'A man of to-day lives by making use of dodges, by means of which he deceives himself pretending to believe that the world surrounding him is very simple and feasible to an arbitrary description. Nevertheless, his real consciousness forces him to confirm that the real world, corresponding to the whole present time reality, is extremely complex, and challenging. However, he is afraid, as an ordinary man of to-day is very weak, in spite of his blustering gestures. He is afraid of opening to his real world that would require much from him (...)'

Therefore, a historical meaning is to be attributed to reintroduction to the University its basic tasks, that is the enlightening of a man, implanting the full culture of the current epoch into him, a bright and accurate disclosure with its whole magnitude of the contemporary world, the world in which the life should first become rooted in order to achieve full authenticity'.

The tasks of universities, as described by Jose Ortega y Gasset many years ago, were still relevant in 2002, the year proclaimed as United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage. The mission, derived from the Middle Ages, when university education was limited to the teaching of a profession, aimed at transferring ideas which enabled an understanding of the world, i.e. philosophical and theological knowledge, rhetoric, arts, etc. Contemporary university education is distinguished by an opposite approach to the medieval one, as it is predominated by specialist professional teaching, while its cultural aspects remain only indirect. However, it is culture, inclusive of the consciousness of a common heritage, that provides conditions for the rooting of a man in his time and allows full development of his personality.

However, the area of common heritage is complicated and includes material and non-material culture, as well as resources of natural environment. Therefore, definition of the heritage variety within the framework of university education is a difficult task requiring appropriately differentiated conceptions.

Among detailed concepts, the Polish experiences in developing consciousness of the heritage within the framework of medical and pharmaceutical studies deserve particular attention. As an illustration I would like to present the example of the Karol Marcinkowski University of Medical Sciences in Poznan.

Poland was one of the first countries where the history of medicine and the history of pharmacy were introduced as a compulsory item in the curriculum, appreciating the fundamental meaning of developing a consciousness of heritage in medical and pharmaceutical studies. This was done by 1920, with the original character of the proofs of material culture, fundamental to the history of medicine and pharmacy, contributing to the fact that teaching of the subject joined the values of transferring professional knowledge and presenting the cultural heritage.

The original concept, conceived many years ago by Wladyslaw Szumowski (1875-1954), in the interwar period, at the Polish school of History of Medicine, consisted of connecting the history of medicine with the history of philosophy and civilisation. Polish historians of pharmacy also applied this concept.

Development of consciousness of the heritage was one of the tasks of the Faculty of Medicine of the Poznan University initiated in 1920, as the Department of History and Philosophy of Medicine had been established as the first scientific entity. It extended and widened former traditions, creating a suitable climate that served as a basis for the activity of all the other
departments. It provided a climate of candidness and a
tolerance for philosophy of life and political liberality, as
the history of medicine and pharmacy was affected by
achievements of different nations, religious beliefs, and
political opinions. It should be emphasised that Prof.
Adam Wrzosek (1875-1965), who took up the
Department of History and Philosophy of Medicine, was
at the same time the first organiser and Dean of the
Poznan Faculty of Medicine.

The outbreak of World War II did not stop the
development of medical and pharmaceutical studies in
Poznan. Teaching students in a full range of pharmacy
continued in secrecy, without interrupting tuition in the
history of medicine and pharmacy. This occurred,
however, in 1950, after separation of medical academies
from the universities, formerly dealing with medical and
pharmaceutical studies. These subjects had been
considered as a sign of idealism, unnecessary in a
materialistic philosophy of life.

Teaching of the history of medicine and pharmacy was
only restored in 1957, when Poland underwent a
political revival. It continues now although considerably
reduced as compared to its beginnings. The former
Department of History and Philosophy of Medicine
became the Department of History of Medical Sciences,
dealing up to the present time with tuition in an
appropriate range with all specialisations in the Karol
Marcinkowski University of Medical Sciences in Poznan.

During lectures and seminars of the history of
medicine and pharmacy the students become acquainted
with monuments of material culture, visiting museums,
examining slides or selected prints. Particularly valuable
illustrative materials for teaching history of medicine and
pharmacy are ancient pictures, drawings and old
manuscripts. They enable the acquisition of knowledge in
the range of the history of culture in an attractive
manner. Lessons are held in part therefore, in the
museum of the Karol Marcinkowski University of Medical
Sciences, where the objects and other archives are
collected as evidence of its traditions. Lessons are also
held in the Poznan Museum of Pharmacy, where
students become acquainted with the artefacts of
pharmaceutical history, as well as the Archaeological
Museum, where they acquire knowledge of ancient
medicine. Direct contact with the museum collections
gives an idea of the dimension of the progress in
civilisation and shows the need for careful protection of
the cultural heritage.

In addition, students of the Pharmaceutical Faculty of
the Karol Marcinkowski University of Medical Sciences
undertake a Master's thesis in the sphere of history of
pharmacy. As an example, a project of 1995 might be
mentioned, entitled "Pharmaceutical collections in the
National Museums in Poznan." The student was charged
with becoming acquainted with the collections of the
National Museum in Poznan and its departments with a
view to separating the exhibits to give evidence of
material culture related to medicine and pharmacy. The
student made use of consultations with specialists in the
history of arts, ethnography and archaeology, extending
her professional knowledge by a wide understanding of
cultural topics. She discovered, catalogued and made
comments on many interesting but forgotten museum
items related to medicine and pharmacy, which had been
hidden in storerooms because of the lack of appropriate
exhibition area.

The students' attitude to such an approach to the
cultural heritage should be considered. Sometimes
students are pessimistic as to whether the lessons
develop practical medical skills; that only a humanistic
aspect is necessary. However, such an opinion only
appears at the beginning of the course. As lessons
proceed, doubts disappear and the students show a
growing positive and creative attitude. The students
presenting selected problems at the seminars usually
find some additional material among them, such as
pharmaceutical equipment, ancient chronicles,
photographs and books. Many presentations make use of
the students' own slides or Power Point. One of the
students has even developed a didactic game consisting of
the organisation of the dates, scientific facts and
related comments. The lessons are appreciated as
interesting and necessary.

In summary, the UNESCO-inspired concept of putting
forth awareness of our heritage through the history of
medicine and pharmacy is worthy of notice. The idea
connects, in a very interesting way, professional
knowledge and consciousness of culture. In effect the
conception appears to be a skilful realization of the
mission of universities, outlined by J. O. Gasset, with
reference to medical and pharmaceutical studies.

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