementia. In other words, neuroscience is driven by economic and epistemic forces that derive from today's capitalism."

4. Historical Features of Polish-Ukrainian Relations as an Aspect of the Creation of a New Policy

The Institute of Education serves as a crucial institution of socialisation, significantly contributing to the development and reinforcement of civic identity within the population. The structure and composition of historical memory, as well as the evaluation of "images of the past," are influenced by the quality and effectiveness of history teaching methodologies. In this context, selecting management mechanisms that enable new digital generations to cultivate historical memory - while considering technological advancements, evolving tasks and responsibilities of educators, and the reshaping of ideologies and psychological strategies - has become increasingly important. The objective is to refine the existing model of historical memory management, particularly at the Institute of Education, which serves as the primary conduit for the transfer of historical knowledge and socialisation.

The events of the total war in Ukraine were one of the factors that contributed to the ideological and political mobilisation of politicians in the formation of a new approach to Polish history. Politicians reproached historians for excessive preoccupation with negativity, exaggerating individual manifestations of Poles' "sinfulness," and ignoring numerous examples of heroism, self-sacrifice, and patriotism. A historical policy based on the "pedagogy of shame" will only inspire people with an inferiority complex and lead to the erasure from social memory of everything positive that unites Ukrainian and Polish people.

The activists called for a new historical policy. They considered the belief that coverage of positive events in history could "degenerate" into nationalism and xenophobia to be erroneous (Loreman et al., 2016). The memory of the past is too important to be left to the market forces of culture. The emergence of new humanitarian disciplines, especially at the intersection of multiple fields, which we will turn to in order to answer the question, makes it quite difficult to identify specific moments and events in its history that would clearly indicate its beginning. Historians note the need for active participation of the state in the creation and transmission of historical knowledge.

Positive historical experiences hold greater significance than negative ones, and the notion that "heroes are preferable to traitors and cowards" underscores this belief. A strong sense of pride in the achievements of our ancestors can serve as a unifying force within society. Active engagement in historical politics has been identified as a crucial element in shaping future political landscapes as a means of re-deployment. For years, certain members of the political and intellectual elite have sought to undermine the "pedagogy of shame" within society, particularly among the youth. Some scholars have suggested that we are approaching the "end of history," leading to the conclusion that societal memory of historical events is becoming obsolete (Batowski, 2001). Additionally, some politicians argue that the ongoing process of European integration renders the nation-state a relic of the past, promoting the idea that it is the responsibility of citizens to contribute to the creation of a "great European community." Yet, it remains evident that the strongest states consistently pursue an active historical policy, often producing films that depict history in a manner contrary to popular perception.

For many years, the media actively promoted the image of history as a "continuous hell". There was constant talk about anarchism and the inability to establish a state. According to many

media, all this should be left in the past and start its history from scratch (Gmurczyk-Wronska, 2005). This approach was primarily beneficial to those post-communist forces who wanted to avoid critical analysis of the legacy. Some intellectuals argued along these lines.

Historians are convinced of the significant role that historical memory plays in social and political life. They emphasise the importance of portraying the history of a people and their state positively, highlighting the heroism of national figures and recognising the crucial role of martyrology, as noted by Bialokur M. (2005). According to these historians, every nation requires a sense of power and a pantheon of heroes to serve as exemplary figures. They advocate for the commemoration of the deceased and the respect owed to them, while cautioning against becoming overly focused on martyrological narratives. While it is essential to acknowledge harm and suffering, the retelling of history should concentrate on optimistic and inspiring stories, present a model of a prosperous life, and convey the value of customs along with the richness of culture.

In order to create statehood, it is necessary to form a sense of pride in the people's historical heritage. In a public discussion on the politics of memory, historians have noted that previous generations have left an important moral legacy to citizens. Historians also note the need to talk about the positive aspects of Polish and Ukrainian history in order to establish a constructive relationship.

One of the key events in historical discourse in the Polish-Ukrainian calendar of commemorative dates was the anniversary of the conclusion of the Union of Lublin, which in 1569 united the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into a federal state, and most of the Ukrainian lands were annexed to the Commonwealth of Poland. The state was built on the basis of freedom, parliamentarianism, and democracy. For its inhabitants, among whom, apart from Poles and Lithuanians and Ukrainians were also representatives of many other peoples, religions and cultures, the Rzeczpospolita was the embodiment of tolerance and principles of benevolent coexistence, and for Europe, beset by conflicts and religious wars, the state created at the Seimas in Lublin showed the possibility of peaceful coexistence of different cultures and political traditions. A joint statement from the presidents of Poland and Lithuania highlights that their historic union, which lasted for over 200 years, has served as "an inspiration to all of Europe to integrate and foster ever closer cooperation between states as the best approach." For the Ukrainian people, membership in the Rzeczpospolita was essential for their National Liberation War led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky, and played a crucial role in the emergence of the Cossacks as a distinct social class. It is important to develop a constructive policy and to discern the positive historical experiences that can inform the framework for collaboration among states. The awakening of historical consciousness significantly contributes to this reexamination of history.

5. Education as a Factor of Personality Formation in the Context of Historical Science

In modern society, the problem of conflicts is becoming increasingly relevant, since throughout its history, humanity has accumulated considerable experience in non-violent resolution of social conflicts. This means that conflict, as a confrontation and opposition of interests, continues to play an important role in the process of historical development. In order to understand the essence of historical conflictology as a method of studying historical processes, it is necessary to consider the theoretical and methodological basis of social conflict.

Social conflict can be defined as a process of opposition of social subjects aimed at resolving contradictions in their interests and goals. A manufacturing enterprise includes people in a system of economic, political, social, and spiritual relations.

Conflict in an organisation is a complex multi-level system, an open system of interactions based on an actualised contradiction in interests, goals, values, the subjects of which are individuals or groups occupying different role positions in the organisation. In most cases, these contradictions arise due to the limited resources that act as important and urgent needs for them. There are several typologies of conflicts in an organisation. All these conflicts are interconnected, and sometimes it is difficult to notice the difference between them. Conflicts, however, can be divided depending on the

parties and focus into intrapersonal, interpersonal, between an individual and a group, and intergroup.

To reveal the causes of conflicts, a universal analysis of the actions, positions, psychological characteristics of its participants, and the circumstances that arise in the situation of their interaction is necessary.

Widespread international conflict was caused by the expansionist policies of the Russian Federation. poses as a threat to multiple sovereign states. Poles are well aware of the threats that have arisen not only for Ukrainians, but also for many European countries, including their own. Therefore, Polish-Ukrainian relations are close and positive, with prospects for the future.

Society is currently undergoing significant shifts in cultural values, influenced by developments from the 20th century and continuing into the early 21st century. The essence of these sociocultural processes can be summarised by the observation that sociocultural phenomena often lack substantive meaning. These changes are characterised by trends such as the "cancellation of culture" (cultural genocide), historical falsification, and shifting value-oriented perspectives. As a result, these new trends considerably undermine the regulatory role of fundamental beliefs and traditional values, leading to a deterioration of social identity. In contemporary generations, historical memory is shaped by a distorted understanding of the past, often resembling a "pseudo-scientific aberration." This misrepresentation arises from the influence of a manipulated narrative and a frequently falsified version of history. Additionally, the widespread digitisation and technologisation of social memory play a crucial role in this transformation, predominantly favouring short-term memory, thereby amplifying individual narratives while diminishing control and censorship. Researchers note that the Internet has become a significant institution and resource for memory, marking a medial turn in society that has transformed it into both a medium of memory and a tool for the ongoing production of the digital past.

At the level of state development strategies, the importance of history as both a science and an educational discipline has been recognised. Its pivotal role in this process has been established. Specifically, the subject of "History" is mandatory, as outlined in the state educational standards for basic and secondary general education, as well as in the educational standards applicable to all specialties and areas of bachelor's and specialist training.

However, the results of sociological studies of historical consciousness and the state of historical memory show that "folk knowledge throughout the centuries is fragmentary, comes from different sources and is not always correct." In other words, after completing a comprehensive 7-year curriculum, students do not develop integral historical knowledge and functional historical memory.

In the context of the new historical reality, it seems appropriate to pay scientific attention to this most important factor, precisely in the prism of learning history, which is the main form of communication with the past and the main social mechanism of personality formation. namely, the cultivation of historical memory. In recent decades, history as an educational discipline in the system of school and university (non-historical) education actually ended up in the "existential gallery": as a subject, it is mandatory for only a dozen areas of training. These are in little demand on the labour market, many questions arise in the public discourse about the quality of textbooks (primarily school textbooks). Currently, the state is making large-scale efforts to change this situation, increasing the number of study hours, updating the structure and content of the course, and implementing large-scale programs of retraining of teaching staff.

The professional pedagogical community is reconsidering its role and functions in the context of today's evolving social landscape. Beyond traditional schools and educational organisations, knowledge transmission is now effectively carried out by bloggers, media outlets, and television. Their approach to presenting information is marked by brevity, vivid visualisation, and often an engaging, entertaining style that emphasises active visualisation. In light of these developments, it is essential to enhance the teaching methods employed within the education system to meet the challenges and demands of modern society.

6. Conclusions

The research conducted provides a foundation for the formation of new interstate relations in the future, as one of the accents of the postmodern rethinking of the world system. Thus, an important aspect of defining new perspectives is the awareness of the historical past, the formation of positive experiences in the past, and the creation of a new policy of relations.

To clarify the prevailing trends, it has been determined that historical memory plays a crucial role in shaping national identity. The nation serves as a central element in state formation. To fully realise one's affiliation with a nation, it is essential to understand its history, evaluate both positive and negative aspects, and have a firm grasp of historical memory while also considering each other's perspectives through the lens of neuroethics. A consistent approach in this direction leads us to the third understanding of neuroethics as a regulatory sphere within certain branches of neuroscience, positioning neuroethics as part of research ethics or specific neuroscience disciplines. It is important to note that within bioethics, there is a tendency to isolate research ethics as a distinct field. This trend has emerged due to the limitations surrounding the focus exclusively on biomedical research, leaving psychological experiments often overlooked.

Sound political foundations should be based on knowledge of historical aspects, the formation of correct conclusions, and awareness of the role of each nation in the creation of its state.

Thus, the most important problems of Polish-Ukrainian relations in the historical past were also investigated, and historical problems that must be resolved in order to continue constructive communication in the future, in the context of postmodern rethinking, were identified.

Aknowledgement

The Author 1 reviewed scientific research on the problem of defining historical memory as the basis for a postmodern rethinking of the future.

The Author 2 presented in the article the political conditions of the formation of relations between states.

The Author 3 defined the main concepts of the research, formed the principles of the postmodern perception of historical development.

The Author 4 structured the thematic blocks of the paper in accordance with the purpose of the research.

The Authors 5, 6 systematised foreign and domestic literature.

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