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## Joachim Lelewel's methodological ideas

**Abstract:** The main aim of this paper is to capture the essence of a Polish historian Joachim Lelewel's methodological ideas and their philosophical underpinning. For this purpose, I analyse his publication entitled *History: Its Branching and What It Is Based On*, which has thus far been overlooked in research. I propose a new perspective on Lelewel's work, taking into account his European inspirations in the field of historical theory and his tendency to combine the contradictory research approaches of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. I address topics related mainly to the theory of historical cognition, the subject of historical study, source criticism, the concept of truth, historical interpretation, methods of historical analysis and selected rhetorical principles.

**Keywords:** Joachim Lelewel, methodology of history, theory of history, historical study

### Introduction

Joachim Lelewel and his works continue to attract the interest of researchers from various academic fields to this day. He is a source of inspiration, not only for historians but also, in particular, for literary scholars<sup>1</sup> and cultural theorists.<sup>2</sup> His work has also caught the attention of scholars abroad.<sup>3</sup> However, Lelewel's ideas

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, D. Zawadzka, "Paralela recepcji. Lelewel i Mickiewicz w odbiorze literaturoznawców i historyków", *Sensus Historiae* 15 [2] (2014), pp. 177–198; D. Zawadzka, "Przestrzeń historii, przestrzeń tekstu – paralele Lelewela i Mickiewicza", *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2 (2014), pp. 5–20.

<sup>2</sup> S. Kandulski, *Kulturowe funkcje historiografii romantycznej na przykładzie twórczości Joachima Lelewela*, Poznań 2018.

<sup>3</sup> J. Stanley, "Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861)", [in:] *Nation and History: Polish Historians from the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, P. Brock, P. Wróbel (eds.), Toronto 2006, pp. 52–84.

have not been comprehensively evaluated yet. Information about the historian can mostly be found in various biographical books and articles, which concentrate on Lelewel's political activities and his didactic work, and also analyse some of his scholarly publications. This lack of an exhaustive study on the whole of his oeuvre is mainly due to the multitude of his research interests and his enormous impact on many branches of Polish literature of the 19th century. This is due to the multitude of research on the author of *Historyka*<sup>4</sup> and his enormous impact on many branches of Polish literature of the 19th century. Lelewel published, among others, cartographic, tabular and numismatic works, literary criticism, bibliographic and heraldic descriptions, as well as comparative studies. Apart from these, Lelewel worked on Polish and general history (every epoch), geography, legislation and "socio-political journalism".<sup>5</sup> He is widely considered to be the most eminent historiographic thinker not only of the 19th century, but also in the entire history of Polish literature. All those who have studied Lelewel agree in their assessment of both his novelty in the first half of the 19th century and his great influence on his understanding of Polish history. Despite this, the specificity of his interpretative and methodological ideas has not been sufficiently explained and elaborated so far.

The scope of research on Lelewel's methodological and theoretical concepts of history is rather small. On closer acquaintance one finds a narrow circle of the same names constantly repeating themselves, with most studies being an adaptation of Lelewel's theories to the needs of communist ideology.<sup>6</sup> In this context, Jerzy Topolski's article "Lelewel a postęp metodologiczny historiografii europejskiej. Refleksje o »historykach« Joachima Lelewela" [*Lelewel and the Methodological Progress of European Historiography: Reflections on Joachim Lelewel's »historica«* is worthy of distinction.<sup>7</sup> He outlined the European background to the development of history as an academic discipline (especially in the context of German scholarship, which has not been reliably analysed yet), referring to Lelewel's innovatory achievements in this field. He emphasised the regularity of his research work and the multitude of his writings on methodological issues. The works of Violetta Julkowska<sup>8</sup> also deserve a special mention because they were created after the changes in interpretative perspectives that took place in the humanities in the second

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Stanley presented Lelewel from a socio-political perspective, taking into account his views on the nation (including the role of the Polish nation) and the importance of Polish history for the emerging consciousness of contemporary people.

<sup>4</sup> J. Lelewel, "Historyka", [in:] J. Lelewel, *Dziela*, vol. 2, J. Adamus (ed.), Warszawa 1964, pp. 178–208.

<sup>5</sup> H. Hleb-Koszańska, "Wytoczne bibliografii Joachima Lelewela. Z problemów bibliografii osobowej", *Biuletyn Państwowego Instytutu Książki* 1 [5] (1948), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> A more detailed explanation can be found in H.M. Słoczyński, *Światło w dziejarskiej ciemnicy. Koncepcja dziejów i interpretacja przeszłości Polski Joachima Lelewela*, Kraków 2010, pp. 9, 11–14, 49.

<sup>7</sup> J. Topolski, "Lelewel a postęp metodologiczny historiografii europejskiej. Refleksje o »historykach« Joachima Lelewela", [in:] J. Topolski, *Varia historyczne*, Poznań 2010, pp. 108–129.

<sup>8</sup> V. Julkowska, *Retoryka w narracji historycznej Joachima Lelewela*, Poznań 1998; V. Julkowska, "Wkład Joachima Lelewela w rozwój podstaw akademickiej metodologii historii i historii historiografii w latach 1815–1830", [in:] *Historia historiografii i metodologia historii w Polsce i na Ukrainie*, J. Maternicki (ed.), Rzeszów 2015, pp. 138–154.

half of the 20th century.<sup>9</sup> However, her research focused on a narrow field, which is only one of the many components of Lelewel's methodology, i.e. the rhetorical layer of his historical narrative. In her studies, she adopted the theoretical assumptions of the narrative philosophy of history in its non-postmodern version and made use of the theoretical corpus of classical rhetoric.

This article is devoted to the analysis of Lelewel's *Historia. Jej rozgałęzienie, na czym się opiera* [*History: Its Branching and What It Is Based On*],<sup>10</sup> which has survived in a copy made by his student Stanisław Kiewlicz.<sup>11</sup> I aim to describe the methodological concepts contained therein, to capture their essence, and to draw attention to the differences between this text and Lelewel's earlier works, especially the treatise *Historyka* from 1815. This analysis, for reasons of space, focuses on selected fragments of Lelewel's work, with emphasis on the philosophical issues. The choice of this particular publication was dictated by practical considerations (the omission of this study in the literature on the subject) and by the fact that its analysis will, hopefully, be a valuable contribution to the scholarly debate. It is a copy of a short text written by Lelewel for his students as a kind of teaching aid—it contained the basic assumptions of a given research problem (in this case the theory and methodology of historical research), and was probably used by him as part of his lectures on general history over the course of the 1824/1825 academic year at Vilnius University. He used such course summaries to systematise, complement and clarify the content of lectures.<sup>12</sup> The analysis of *History* conducted in this article is based on categories construed by Lelewel himself in this treatise, in the form of the most general terms referring to the content of its individual chapters. These key categories were the subject matter of his historical methodology.

It should be noted that Lelewel's concepts continued to evolve throughout his life. Especially the years 1815–1824 provided him with many opportunities to broaden his knowledge within the so-called two Vilnius “professorships”, i.e. the two periods during which he held the position of a professor at Vilnius University.<sup>13</sup> At that time, as part of a continuous redefinition and clarification of his own theoretical and methodological view of history, he prepared the ground for history understood as an academic discipline organised according to the modern, Western-European model. Lelewel believed that history could acquire the status of a professional field of study if academics followed his research principles. Further in this paper I present selected elements of Lelewel's model with respect to their connection to philosophical issues.

<sup>9</sup> For more information, see E. Domańska, *Historia egzystencjalna. Krytyczne studium narratywności i humanistyki zaangażowanej*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 13–15.

<sup>10</sup> J. Lelewel, *Historia*. “Jej rozgałęzienie, na czym się opiera” (1824), [in:] J. Lelewel, *Dziela*, vol. 2, pp. 233–271.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the relationship between Lelewel and Kiewlicz, see M. Adrianek, “Związki przyjaźni Stanisława Kiewlicza z Joachimem Lelewalem w świetle zachowanej korespondencji”, *Folia Bibliologica* 40/41 (1992/1993), pp. 27–55.

<sup>12</sup> N. Assorodobraj, “Wstęp”, [in:] J. Lelewel, *Dziela*, vol. 2, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> M.H. Serejski, *Koncepcja historii powszechnej Joachima Lelewela*, Warszawa 1958, pp. 225–227.

My analysis will focus on his methodological concepts and on situating them in relation to European thought from the periods of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The Polish historian compiled numerous bibliographic lists and notes with comments on the works of writers considered to be the founders of historical study (from the perspectives of both the 19th century and modern day), ranging from antiquity to around 1825. This creates an opportunity for undertaking comparative research in the history of ideas (in the sense of the ideas that influenced Lelewel in the field of emerging historical study, concerning, among others, its subject matter, research conduct and socio-cultural significance). There is ample evidence that the historian did not incorporate European theories into his own methodology uncritically, both in terms of philosophical issues and analytic approaches. He created his own foundations of historical study, formulating detailed recommendations for research, based on a combination of empirical and theoretical solutions. Critical and philosophical research constituted the whole of external and internal source criticism. It consisted in examining the authenticity of historical sources, the reliability of the information contained in them, as well as the interpretation of their meaning in the light of the causes and conditions of their creation in the historical process.

The theory of historical cognition, developed by Lelewel based on epistemological idealism, was very important in the formation of his model for studying history. He employed Immanuel Kant's concept of our knowledge of reality being conditioned by certain subjective structures, i.e. *a priori* cognitive forms –categories of time and space and of intellect. In this sense, objects must adapt to human cognition. The theory of history should, therefore, according to Lelewel, take into consideration the subjective factor in historical cognition and seek solutions to the resultant conditions. Lelewel's research in this area concerned, among others, the essence and criteria of historical truth as well as the influence of the scholar's perspective on the research object. The notion of historical truth proposed by Lelewel is paradoxically continued in contemporary historiographic work on the grounds of constructivist discourse.

## European methodological thought and its impact on Lelewel's views on historical methods

Over the centuries, methodological works in the field of history have come to be known by the name of "historica",<sup>14</sup> which is also used today. History acquired the formal status of an academic discipline between the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries due to the achievements of German historians, among others, from the Göttingen school. They conducted research on the forms of the historian's work and how it could be professionalised, focusing on the question of how to write history. It was also then that heuristic and methodological

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<sup>14</sup> The term "historica" dates back to the 16th century. The phrase "arshistorica" was first used in methodological context by the Dutch scholar Gerrit Janszoon Vos in 1623 in the title of a work about historical method.

knowledge became the subject of university lectures.<sup>15</sup> Works on historical cognition, the ancillary sciences of history, and issues related to the philosophy of history began to be published.

In Polish scholarship of the 19th century, Lelewel was the first historian interested in methodology. He not only reflected on factual issues, but also developed principles for studying them in the most effective way, based on the Western-European model. The historian openly opposed the approach of those scholars who treated history as a collection of stories devoid of the status of an academic discipline.<sup>16</sup> In this light, his theoretical and methodological reflections reveal the importance of his contribution to the process of the early professionalisation of the historian's work in Europe. Independently, Lelewel began to study the methodical and methodological knowledge of history, thanks to the encouragement of Gottfried Ernst Groddeck, a professor at Vilnius University whose classes in classical philology he attended. It should be noted that this professor had studied in Göttingen in the 1780s, so Lelewel had first-hand access to the knowledge and literature of German historiography, and, therefore, it greatly influenced his work.

There were significant similarities between Lelewel's thought and the theory of historicism, which claimed that all phenomena in the world are historically conditioned, i.e. they take part in an uninterrupted process of the influence of one factor—the cause of a phenomenon—on another. This closely matched the views of Lelewel, who wrote about “the historical circumstances of the surrounding people and those of human and social nature”.<sup>17</sup> The perception of anthropological issues in terms of historicism opened the way to understanding historical phenomena idiographically. It is particularly clear in the works of Leopold von Ranke and his followers, whose subjects of interest were individualities, i.e. unique historical events and individuals.<sup>18</sup> The quality of research in this approach contrasted with the views held by Lelewel, since German-speaking historians tried to understand the essence of individual beings, such as the state. In this regard, they analysed the nature and specific features of a given state entity. They believed that every single entity thus understood was unique, due to specific, characteristic values. For Lelewel, describing the individual aspect had a completely different function. He drew attention to the interaction between state entities and the European context on a large scale, and between individuals and society on a small scale. However, he was interested primarily in the former relationship and understood Europe as an all-encompassing structure of interdependence.

It is worth noting that in his work entitled *Historyczna paralela Hiszpanii z Polską w XVI, XVII, XVIII wieku* [*Historical parallel between Spain and Poland in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries*]<sup>19</sup> Lelewel discussed the subject of his research in terms of individuality (i.e. individual countries). Nevertheless, his goal was not to provide a detailed analysis of their “nature”, characteristics, “internal and

<sup>15</sup> J. Topolski, “Lelewel a postęp metodologiczny historiografii europejskiej”, p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> J. Lelewel, “Historyka rękopiśmienna”, [in:] idem, *Dziela*, vol. 2, p. 97.

<sup>17</sup> J. Lelewel, “Historia”, p. 250.

<sup>18</sup> A.F. Grabski, *Zarys historii historiografii polskiej*, Poznań 2003, p. 462.

<sup>19</sup> J. Lelewel, *Historyczna paralela Hiszpanii z Polską w XVI, XVII, XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 2006.

external relations” as such, but to describe a larger, continuous historical process taking place in Europe — a process in which these countries were only elements. According to Lelewel, such a perspective enabled a better understanding of this process and its impact on state entities throughout European history. Thus, individual analysis was not his goal (as was the case with German studies in the 19th century), but only a tool to achieve a different objective. In this respect, it is also important to stress the difference in how the subject of historical research was understood by German historians and Lelewel. For the author of *Historyka*, it was a nation, not a state entity.

Regarding the connections between Lelewel’s thought and English methodological assumptions of history, the impact of David Hume’s concepts on his views should be mentioned, especially concerning cause-and-effect relationships and the achievements of empiricism. Lelewel believed that history should be explored using methodological empiricism (as a basis for critical research) and methodological rationalism—both serve as guidelines for interpreting information contained in sources in terms of their causes and circumstances of origin in the historical process. In *Historyka* he claimed that “in critical historical research, that is, in the investigation of historical truth—the truth of experience in the sensory circuit—all of the researcher’s work is of course founded on gathering and understanding the sources in which this truth is sought”.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of the superiority of rational cognition over experience, Lelewel was aware of the huge role of intellect in cognitive processes. In addition, he was often guided by intuition in his work. It is worth noting that, despite his negative attitude towards speculative views and apriorism, he shared some of these beliefs, including faith in “homogeneous human nature” and absolute truth (which is inaccessible to people). One could present many arguments that prove his belief in a rational worldview,<sup>21</sup> both in terms of his research methodology and his views on reality. He proclaimed, among other things, faith in social progress (without finality) and in the positive role of science; he criticised fanaticism, the influence of religion on politics, dogmatic thinking, prejudice and the arbitrary nature of power. One of the most interesting concepts he used was “human nature”—a vague term that referred to the shared characteristics of the entire human race. Presumably he associated it with human passions and tendency to prejudices, as indicated by the frequent use of these words with relation to nature. More importantly, Lelewel did not mention anything about the stability or continuity of this category, referring to it only as “monotonous”.

Lelewel was not an uncritical follower of the Enlightenment recommendations of practising European “philosophical history” based on the nomological concept of history.<sup>22</sup> His thinking was closest to the concepts developed by Johann Gottfried Herder, e.g. in respect of the interference of the social world in nature. Lelewel

<sup>20</sup> J. Lelewel, “Historyka”, p. 179.

<sup>21</sup> B. Williams, “Rationalism”, [in:] *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, D.M. Borchert (ed.), Detroit 2006, p. 240.

<sup>22</sup> A.F. Grabski, *Zarys historii historiografii polskiej*, p. 303.

did not think of the two in terms of autonomy, but interaction. This is indicated by a fragment of *Historyka* referring to both the “circumstances of the place and time”, where “each place necessarily impacts on human matters, and variations of its elements, in relation to time and events, produce changes in these human matters” and “all these events[i.e. natural phenomena and human activity] are historical, as long as they affect the fate and the circumstances of people”.<sup>23</sup> There is no doubt that Lelewel treated humans as an element of the natural world, but also as a part of society. Moreover, in his vision humans held a special place, as they were the focal point of his philosophy. Thus, Lelewel combined the thought of the French and English Enlightenment with the German perspective on historical knowledge and its philosophical scope.

### ***Analysis of History: Its Branching and What It Is Based On***

The following analysis of *History* concerns those fragments of the text which are most important from the point of view of methodology. Lelewel’s study was divided into two parts. In the first he presented his views on “res gestae” and history as subjects of historical research, while in the second he made methodological recommendations under the title “Historica”. Lelewel pointed out that the word “history” had many different meanings at that time. For him, scientific research, i.e. “historica,” represented the most noble variety. He brought to the fore its key elements, namely critical research, philosophical explanations, and historiographic recommendations. On the margins of Kiewlicz’s text are written the names of authors who inspired Lelewel in this respect, such as: Albert Niemann, Christian Friedrich Rühls, Christian Jakob Kraus, Jean Bodin, Henry St John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke, Nicolas Langlet du Fresnoy, and Joseph Priestley.<sup>24</sup>

The first issue he raised in the subsection “Gestae: History” was the concept of history understood according to a “broader” and a “stricter” definition.<sup>25</sup> The former referred to all perspectives experienced by people in time and space. The latter was specific to the place and time “of what happened to people”. Crucial for this understanding of history was the category of “what is happening”, i.e. the process of events and their occurrence. In Lelewel’s opinion, this process can be explained within the framework of the two historical narratives of “describing” and “telling” stories. The first one was based on a “description” concerned with depicting a given research problem, with a focus on the place where the discussed phenomenon occurred, i.e. “the state of affairs at one time”, but in different environments. The second writing method consisted in the presentation of events according to the course of time and according to their consequences, i.e. describing phenomena occurring in one place, but considering their evolution.

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<sup>23</sup> J. Lelewel, “Historyka”, p. 185.

<sup>24</sup> J. Lelewel, “Historia”, p. 233.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, pp. 233–237.



The second extensive chapter of *History* is entitled “The Theory of History and Statistics”.<sup>26</sup> In the beginning, Lelewel provided a broad introduction on the importance of historical research on society and the tasks that “historian-statisticians” faced. The literature cited on the margins included, among others, the works of Rühls, Kraus and Ernst Chladni. According to Lelewel, being a historian meant studying in detail the changes and the condition of humanity and explaining them. In addition, he was to trace “the beginnings from which such changes and state arose” and their “causes, which are the result of their properties, and harmony”, i.e., as he would later write, based on “the first” sources, he was to reach the genesis of historical events and processes, taking into account the causal sequence, as well as their characteristics. Interestingly, Lelewel believed that researchers should be emotionally involved in their work and should “feel” the object of their study, even be part of it. Such postulates are still valid today within so-called historical anthropology, which often challenges researchers to participate in the life of the community they are studying and through this activity to discover their own personality.<sup>27</sup>

The aim of Lelewel’s research was to clarify the notion of historical truth. He understood this concept differently from the category of “absolute” truth, which is only partly comprehensible to humans due to their “character defects” and epistemological limitations, as claimed by Lelewel in *Historyka*. In *History*, he defined historical truth as “a human creation, the fruit of experience, in line with human comprehension”. This means that Lelewel suspended metaphysical judgements on truth in favour of epistemological ones. Thus, it can be assumed that in his approach historical truth does not function as an absolute but is closely dependent on social conventions.

As regards the theory of historical cognition, Lelewel considered historical research to be the result of the “progress” of experience and the attempts of reason to expand its knowledge. “Truths invoking supernatural [i.e. metaphysical] forces, that is, those beyond rational human abilities, cease to be historical”.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Lelewel dissociated himself from all kinds of “speculative philosophy,” treating it as an unscientific approach. However, he claimed that it must not be disregarded and should be respected. This means that he viewed these concepts as human-made constructions, and it can be assumed that he did not distance himself from them completely, as they allowed him to acquire a more coherent and comprehensive understanding of people’s thinking and behaviour. Consequently, he did not apply metaphysical categories in his own research, but analysed them as elements of a given historical reality. At the end of this part of the second chapter, he pointed out that critical studies “contain more truth of experience”, i.e. are based on empirical evidence, in contrast to “combinational ones”, which can only be “understood”, meaning that they are subject to reasoning.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, pp. 242–271.

<sup>27</sup> J. Ołędzki, *Murzynowo: znaki istnienia i tożsamości kulturalnej mieszkańców wioski nadwiślańskiej XVIII–XX w.*, Warszawa 2016, p. 35.

<sup>28</sup> J. Lelewel, “Historia”, p. 244.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.



Lelewel began his methodological considerations with “criticism”.<sup>30</sup> In this respect, the most difficult task, in his opinion, was the “penetration of the spirit of historical sources”. Defining the concept of “spirit”, as in the case of *Historyka*, is not easy due to the lack of an explicit explanation. Lelewel emphasised that textual criticism depends on a thorough exploration of the circumstances that affected the analysed sources, i.e. an analysis of the factors influencing historical events and phenomena, and the “researcher’s personal abilities”, i.e. his ability to interpret source materials. In the next part of the text, he listed a number of difficulties encountered by historians doing research, such as the unavailability of sources, the diverse and complicated nature of their “circumstances” or a lack of knowledge thereof, the varying levels of acuity and empathy shown by individual researchers. It is worth noting that, as in the case of *Historyka*, in this text Lelewel was writing about historical sources and their hermeneutics, although he intuitively questioned the credibility of the information provided by authors. In this respect, his views were compatible with the contemporary trend of treating historical sources as reflections of reality, i.e. as objectively existing facts, processes, regularities or historical tendencies,<sup>31</sup> while at the same time he was aware that sources only provide information about the world, not its faithful representation, which was an example of much later structural thought.

The next chapter of *History* was called “Combinations”.<sup>32</sup> Lelewel defined them as “getting to know the connection in history, that is, explaining the causes, effects and mutual hinges [i.e. dependencies] of human affairs”. He described it as “the task of the philosopher-researcher”. He included in his duties “tracking historical truths” by means of rational methods. In his opinion, the main object of philosophical study was reflection on “human nature”, because it revealed “reliable rules for proceeding in combination studies”. He noted, however, that applying these principles did not give ready answers regarding the causality of phenomena, but merely highlighted the given research problem and provided “means for considering the springs [i.e. stimuli] and relationships of the known state of human affairs and of their changes”. Thus, Lelewel was sure of the effectiveness of his methods and the guidelines for conducting historical research in a philosophical perspective. In this respect, it was necessary to stick to the list of factors that influenced the historical process, i.e. “the circumstances surrounding people, in human nature and the nature of societies; out of these, the social relations between nations require special consideration”.

As in *Historyka*, Lelewel began this chapter by describing the first category of “circumstances” and dividing it into “place, time and events”. He put the “circumstances of the place with their effects” into two categories: “physical and historical conditions”. The first concerned different temperatures, landforms, “their varying nature and organic and inorganic produce” (i.e. natural resources). According to

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 244–249.

<sup>31</sup> A. Radomski, *Czy jest możliwa historyczna interpretacja tekstów źródłowych?*, <https://depot.ceon.pl/handle/123456789/2145> (access: 30.05.2020), p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> J. Lelewel, “Historia”, pp. 249–263.

him, the place where a given population lives shapes its disposition and behaviour. In his opinion, geographical location plays a part in the strengthening or loosening of social bonds. As was the case in *Historyka*, he believes that the moderate climate was the most conducive to the “progress of the human race”. This time, however, he emphasised “progress in culture and improvement”, as well as the impact on “the level of industry”. The second category of “historic place” included factors such as the variability of a given location, i.e. its warming or cooling, the diversity of soil types, ranging from deserts to cultivable land.

The next subsection of *History* referred to “the circumstances of time with their effects”.<sup>33</sup> Lelewel drew attention to the importance of using the chronological sequence in all historical works. He further divided the issue into three points, i.e. “unconditional time”, “physical” time and “historical” time. In the first part he described the continuous life cycle of “arising, growth, persistence, deterioration” and “disappearance”. The second concerned the division of night and day, and the seasons. The last perspective was the most complicated. He considered the variability of place in time and its physical condition, including human activities, which, for him, constituted the most important area of research. Lelewel called this change “the spirit of the time”. He defined it as “the spirit of feelings, wishes, needs and dispositions, giving meaning to words and thoughts” (by this Lelewel probably meant the impact of spatial variation on human expectations and perception of reality). Particularly interesting is the last passage regarding “thoughts” and “words”. It can be assumed that the historian was convinced of the variability of the development of specific mental tendencies and of language systems formulated on this basis, which corresponded to a given era and culture. Lelewel also stated that “the spirit of time enhances or condemns human actions, gives them strength or weakens them”. This could be related to human activities which, in some circumstances, appeared to be a manifestation of everyday life, while in others they represented a clear violation of social rules. According to him, this force appeared in religious and political activity and added “resilience to undertakings, wars, settlements”. Lelewel probably meant by that the ability of using these mental tendencies for one’s own purposes. He wrote that “its [i.e. of the spirit of time] direction excites passions in disputes, resentments”, that is to say that this force awakens negative human emotions and inclinations towards conflict. The “spirit of time” was for him a “spring”, i.e. a stimulus of all changes in history. Thus, Lelewel considered the impermanence of human thoughts and ideas to be the source of variability in human behaviour (and also in the historical process). The most favourable conditions for this process were, as he noted, “national freedoms”, by which he probably meant the freedom to express one’s own ideas, without limitations imposed by religious dogmas and political censorship.

The last type of “circumstances surrounding people” is “events and their consequences”,<sup>34</sup> which covers everything that was related to humans. Many sentences and expressions from this subsection were copied by Lelewel from the text of *Historyka*.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 251.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 252.

He believed that even seemingly insignificant factors had an impact on “big changes”, i.e. they were connected due to certain events. He warned that it might seem that events “disrupt order”, but in fact “they did not break continuity”. Probably Lelewel was referring to the stability of the historical process based on the realisation of the goal of improving humanity. Events, in a similar way to place and time, had an impact on human life because they aided “development” or “on the contrary could impede it”, i.e. inhibit this process. Lelewel pointed out that “healthy forces in the human race resisted this [impediment]”. Thus, he believed that factors affecting people (probably human nature) also counteracted the inhibition of their development. He emphasised that events were a result of the interaction of human activity and ability, and of the various combinations of events caused by it.

The next chapter was entitled “The Historical Human”.<sup>35</sup> This part was also included in *Historyka* with reference to sociological considerations and their role in historical study. In the case of *History*, the text is divided into fewer subsections but they are more detailed and often feature the same headings as in the publication from 1815. The authors mentioned in the margins of Kiewlicz’s copy are: Adam Ferguson, Heinrich Home, Isaac Iselin, Johann Gottfried Herder, Christoph Meiners, Friedrich August Carus and Immanuel Kant. Lelewel noted the “uniformity of human nature” and wrote about its “sociable”, i.e. social, character. He listed the good and bad sides of human temperament, treating “passions” as negative traits. He believed that “everyone is involuntarily one of the great masses”. Thus, a strong emphasis was put upon community and freedom. Apparently he viewed the human world as separate from the animal world. The main factor distinguishing people from animals was the process of “human improvement”. The mental abilities, which are a distinctive characteristic of man, constitute the most important stimulus of his actions. In the next part of this chapter Lelewel came to the conclusion that “although [man] cannot conceive anything without experience, he leaves the mark of rational action everywhere, he forces his way into the highest beginning” (by the “highest beginning” he probably meant “the primitive peoples”). It is worth noting the great value of “rational actions” in Lelewel’s philosophy, which did not falter over the years like the belief that “circumstances” affect a person regardless of their will. In this passage, however, Lelewel devoted more attention to “the nested circumstances”, in the sense that he did not write only about human nature, but also about man’s “ideas and beliefs”. Thus, he was aware of and paid attention to the individual personality and mentality of humans and their role in history. Nevertheless, “the historical human was considered as part of a social state, to some extent culture, and he was tangled up in passions and prejudices”. In this respect, the individual perspective was always supplemented by a more general aspect, referring to the entire social structure.

Further in this section he characterised the conditions of the “improvement” process, with the positive and negative factors affecting it. The first of these were for Lelewel “freedom and prosperity”, which were to “lift minds, revive strength, awake to action and improvement”. In her commentary on Lelewel’s *History* Nina

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<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, pp. 252–254.

Assorodobraj points to a remark about the role of art in this process, made by the author in one of his drafts.<sup>36</sup> He understood art as a manifestation of a “greater perfection”, and associated “feelings of beauty” only with feelings specific to people. The factors inhibiting this “progress” were: “misery, poverty, oppression, wretchedness, and painful feelings”. According to him, they cause “gloom and humiliation” in people, as well as a “desire for intoxication”. More importantly, he pointed out that various people react to the “circumstances” affecting them and thus reality had to be interpreted in this context. As a result, some people, having achieved “fortune and happiness, quickly dream of new wishes and pleasures, while others lazily linger in numb calmness and musing”. Consequently, the historian should consider all these factors and the element of randomness (Lelewel wrote about these issues in the context of people developing their own “tendencies and abilities”) in historical analyses and interpretations. Lelewel’s complex views on the study of “social relationships” in history will be omitted here because their relationship with philosophy was much weaker.

The aim of the historian in Lelewel’s approach was to explain the “gradations and shades” of the different ages, i.e. the level of diversity of events and phenomena in history, and their causes, which he understood to be multi-layered, overlapping. To this end, he proposed comparing various historical elements with each other and tracking the differences and similarities between them. He drew attention to what he considered the most effective research perspective, based on describing events from a considerable time distance. Only then did the “finished view” of the event become visible, i.e. with all of its historical context and corresponding “circumstances”.

The next chapter, just like in *Historyka*, was called “Historiography”.<sup>37</sup> For Lelewel this meant the art of interpreting history in various ways. He discussed the most accurate and at the same time “the most dignified” methods, i.e. the scientific ones, based on critical and “etiological” research. He emphasised that events and phenomena that were extracted from philosophical research were “enlightening and appealing to the heart and mind”. Thus, historical narrative should retain these characteristics. To achieve this, it should not contain “research reasoning” (probably Lelewel had in mind methodological reflections, whose place was in specially designated writings) and moral teachings. He pointed out that history was not created at human request, so “it should not be cold”. The researcher’s task was to “assess” the past with “moderation and to speak in the spirit of humanity, virtue and purest morality”. It is worth emphasising that this was not synonymous with moralising, which he criticised earlier in the text. One should not “embellish the truth or be completely indifferent to it”. He wrote that “truth was revealed in the most intense feelings, and so it should be accurately published”. Thus, it is clear that Lelewel was aware of the impossibility of constructing a fully objective description of history and permitted within its framework the involvement of the researcher, and probably also empathy, as described in the earlier chapters

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<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, pp. 254, n. 37.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, pp. 263–271.

of *History*. Further in the text Lelewel provided detailed guidelines for scholars, which will not be discussed here, but only mentioned. He provided instructions on the structure of scientific publications, citation rules, using auxiliary tables and other graphic means of presenting information, as well as the practical application of the achievements of modern auxiliary sciences of history, which enrich the historian's knowledge about sources and the context in which they were created.

## Conclusion

The analysis carried out in this article shows that Lelewel presented exceptionally well not only the methodology, but also the subject of historical research. He opposed the literary and traditional view of history held by representatives of Polish historical study in those times. He was the first Polish scholar to abandon theological and ideological paradigms in favour of understanding history as a scientific discipline and a fully-fledged academic subject. He also broadened the research subject of history by not limiting himself to describing only so-called great history (political history, the history of great rulers and ground-breaking events, i.e. those that caused dramatic changes in the socio-political reality of Europe). Lelewel wrote about many different research perspectives that were to lead to a coherent and complete account of the reality of the past. These perspectives were divided into different approaches: philosophical (mainly in the field of the history of philosophy and the theory of historical cognition), sociological, anthropological, political, economic, cultural, and linguistic ones. Thus, the political factor was treated by the historian as one of the components of a description of the past. In addition, he understood it not only in terms of an assessment of how different sovereigns rule, but also considered the statistical aspect, i.e. the "description of the state of countries".

Lelewel's concept of the philosophy of history, which involved the ordering of history and its changeability within the historical process encompassing the entire human race, i.e. its "improvement", is a recurring element of his oeuvre. The motif of change, movement, and evolution of the world is strongly noticeable in the historian's works. In his view, people were also involved in this continuous process of transformation. However, the issue of how consciously humans interfered in these variables was not clearly defined. On the one hand, Lelewel wrote about the role of reason, i.e. the mental powers of humans, in history, even though, on the other hand, he admitted that humans have no control over certain things, such as the environment in which they are born and its climate variability, or the "circumstances" affecting them.

We should mention the influence of Lelewel's worldview on the shape of his works. It is interesting that, on the one hand, the historian advocated a very strict canon of methodological principles as a requirement for historical study. On the other hand, his writings reveal subjective emotions, tendencies, and preferences. He even thought that truth "emerges from feelings". The aforementioned elements of thinking of "ideological rationalism", which corresponded to Lelewel's

perception of the world, were reflected in his works on many levels and were expressed by him through his critical remarks on the past. In this regard, further research should be carried out on the moral impact of historical research on the researcher himself and on his assessment of his object of study.

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