

VALUES AND VALUING IN THE LETTERS OF STANISŁAW WITKIEWICZ
WRITTEN TO HIS SON

Anna Majewska-Wójcik,
doctor,
Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II

Предметом аналізу статті є огляд цінностей, які у своїх листах Станіслав Віткевич передає синові, Станіславу Ігнатію, а також мовні засоби, що використовує для оцінювання. Матеріалом для цього дослідження стало листування між батьком і сином, який вступає у доросле життя, саме тому можемо припускати, що маємо справу зі свідомим і цілеспрямованим трансфером цінностей, які визнає батько як зріла та відповідальна за формування особистості дитини людина.

Питання цінностей та оцінювання розглянуто з аксіолінгвістичної точки зору, закладеної в педагогічний контекст. Аналіз матеріалу дослідження дає можливість зробити висновки, що батько авторитетно намагається передати синові своєрідну аксіологічну парадигму, яку він сам визнає, посилаючи йому цілу низку повідомлень різного ступеня директивності. Серед них можна назвати: прохання, поради, догани та вимагання. Після проведеного детального аналізу листування можемо стверджувати, що запланований Віткевичем-батьком виховний метод не спрацював на повну потужність, оскільки що більше батько нав'язував синові своє бачення світу, то наполегливіше Віткацій намагався звільнитися від гнітючої дидактики батька.

Ключові слова: цінність, оцінювання, значення, аксіолінгвістика, Віткевич, директиви

Majewska-Wójcik Anna. Values and valuing in the letters of Stanisław Witkiewicz written to his son. *This paper examines the values which Stanisław Witkiewicz passes on to his son, Stanisław Ignacy; as well as the linguistic resources used for valuing. The research material was drawn from the correspondence between the father and his adolescent son. Thus, we may assume that what we face here is a conscious and purposeful transfer of values regarded by the father, who as a mature adult, is responsible for shaping the personality of his child. The issues of values and valuing are studied from the axiolinguistic perspective in the context of pedagogy. The review of the research material enables us to claim that the father tries to convey to his son the axiological paradigm, which he follows in an authoritative manner, by sending a series of messages to the son of varying degrees of directive, starting with requests, through advice, admonitions, and ending with demands. As it turns out, the educational method of Witkiewicz-the father did not quite work. The more the father imposed on his son his view of the world, the more the son tried to free himself from his father's overwhelming didactics.*

Keywords: value, valuing, parenting, axiolinguistics, Witkiewicz, directives

1. Introduction

Stanisław Witkiewicz is spoken of mainly in the context of painting, architecture (creator of the Zakopane style), art or literature criticism, while the issues related to his family life (as a husband and father) are less frequently discussed. This private page of S. Witkiewicz and his keen interest in matters directly related to his son – Stanisław Ignacy – are revealed by letters to his descendant (Witkiewicz S. 1969).

Stanisław Witkiewicz was deeply engaged in parenting of his only child from the very beginning. He was open to numerous interests Staś showed in childhood, and created a stimulating environment in which his son could experience various activities, aiding in this way his multi-directional development and encouraging further exploration of a young, curious mind.

The aim of the article is to analyse the values passed on by S. Witkiewicz to his son in the context of Jadwiga Puzynina's axiological typology (division based on the classification of Max Scheler's values), as well as linguistic exponents of valuation and the way of transferring value on the father-son line.

The paper consists of four sections: 1) an introduction describing the attitude of S. Witkiewicz to his son, 2) basic information on the methodology of the undertaken research, 3) the proper part, which presents an analysis of the key values represented by S. Witkiewicz-father and inscribed in the content of his letters to his son (the point of reference is J. Puzynina's typology). Section 3 deals as well with the language treatments that the father uses to convince his only child to his axiological beliefs. The article ends up with the most important conclusions regarding the presented groups of values and

evaluation methods, as well as those resulting from the analysis.

2. Research methodology

Witkiewicz developed an entire parenting curriculum, which was supposed to help to shape the personality and character of his son. It seems that the primary emphasis was put on education and promoting the system of values which his father held in high esteem and wanted to instil in his child.

Values and valuing play a key role in pedagogy,⁷ in the process of upbringing, which is understood in several different ways. Parenting in its broad sense encompasses «any influence on a person, which co-creates their personal individuality. (...) This concept often includes a postulate of providing diligent care (...) and a postulate to lead him towards full, well-rounded development» (Nowak 1996: 242). Whereas, in a more narrow sense, this concept denotes «the entirety of purposeful influence on the pupil, undertaken (...) for a particular purpose and in a particular situation. In this sense of 'upbringing', the issue of values is already clearly addressed. (...) The mentor, facing his pupil in his particular 'be-now', aims at leading him to 'can-be', 'should-be'. (...) As parenting and teaching cannot be considered without first addressing the aim of upbringing, they do not exist without valuing and values» (Nowak 1996: 242).

Values and valuing are concepts of interest also to linguists. Much like in other fields (pedagogy, psychology, sociology, theology or philosophy),⁸ there are various definitions and categorisations of these notions in linguistics as well. In her monograph, devoted to valuing in the letters of Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska to her husband Stefan Jasnorzewski, Iwona Benowska (Benowska 2015: 41-51), provided a comprehensive research and literature overview of the problem in question, therefore repeating that report here would be redundant. Rather, I shall evoke here the works of J. Puzynina, which provide me with methodological tools and serve as a base for analyses concerning values and valuing in the letters written by Witkiewicz to his son.

Following Puzynina, I define value as, «something which is considered either good or bad (in broad definitions)» (Puzynina 2013: 111), thus it constitutes either a positive value or an anti-value. It should be born in mind, however, that assigning values to the 'good' – 'bad' sets takes place from a subjective standpoint of the conceptualiser (be it an

individual, group or society). Therefore, as Puzynina notes, «'X is good' means: X is such that people in general, some groups and the conceptualiser want(s) X to be (...); 'X is bad' means: X is such that people in general, some groups and the conceptualiser does not want X to be» (Puzynina 1991: 129). Valuing, in turn, means assigning positive or negative values to various real life elements, but also to some abstract concepts of the surrounding world. Another feature of valuing – apart from the aforementioned subjectivity – is its changeability, as determined by various factors.

Both Benowska in her monograph, and I in this paper, take private correspondence as an object of research interest. Different, however, is the sender-addressee relationship in both: parallel in the correspondence between spouses in the case of Pawlikowscy [the Pawlikowskis], and superordinate-subordinate in the father/son correspondence in the case of Witkiewicz-senior and Witkiewicz-junior relationship. Furthermore, different contexts of both correspondences create different optics. For Benowska, «of primary importance was in particular to distinguish axiologically-loaded tools, and types of values provided a supportive tool for creating rules / divisions within rich semantic groups» (Benowska 2015: 48). On the other hand, in this paper it is the values themselves which shall be the axis of analysis, whereas evaluative language resources will serve as tools supporting explication of Witkiewicz's system of values. As a reference point, I adopt the typology of values developed by Puzynina, who differentiates the following sets of values: sensory, vital, moral-social, and within spiritual values further – cognitive, moral, aesthetic and sacral values (Puzynina 1992; 2013: 112-113).

Arguably, values of all aforementioned categories fit in Witkiewicz's system of values. However, as the problem of axiology in his letters to Stanisław Ignacy makes for an extensive topic in and of itself, reaching far beyond the scope of this paper, here I shall limit myself to introducing the subject of values and ways of valuing as presented by the creator of the Zakopane Style, by touching upon the most prominent areas of Witkiewicz-father's axiology.

What values S. Witkiewicz wished to pass on to his son, and how he wanted to achieve it – is shown in the correspondence he had with his son, comprising of 515 letters (Witkiewicz S. 1969) in total. Witkiewicz-senior began to write to his son when Stanisław Ignacy was leaving for holidays or education, and their correspondence resumed later on when Witkiewicz-father went to a health resort in Lovrana.

Until his 15th birthday Staś was home schooled, which significantly facilitated the process of transmitting to him the values his father wished to

⁷ These concepts attract the interest of researchers also from other fields – philosophy, sociology, psychology, among others.

⁸ An overview of various research approaches to the concept of value is to be found in A. Błasiak's monograph titled *Youth – the world of values*, Kraków 2002.

instil in him – by parental example, presenting a particular attitude, and being a good role-model. Later, their separation enforced a switch to distant parenting. From then on, the father guided his son in letters in which he advised him how to behave, what values should guide him in life, pointed out what is good and bad (from the parent's point of view) and continuously kept evaluating.

3. The analysis of the research material

3.1. «Art and knowledge. Their worst enemy – schools» (LS, 104⁹). Self-education as the grandest method of development

Among the values adopted by Stanisław Witkiewicz, directly following his worldview, there were cognitive values, which J. Puzynina links to a high evaluation of truth in the epistemic sense. Such aspects as knowledge, science or talents are valued *in plus*, whereas illiteracy, ignorance, stupidity etc. are valued negatively (Puzynina 2013: 113). In the letters to his son, Witkiewicz-father oftentimes evokes these aspects of life. He is a fervent opponent of institutionalised education. Being highly critical of it, he strives to protect Stanisław Ignacy from 'schoolarism' (Polish 'szkolarstwo') – as he calls the schooling system. This is why he diligently organises quality home education already in Staś's early childhood. In this way, Witkiewicz senior carries out one of the vital points of his larger conscientiously drafted parenting plan. The father's views on 'schoolarism' and 'academiarism' become particularly vocal in letters written when the junior was taking the maturity exam, and later when Stanisław Ignacy began his studies. Witkiewicz-father negates the value of school as an institution, describing it as unequivocally evil, [something] which makes the soul «tormented and humiliated» (LS, 49). The language he uses when referring to maturity exam is also decidedly negative. The exam itself he describes in a highly expressive manner, using hyperbolic expressions and powerful rhetorical questions, with occasional ironic remarks: «My Oldie! So what about that quire of paper? What did they do to my child? Did they tire you so terribly?» (LS, 45); «So now my child is being tortured by 'the apostles of education'» (LS, 55); «Now they are going to "torment" you.» (LS, 64). He stresses here his paternal empathy: «I imagine it all – as my child sits locked in and writes, once and again moving up his absent eyes» (LS, 47), or by making use of puns and word plays when he attempts to joke: «I know you are hitting the books¹⁰, and I feel for you dearly.

But look at it from a different perspective: you are being forged! Forged iron is much more valuable than unforaged» (LS, 39). Witkiewicz perceives the contemporary system of education as a harm (referring therefore to negative moral values) done to young people: «May they never again harm my child at school» (LS, 52). He is just as critical of the academic plans of his son – as Stanisław Ignacy decides to pursue studies in the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts. In a highly depreciating manner, using ironizing diminutive formants and depreciative morphological forms of masculine nouns, Witkiewicz-senior speaks of Stanisławski – the academic mentor of Witkiewicz-junior – and of academic colleagues of the latter: «So you intend to join the piglet herd led by Stanisławski» (LS, 190). «Your place is not among those led by a professor, various «paintents»» (LS, 190). «Your place is not among those deaf-and-dumbs, yids, Filipeks.» (LS, 190). The father is firmly convinced that his son's academic studies will be an utter waste of time and actually will hinder his development as a painter. This negative note is issued by an authority figure in the field, but also is influenced by Witkiewicz's emotions as a father, who highly values talent and artistic technique of his son. Witkiewicz expresses it by means of sharp contrasts – he speaks of «lousy school», «shallow paddle» (LS, 190), a place of «all those 'cowsy' experiments» (LS, 251), «distracting yourself for nothing, for senseless relationships with senseless morons» (LS, 253). He contrasts that with Stanisław Ignacy – a holder of «such gorgeous innate qualities» (LS, 253), who «as a child had (...) pride and independence of a self-guided spirit» (LS, 190), and «possesses more value than everything that schooly-painting Kraków can offer» (LS, 190). The father foresees a different path for Stanisław Ignacy, he hopes for a possibly comprehensive, well-rounded development of his son, in accordance with the values he himself holds dear. Arguably, one of such values is self-education and development freed from school rigours. Those statements clearly show the standpoint of the father-sender, who passes on to his son-addressee what is important, valuable from the parental point of view, reveals his will and wishes. The beneficiary of those valuing-volitional judgments is Stanisław Ignacy, and it is his well-being that is the core value of his father. So that his son could experience this value, the father provides him with a set of instructions, pieces of advice, words of wisdom, so in the pedagogical sense he carries out one of the primary parental tasks.

3.2. «Art is an expression of a soul» (LS, 49) – a path towards excellence

particularly wisely, rather being focused on mere memorisation even with no understanding whatsoever.

⁹ LS Abbreviation – *Letters to My Son*, the number in parentheses stands for the number of the letter being quoted.

¹⁰ The translator's note: literally 'you are forging' – Polish 'kuć' means to study very intensely, but not necessarily

The cognitive values emphasised by Witkiewicz-father closely correspond to the aesthetic values distinguished in Puzynina's typology; which in the case of the Witkiewiczzes are clearly painting-oriented. Among all the aesthetic values, it is art that takes the most prominent spot for Stanisław Witkiewicz, the one he particularly underlines. According to Witkiewicz-father, who first tilted towards naturalism, and then adopted the premises of impressionism in art, a value indisputable for a painter – apart from talent, obviously – is the contact with nature, «comprehensive mastering of nature» (LS, 24), getting into its spirit, becoming one with it, drawing inspiration from it, filling the artist's soul with stimulants flowing from it (Mączyński 2017). How crucial is the role of nature, what an incredibly important aspect of artistic development it is as a source of inspiration and art, but also as a vital part of a perfect life, Witkiewicz senior emphasises by means of comparisons, adjectives and adverbs pointing to the maximal intensity of the feature – the most desired by him, as leading to excellence. For example, «comprehensive mastering of nature, so as to keep it as a dog on a leash» (LS, 24); «This perfect synthesis is achieved (...), by remaining with it in perfect harmony» (LS, 24).

Witkiewicz-senior highly the values of individualism, independence and determination in pursuing desired goals, and reaching into one's soul while working on a piece of art. He advises his son, forces him even, to «go [in painting] to the very depth to draw up the most genuine effect, imagining, encompassing properly what [he is] painting» (LS, 125). «Only do not stop painting. (...) You do not need to sit in a painting room and pour over acts. What you need to do is to become independent – this is your first and most important task, both as an artist, and as a human» (LS, 314), Witkiewicz-senior instructs his son. The creator of the Tatra style perceives their individual education and independence in seeking their own artistic path as a tremendous value. Given his own negative academic experiences, Witkiewicz tries to protect his son from mistakes. However, his attempts cause just the opposite effect – at certain point Stanisław Ignacy gets matured enough to free himself from the 'custody' of his father and begins his own, independent artistic existence. Yet, the tentacles of paternal love prove strong enough, so that Witkacy never really manages to escape from the subsequent directives of his father.

Witkiewicz-father never ceases to encourage Stanisław Ignacy to work intensely and to strive for excellence. Taking into account the imperative tone and gradation vocabulary regarding quantity (much, even more, masses, etc.), one can safely assume that, in fact, he rather pushes his son; although, at the same time he continuously builds up his self-

confidence, in an explicitly stated conviction of uniqueness and genius of his only son, cf. «Paint with masses, all the time striving to learn nature, so that no longer will it have any mysteries from you; strive to learn the entire material that she possesses». (LS, 28); «Paint a lot – and observe and experience the nature even more. Paintings! – Paintings!» (LS 91); «Paint landscapes». (LS, 128); «It seems to me that you, more than anyone else, are capable of comprehending and translating to art the power and motion of the Ocean» (LS, 392).

Witkiewicz-father negatively values the technique of Stanisławski, who was the mentor of Stanisław Ignacy during his studies in the Academy. «He is inert on certain subtle issues – reaches for ultramarines where pure silver and opal are desired. That is wrong» (LS, 49); «Stanisławski (a derogatory neologism – A.M.-W.) lacks imagination» (LS, 128). On the other hand, he holds Böcklin in high esteem: «the most wonderful combination of lively and wonderfully excitable imagination with perfect, fully aware and versatile intelligence» (LS 242). Witkiewicz wishes that his son would achieve the same mastery in art and life as Böcklin did: «You have to live with nature and paint it not like an absent individual passing by, barely catching its external shade with his lazy eye, but like Böcklin, fully aware of the depth of what he sees» (LS, 190). According to Witkiewicz-father, the following attitudes are essential: focus, acute observation and right judgment, free individualism, passion in action, self-restrain and striving for excellence.

How high in Witkiewicz's hierarchy of values is the position of art and striving for excellence? Both with regard to art, as well as life, is clearly shown in the words in which the father urges his son to higher ambitions and continuous work to achieve excellence. On numerous occasions Witkiewicz emphasises the importance of the duty of man to continuously put more effort in honing one's talents, in shaping the mind and soul. The work of an individual affects the moral state of the entire society, and as such serves as a base for the future existence of the nation and social order. However, not only art and striving towards artistic excellence were of vital interest to the father. Equally important was moral and social development: «I care dearly not only about your progress in painting, but also that you would be always cognizant about people and feel gratuitously and cordially» (LS, 13); «Your attitude towards people is what I truly care about» (LS, 474).

3.3. «You know my theory: Deliver bread in Zakopane, but be a good and noble man» (LS, 28). Moral and social-cultural values

Directives found in the letters of the father to his son are so rich in content and so charged with various values that they pose a serious problem when it comes to assigning them to just one category. In the

case of moral and social values the boundary becomes virtually non-existent. In her taxonomy, Puzyrnina distinguishes them separately. The core of the first moral category is an obligation to prevent and counteract all evil (violence, injustice, harm, poverty) affecting another human being. In effect, it also entails an obligation to undertake actions supporting and protecting goodness in others and in their lives. Positive valuing is assigned to the sense of responsibility, goodness, truthfulness; whereas negatively perceived ones are lack of responsibility, indifference to human misfortune and harm, lies, etc. (see Puzyrnina 2013: 113). The functioning of an individual and attitude towards others are mirrored in social relations.

To Witkiewicz-senior, moral and social-cultural values are as important as art, thus «moral upbringing and shaping the abilities to live with people were supposed to be parallel to mastering the technique» (Kałowska 2011: 145), and what follows from the letters, the father diligently cared about it, even though from distance. He continually repeated a fairly general but highly capacious, meaning-wise, directive: be good.

In one of the letters, Witkiewicz-father writes to his son: «Only, my Oldie – do not forget about people and never lose the ability to empathise – this is of primary importance» (LS, 12). In the moral-ethical code of senior, empathising becomes one of the keywords. As Z. Piasecki notices, «the phrase ‘I feel for’ Witkiewicz would always use (...) in the sense of ‘sympathising’, ‘relating to in his feelings and intellect’» (Piasecki 1983: 122). He tried to awaken in his only son a need to walk out of his own ego, a need to «do well for others – with an act or a word» (LS, 7). The father wants to show his son on his own example what it means to be close to another person, how vital for the social development such contact is. However, Stanisław Ignacy is not quite as observant of many issues as his father wants and expects him to be. Subjected to the senior’s criticism are the letters that the junior writes to his parents – both in their aesthetic aspect, as well as content-wise. The father complains that his son’s letters are abrupt, lacking signs of intimacy to his parents, missing the connection that human relations should be characterised by in general, not to mention with regard to the relatives.

Another keyword of Witkiewicz-father, referring to the world of moral-social values, is «nobleness» Witkiewicz is an astute observer and critic of the political-social issues of his times. He values negatively those social behaviours in which he discerns «so much of grunginess, floppiness and gradual melting in some mud of mundanity» (LS, 130) and superficial and factitious socialisation. He also criticises people who, according to him, «like wild cactuses are covered with thorns, which – as one

would assume – civilization should have lost by now» (LS, 249). He strives to make his son aware of the «social feeling» and help him understand «social ideas» (LS, 240). By means of a botanic metaphor, ironically comparing the antisocial attitude to cactuses, he explains to Stanisław Ignacy why such an approach is wrong: «Un-socialise oneself, cover oneself with thorns and develop a dry and tough cactus pulp on one’s soul – what a goal in life!» (LS, 249). Witkiewicz wants the very best for his son and requires him to aim higher, to strive for excellence in every aspect of life, and never «fly low»

Another prominent spot in the hierarchy of values of Witkiewicz-father is reserved for responsibility for one’s own actions, but also responsibility for the society. The father strongly urges Stanisław Ignacy: «Keep training yourself to action and get used to taking responsibility for what you do» (LS, 130). Apart from that, for an invaluable element of life he considers also «the sense of [one’s] own strength» (LS, 315) – by which he means being aware of one’s self-worth which enables man to create, but also to attempt to make changes for the better in various aspects of life. Written into that is «the leading force of life» (LS, 453) and responsibility of an individual for the course of history. At the same time, he warns of posing, which he himself considers an anti-value and defines as, «the lack of simplicity, and the lack of simplicity is hiding what man is truly like» (LS, 12).

Moral and social values are not bestowed upon people, rather they need to be developed, much like artistic talents. Witkiewicz also lists a number of attributes which speak of the internal value of a person. A soul “must be (...) simple and strong, noble and grand – the rest is just moulding – in various styles – added by time, external factors. (...) One needs to consciously help it to crystallise itself” (LS, 92).

By means of the behaviour directives in which his letters abound, Witkiewicz wants to equip Staś with axiological life tools. He shows him what he values himself, and – much like in other aspects of life, so with regard to morality – he expects of his son more and more: «May it be better, may you learn to empathise wider and deeper, and be good» (LS, 20).

3.4. «Have a minimum of material needs and addictions and a maximum of ideological desires» (LS, 33); «Gospel. A good book» (LS, 10) – towards sacred values

Sacred values in Puzyrnina's typology constitute a separate category. They are transcendent, religious, but also resulting from the process of sacralising spiritual values (Puzyrnina 2013: 113). It seems that, in correspondence with his son, Witkiewicz does not clarify sacred values as clearly and *expressis verbis*, as he does with other types of values. From reading

the letters, one can read two aspects that should be considered in the category of religious values: the cult of Tatra nature and an ethical attitude modelled on the Franciscan idea of life.

The painter constantly told his son how important the nature plays in the artist's development – not only the Tatra one. In the letters, Witkiewicz often expresses his fascination with the Tatra Mountains, mountain nature and atmospheric phenomena that took place over Giewont. He paints by means of words depicting the beauty, mystery and spontaneity of nature, using for this purpose a number of valuable epithets (beech green, fabulous clouds, wonderful blue, delicious spring, austerity of the Tatra Mountains), highlighting the contrast with the spirit and dirt of the city (LS, 251). It is in the unspoiled Tatra scenery that specific mysteries of nature take place – colourful, expressive, unique, and magical. It is in the bosom of (mountain) nature that a peculiar catharsis, metaphysical experience, which is so important especially for the painter, can happen. According to Witkiewicz-father, nature is an important creative but also equally psychologically significant factor. In the letters to his son we have the announcement of the national sacralization of nature that is giving it the highest rank (Majda 1998: 48), which in its full form and in a broader context, including not only the Tatra nature, but also the highlander culture, will take place in *Na Przełęczy* [On the Pass]. Therefore, we can see why the father, while improving his son's artistic skills, places so much emphasis on the role of nature and Witkacy's contact with nature.

Equally important from the father's perspective is the son's attitude towards other people and various aspects of life. In a letter of September 5, 1905, Witkiewicz-father – handing his son another life directive: «Don't pose, be simple and honest». «Let your speech be: Yes – yes, No – no» (LS, 10) – reaches for the words of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. He argues with a value judgment: «That's what the Gospel says. Good book. I wrote a lot about it because it is an important matter» (LS, 10). Witkiewicz often refers to evangelical ideals and tries to make his son realize that they are the basis of ethics (Kałowska 2016: 87). Ethics crystallizes on the basis of religion and is «the sphere of the fullest impact of religion on human life» (Kałowska 2016: 119). Thus, religious values directly related to religion overlap with the ethical / moral values, referred to in the previous section of the article. They can be included in a very general and thus very semantically capacious frame, as a wish directive often repeated by Witkiewicz-father: be good.

3.5. «Be healthy, fair, joyful – brave and merry» (LS, 116) – vital and sensory values

In her typology of values which I adopt in this paper, Jadwiga Puzynina treats vital and sensory

values as two separate categories. What is common to them is the reference to human biology. In the case of the sensory values, we consider psychic and physiological experiences. That allows for including in this category positively valued happiness, sense of closeness and security, as well as based on sensual experiences hedonistic values fitting in the scale of «pleasure – distress». Within the realm of positive experiences, we can distinguish comfort, superiority, delight, whereas on the opposite side of the spectrum we find pain, danger, despair etc. (Puzynina 2013: 112). Vital values in the positive sense are life and health, along with everything that allows us to tend to them; whereas negative connotations are attached to illness and death, along with factors causing them. In the correspondence with his son, Witkiewicz strongly emphasises vital values, among which, at the very top of the hierarchy, he locates health. From his youth Stanisław Witkiewicz has suffered from health issues – advancing lung disease and arthritis which were a consequence of his stay in Siberia and living in poverty while studying. Perhaps it is due to his own experiences in this regard that he keeps health and the factors it depends on in such a high esteem. Undoubtedly, Witkiewicz is a very caring father, keenly interested in the doings and wellbeing of his son, always inquiring about his psycho-physical condition. Oftentimes, he reminds his son about the importance of hardening himself and being diligent about proper hygiene both on a personal level, as well as with regard to the environment where young Witkiewicz stays. He asks his son to conform to the habits he has been taught at home: «Try to stay healthy and always bear in mind the rules we oftentimes discussed with you, and which [as] a child [you] adopted as guiding in life» (LS, 97).

The parent fervently objects to his – barely 16-year-old at the time – son reaching for any stimulants. He expresses utter disapproval for all kinds of such «external revivers», as he calls them – and perceives them as anti-values and something evil. He tries to influence his son referring to his ambitions, by means of highly expressive negatively-valuing nouns, as well as by typical for the stylistics of Witkiewicz's morality tales opposites: Stanisław Ignacy with his young, fair and healthy energy on the one hand, and slouches and poor people with wrecked reins of the soul, on the other. Witkiewicz-senior adopts a firm parenting stand – formulating a strict paternal order: «I firmly demand you stop doing this» (LS, 23), and argues: «For your physical and psychical health it is only detrimental» (LS, 23).

Shortly thereafter he comes to learn about another transgression of Stanisław Ignacy and comments on it vividly and metaphorically: «one spot, spot which gives an impression of a greasy stain on a wonderful whiteness of a beautiful, fair shirt. You understand, son, that I am talking about

alcoholism» (LS, 87). Thus, once again Witkiewicz makes use of the contrastive device: a greasy stain, a sign (a metaphor of stimulants / improper behaviour of his son) – wonderful whiteness of a beautiful, fair shirt (as perceived by the father, the impeccable youth of Stanisław Ignacy).

3.6. «I would like you (...) to remain in the deepest content of the soul in harmony with me (...) I know that this cannot be imposed, but I really want it» (LS, 204) – Witkiewicz’s way of passing his system of values to his son

The father’s authoritarian didacticism means that Witkiewicz often rebels against his father’s «good» counsel or admonition. However, when you look more closely at the mature views of Stanisław Ignacy, you can see the echoes of father’s morality tales (Kałowska 2016).

In the letters to his son, one can see the exponents of the individual language of values, which R. Pawelec defines as «a set of language means that in the texts of a given author are used to express valuations and express values» (Pawelec 1991: 103). Valuation occurs at the lexical level, through the use of words that have the axiological element inscribed in semantics or connote certain values, e.g. «The Munich museum is (...) priceless» (LS, 106); «Autumn colours and lake water – a miracle!» (LS, 96); «Do not be distracted (...) at the chaff of small everyday events and commitments» (LS, 243); «You are about to sign up for a piglet herd» (LS, 190). The contrasting sets, gradation of features or ambivalence on the semantic scale are also characteristic of Witkiewicz-father’s epistolographic style (extreme poles: something is maximally positive, close to ideal and vice versa, extremely negative). The information about the values that father adheres to and various types of valorisation are inscribed in the structure of numerous inducement acts of varying perlocutionary power.

Letters to his son take on the character of memorials,¹¹ as Witkiewicz himself calls them (“I write a few memorials in matters of art and its essence, soul – and what you have to do with life” (LS, 210)), i.e. letters in which the father formulates a series of advice, admonitions, orders, etc. for the son, mostly supported by fatherly arguments. The vertical arrangement of social and communication roles (father – son) and the strong authority of the father (despite the fact that the senior often declares that his instructions are derived from parental care and love, not authoritative didacticism) – all of these cause that a series of persuasive messages appear in

correspondence with his son and directives, taking various pragmatic forms (various acts / genres of speech), by which the father tries to instil in his son what values he should follow in his life. The father explicitly informs about the values important from his perspective and expresses his expectations regarding the son’s attitude. These messages are in the form of voluntary statements with a performative (*not*) *I want / would like; I wish to; I would prefer*, often strengthened with an intensifier, *very, very much, necessarily*, for example, «I want one thing: that your relations should not be lower than yourself – than your best, highest qualities» (LS, 259); «Have you read *Bagno* [the Swamp]? I want you to think about it and sharpen your socio-ethical sense – not to compromise with such phenomena» (LS, 35); «I would like you not only to take from people, earth and heaven, but also give» (LS, 84); «I don’t want you to be like that. I do not want this tightening of feelings and tightening the field of life» (LS, 95).

Witkiewicz expresses his will and desires, regarding various aspects of life in his son’s axiological system that are important from the father’s point of view, but also reflects the emotions that accompany the transmitted content. As J. Puzynina notes, «the verb ‘want’ can mean both voluntary emotional and irrational, as well as consciously motivated. Wanting itself requires neither rational motivation nor assertion» (Puzynina 1997: 254). In the case of Witkiewicz, we are certainly dealing with a deliberate, considered, and motivated by love for his only son action and with a desire to raise his only son as best as possible, but according to his own design.

In the letters to his son, imperative forms predominate definitely. The imperative mode is, among others, an exponent of numerous pieces of advice, which father, due to his extensive life experience and expert position in the field of art, so eagerly addresses to his son, and from which the senior’s axiological system emerges. Imperatives emphasize the directive character of these speech acts, especially if we consider the beneficial communication system: parent – child, e.g. «Look and understand the shape well – and you will draw it. (...) Force your fingers to follow what you want to draw like a slave – make an absolutely obedient tool of awareness out of your hand» (LS, 130). Essentially, advice provides a recipient with freedom, who may not use the sender’s instruction, but when the advisor is a parent and for this he makes imperative advice, this margin for free choice decreases. When formulating advice, Witkiewicz senior also obviously uses a milder illocutionary pattern, with the performative verb *I would advise / advise*, but this does not preclude the use of imperative in the structure of advice, e.g. “One thing I would advise, when applying shadows or halftones,

¹¹ As the *Dictionary of the Polish Language* edited by W. Doroszewski notes, a memorial is “a letter to the authorities, explaining certain matters or justifying requests.”

is to stick to their intensity with the greatest accuracy (...) So dearest! Keep going and if you want to master the shape completely – draw a lot of it” (LS, 298).

S. Witkiewicz’s axiological beliefs are also visible in a series of statements of the obligatory nature with the *need/must* exponent, but also with the categorical, alletical modality verbalized by means of the modal verb *you have to*, e.g. «Now, when your soul is the most flexible, most susceptible to carving by various influences, you have to deliberately and consciously keep it above the filth and misery of life» (LS, 177); «I sent *Bagno* [the Swamp], if it comes to you, read it carefully and think. It is necessary to sharpen your social sense, ethical sense» (LS, 33); «So don’t refrain from museums – you have to educate yourself, you have to start again the self-learning work interrupted by school. What you can learn on this journey is what you miss – learn about man. Look and think» (LS, 106). Judgements with Witkiewicz-father’s deontic modality are either a direct directive addressed to the son (it is needed / you must = you should do it) or serve as arguments for epistemic or intentional statements.

Witkiewicz-father also writes the axiologically significant content in the admonitions – statements with performative verbs in the imperative *remember / do not forget*, often reinforced by restrictive particles *only*, which emphasizes the need to perform actions – after taking into account the context of the message, the admonitions become close to orders / prohibitions, e.g. «keep remembering the program: You are not a minor criminal (...), you are to be a very good, helpful, undemanding poor painter who works hard and tries to be nice and useful» (LS, 5); «Just remember that in relation to everything you see there, you must keep this fearlessness that I have told you many times. Let strength, wealth, material enormity never overshadow the thought I explained to you when I was looking at maps of Polish history» (LS, 12); «My old man, remember not to meet anyone again on sports and stupid and flat in general grounds. (...) You must be healthy and good (...) and morally stick to the best people and the most elevated impressions» (LS, 14).

The father’s letters usually contain sequences of statements urging his son to adopt a specific axiological attitude. Witkiewicz-father in contact with his son is a very dominant parent, trying as much as the son allows, to control the thinking and actions of the offspring (even an adult one), constantly guiding the life of his only child. He relieves his pressure with an optative mode (may / may you), encouragement (try), requests (please), but in the deeper layer of these speech acts there is axiology and inclination. In correspondence to his son there is sometimes a note of manipulation. The letters are saturated with signals of paternal love, but is it unconditional, since the father writes to his son:

«I have a lot of joy from you at all, but I want this joy to be complete, and I want it all the more that it depends only on your absolute value» (LS, 95)?

4. Conclusions

«Letters to My Son» abound in father’s morality tales, in which the senior explicates his will, verbalises expectations of his only son. Apart from the specific directives addressed directly to Stanisław Ignacy (in the imperative form of various pragmatic functions – advice, requests, reprimands, orders etc.), we also find here a rich set of general truths, existential-normative judgments formulated in obligation-charged structures (it is needed / it is not needed, one should / one should not etc.), by means of which the father shows his son what is important / good / valuable in life – what is important not only to an individual, but also to the community, society as a whole. «Letters to My Son» is therefore a peculiar axiological will of Stanisław Witkiewicz-father. The morality tales written into his correspondence with the junior invite an inter-generational transfer of values. Various types of directives, among which those of a wishful character (referring to all types of values distinguished also by other researchers, not only by linguists) are profusely represented in these letters, can be captured in a formulae of a peculiar, unique paternal decalogue. It is a synthesis, and at the same time a canon of values of Witkiewicz-senior – comprising of both the inborn values (overvalues bestowed on a man) as well as the developed (adopted) values, which he wants to instil in his son. The father seems to forget, however, that his son represents another generation. Thus, we encounter here a typical clash of generations: ideals / values of the parent clash with the child’s searches for his own path. Hence, the stances of a young generation stand in contrast to the behaviours of their parents. This dialogue between the father and his son lacks room for even discussing what is important (valuable or not) from the pupil’s (son) point of view. There is no space for any axiological discourse – instead, we see a fairly authoritarian system of the father, who undoubtedly wishes for his son all the best, who declares lots of freedom for his son’s actions: «I want you to have as much individual initiative as it is only possible and undertake a lot of your own responsibility» (LS, 91). Nevertheless, at the same time he tries to program (un)consciously the life of his only son, transfer to him – or actually impose on him – his own system of values, without leaving any sort of a margin for his son’s errors, or a chance for Stanisław Ignacy to verify on his own what he deems good or bad for him, as well as to create his own hierarchy of values. Witkiewicz-father justifies his actions with his endless love for his only son. Paternal love certainly justifies advising, transferring values, pointing to the authorities and goals; however, Witkiewicz-father, named «the

grand builder of life» by Władysław Orkan, attempts to build somewhat forcefully the life for his only child, who undeniably takes the highest spot in the hierarchy of values of Stanisław Witkiewicz.

References

- Benenowska, I.** (2015). *Wartościowanie w listach Marii Pawlikowskiej-Jasnorzewskiej*. Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego [in Poland].
- Błasiak, A.** (2002). *Młódzież – świat wartości*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM [in Poland].
- Chlebda, W.** (2007). O tekstowych wykładnikach wartościowania. *Przegląd Humanistyczny* (no 1/400), (pp. 25–34). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego [in Poland].
- Kałowska, A.** (2016). *Witkacy. Etyka*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego [in Poland].
- Kałowska, A.** (2011). Wychowawca narodu wychowuje syna, czyli kształtowanie etyki Witkacego. *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Folia Litteraria Polonica* (vol. 14 (2)), (pp. 143–151). Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego [in Poland].
- Majda, J.** (1998). *Góralczyzna i Tatry w twórczości Stanisława Witkiewicza*. Kraków: IFP Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego [in Poland].
- Mączyński, M.** (2017). Natura w ujęciu Stanisława Witkiewicza (na podstawie listów do syna). *Epistolografia w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*. P. Borek, M. Olma (eds.) (vol. 7), (pp. 323–336). Kraków: Collegium Columbinum [in Poland].
- Nowak, M.** (1996). Znaczenie wartości w procesie wychowania. *Człowiek – wartość – sens: studia z psychologii egzystencji*. K. Popielski (Ed.) (pp. 241–259). Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL [in Poland].
- Pawelec, R.** (1991). O metodach badania osobniczego języka wartości (na materiale pism Norwida). *Język a Kultura: Wartości w języku i tekście*. J. Puzynina (Ed.) (vol. 3), (pp. 103–117). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego [in Poland].
- Piasecki, Z.** (1983). *Stanisław Witkiewicz. Młodość i wczesny dorobek artysty*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe [in Poland].
- Puzynina, J.** (1991). Jak pracować nad językiem wartości. *Język a Kultura: Zagadnienia leksykalne i aksjologiczne*. J. Puzynina, J. Bartmiński (Ed.) (vol. 2), (pp. 129–137). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego [in Poland].
- Puzynina, J.** (1992). *Język wartości*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN [in Poland].
- Puzynina, J.** (1997). *Słowo – wartość – kultura*. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL [in Poland].
- Puzynina, J.** (2013). *Wartości i wartościowanie w perspektywie językoznawstwa*. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności [in Poland].
- Witkiewicz, S.** (1969). *Listy do syna*. B. Danek-Wojnowska & A. Micińska (eds.). Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy [in Poland].