



Mieczysław Ryba

The Role of Thomistic Philosophy in the Cultural Mission of the Catholic University of Lublin

Introduction

Pope John Paul II, at his 1979 meeting with young people at Jasna Góra Monastery, called the university a “masterpiece of human culture.”¹ The popes of the late 19th and early 20th centuries viewed the institution of the university in a similar way. Noticing the atheization of European universities in the age of positivism, they tried to inspire scholars to create Catholic universities. And such higher education institutions were indeed established in many countries of the Western world.

On the map of Europe after World War I, Poland began to play a huge role from the point of view of the Holy See. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the reborn Polish Republic was the most important state that remained under the strong influence of Catholicism, a state that opposed the Bolshevik atheist onslaught. All

Mieczysław Ryba, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
lipin@kul.pl • ORCID: 0000-0002-6532-5987

¹ Cf. Mieczysław Ryba, *The idea of Catholic University in the Reborn Poland*, trans. Maciej B. Stępień (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo von Borowiecky, 2018), 19.



this was clearly perceived by Pope Pius XI, who earlier, as Apostolic Nuncio to Poland, had observed from close quarters the Polish-Bolshevik war and the Polish victory at Warsaw in August 1920. Years later he described this experience as follows:

The glorious political resurrection which introduced Your Nation..., back into the community of European nations and the nations of the world, is conditioned: you need to take back your position of a Catholic power.²

With these words addressed to representatives of Polish diplomacy, the pope wanted to encourage Poles to take up the civilizational mission they played in centuries prior (Poland as *Antemurale Christianitatis*).

This whole context was perfectly understood by the enlightened people of the Polish Church, and among them, certainly, by the founder of the Catholic University of Lublin, Father Idzi Radziszewski. The struggle for Poland, in the belief of those Catholics, was not only of a military nature, but above all it was a cultural one. Marxist ideology, spreading so rapidly in the world, had to find resistance not only on the battlefields around Warsaw, but had to be defeated on ideological (cultural) grounds. This role was to be undertaken by the Catholic University of Lublin. Therefore, looking at the ideological (philosophical) premises that accompanied the activities of the university in this article seems important from a cognitive point of view.

² Archiwum Akt Nowych [The Central Archives of Modern Records] (AAN, Warsaw, Poland), Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], *Protokół dyplomatyczny. Przemówienia posła (ambasadora) Skrzyńskiego podczas składania listów uwierzytelniających i odpowiedzi papieża, 1922, 1924* [Diplomatic Protocol, Addresses by MP (Ambassador) Skrzyński during the presentation of credentials, with papal responses, 1922, 1924], Ref. No. 808: 23.

In the intention of Pope Leo XIII, the conceptual patron of Catholic universities, it was the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas that was to be the foundation for the revival of academic life in the Catholic spirit. Therefore, an analysis of the functioning of the Thomistic milieu at the Catholic University of Lublin in various periods of the university's existence will to a great extent give us an answer concerning the real impact of the Catholic university on the social life of Poland and the Church.

Struggles over the Compatibility of Science and Faith

The second rector of the Lublin University after Idzi Radziszewski, Father Jacek Woroniecki,³ opposed the secularization of university life that had taken place in Europe, seeing the roots of this crisis in the Age of Enlightenment. Up to that point, despite various ideological upheavals, the prevailing conviction was that there was an undeniable

³ Father Jacek Woroniecki OP (1878–1949) was rector of the University in the years 1922–24. Woroniecki was a philosopher and theologian. He taught ethics, moral theology, and the methodology of religious teaching and pedagogy. His most important work is *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza* [Catholic Educational Ethics], which he based on the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. He entered into debate with contemporary philosophical currents, demonstrating the timeless significance of Thomism. He criticized fideism separating faith from reason, as well as moral intellectualism reducing the importance of free will in human action. He rejected sentimentalism reducing morality to the realm of feelings only, as well as liberal individualism. He emphasized the interaction of the will and reason in human decision-making. Cf. Andrzej Szostek, "Woroniecki, Jacek OP;" in *Encyklopedia 100-lecia KUL* [Encyclopedia of the 100th Anniversary of the Catholic University of Lublin], vol. 2, ed. Edward Gigilewicz et al. (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018), 561–562.

connection between temporal and eternal matters in human life. Woroniecki wrote:

The spirit of the French Revolution sought to refute these convictions, in family and personal life, in science and education: all of these areas were now affected by the ever-growing influence of laicism, that is, worldliness—the principle which says that human beings have to settle all of their relations exclusively in accordance with the ends and purposes of this world alone, without regard for anything otherworldly, eternal, and supernatural.⁴

This laicism, according to the Lublin philosopher, was a theory irreconcilable with the rational view of the world. Hence his call for a return to the ideas that lay at the root of European culture.

The founders of Catholic universities around the world were thus concerned with opposing the various anti-Christian philosophical currents that arose in the 18th and 19th centuries. Following in the footsteps of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith of the First Vatican Council, they proclaimed that

God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certainty from the things that were created through the natural light of human reason.⁵

⁴ Jacek Woroniecki, “Uniwersytety katolickie [Catholic Universities],” in *Oświata katolicka i uniwersytety katolickie. Szkice kazań na „Dzień Uniwersytecki”* [Catholic Education and Catholic Universities: Sermon Outlines for the ‘University Day’] (Lublin: Uniwersytet, 1929), 15–16, accessed Jan. 8, 2023, <https://dlibra.kul.pl/dlibra/publication/45044/edition/49635>.

⁵ Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Bóg – filozofia – uniwersytety. Wybrane zagadnienia z historii katolickiej tradycji filozoficznej* [God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition], trans. Anna Łagodzka (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 2013), 209.]

Woroniecki noted that especially in the 19th century, universities, influenced by the positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte, reduced their research interests almost exclusively to the mathematical and natural sciences, while traditional philosophy (metaphysics) and theology were marginalized. The intelligentsia of the 19th century was brought up in a materialist spirit, which contributed to the crisis of the entire culture of the Western world.⁶

It was in this intellectual context that Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* was written. As a remedy for the crisis of the university, the pope recommended the philosophical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. In the pope's own words:

Again, clearly distinguishing, as is fitting, reason from faith, while happily associating the one with the other, he both preserved the rights and had regard for the dignity of each; so much so, indeed, that reason, borne on the wings of Thomas to its human height, can scarcely rise higher, while faith could scarcely expect more or stronger aids from reason than those which she has already obtained through Thomas.⁷

The return to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas was therefore the quintessence of Leo XIII's message, and this was also the point of establishing Catholic universities around the world. The idea was to show that there is no essential contradiction between science and faith, that theology, philosophy, and the natural sciences complement each other without having to engage in confrontation.⁸

⁶ Cf. Woroniecki, "Uniwersytety katolickie," 16–17.

⁷ Leo XIII, Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy), 18, accessed Jan. 11, 2023, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html.

⁸ Cf. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated*, 3rd ed. (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1873), 219–220.

This was the position of Father Idzi Radziszewski,⁹ the first rector of the University of Lublin.¹⁰ He was a disciple of the well-known Belgian Thomist scholar, Cardinal Désiré Mercier. Mercier, as the founder of the Higher Institute of Philosophy at the Louvain University in 1899, tried to develop scholastic philosophy and theology there, while keeping up with the achievements of the mathematical and natural sciences. All this was to help demonstrate the symbiosis that should exist at the university between the various sciences. Idzi Radziszewski's doctoral dissertation, written under Mercier's direction, was entitled *Geneza idei religijnej w ewolucjonizmie Darwina i Spencera* [The Origins of the Religious Idea in the Evolutionism of Darwin and Spencer]. In reading this work, one will notice the clearly defined scientific position of the founder of the Catholic University of Lublin (known in Poland as Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, or more frequently, by its acronym KUL), who unequivocally rejected the Darwinist (evolutionist) approach to issues of social life (including religion). Radziszewski wrote:

Why is it so, that even in our present day, praised so much for the progress that has been made, for its culture and all the sciences, religion

⁹ Father Idzi Benedykt Radziszewski (1871–1922) was a student of Card. Désiré Félicien François Joseph Mercier (1851–1926) and an avid promoter of the idea of Catholic universities and classical philosophy in the spirit of Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. From 1914 to 1918 he was professor of philosophy and rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. In 1918, he established a university in Lublin. At the scientific level, he developed the thought of the so-called Louvain neo-Thomism. Cf. Stanisław Janeczek, "Radziszewski Idzi Benedykt," in *Encyklopedia 100-lecia*, vol. 2, 247–48.

¹⁰ Please, note that from its foundation in 1918 to 1928 the name of the institution was "University of Lublin"; then, as the Statute was finally approved, it became the "Catholic University of Lublin" (KUL); in 2005 the name was changed to the "John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin", with the same acronym as before.

does not disappear but gains so many defenders and countless supporters? And if a true religion does exist, can its origins be traced back to an error and illusion, as Spencer maintains? Again, if it was born out of an illusion and error, where is that historical moment of it taking the new path of truth? Where exactly did this downright essential change take place, with no change to the essence of religion as such? And if the latter change had indeed taken place, then why does religion... always contain the same essential and constitutive elements with all peoples, at all times and in all places?¹¹

Radziszewski entered into an argument with the highly fashionable sociological trends at the turn of the 20th century, criticizing them from his neo-Thomistic point of view. This was also the spirit in which his thought developed in subsequent years. Rejecting purely Darwinist evolutionism, Radziszewski stood consistently on the ground of Catholic creationism.¹² He believed that the rejection at the philosophical level of the creative acts of God must lead to unbelievable havoc not only at the cognitive (scientific) level, but also at the moral one.¹³

¹¹ Idzi Radziszewski, *Geneza idei religii w ewolucjonizmie Darwina i Spencera* [The Origins of the Religious Idea in the Evolutionism of Darwin and Spencer], trans. and ed. Władysław Świder and Michał M. Maciołek (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2012), 24.

¹² Cf. Ryba, *The idea of Catholic University*, 42–43.

¹³ Years later, Father Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, longtime rector of the Catholic University of Lublin during the communist era, also took up the topic of evolutionism and its cultural effects, following Radziszewski's example. He approached the issue from the Thomistic position: "If there is change and evolution without a cause, without its sufficient reason of being, then something less would become something more without any justification, and non-being would turn, in a sense, into being. And nothing can emerge from nothingness." Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Ewolucjonizm, ale jaki? [Evolutionism—Yes, But Which One?]," in *Ewolucjonizm czy kreacjonizm* [Evolutionism or Creationism], ed. Piotr Jaroszyński (Lublin: Fundacja 'Lubelska Szkoła Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej,' 2008), 39.

Thus, Idzi Radziszewski erected a university in Lublin, while standing firmly behind the thesis of the non-contradiction of science and faith.¹⁴ To Radziszewski's mind, contradicting them both was a foul play, leading to a dramatic secularization of the Polish intelligentsia at the threshold of independence, which in turn threatened to bring in new ideologies (communism) that were so dangerous to the Polish state. Therefore, it was necessary at that time to educate a generation of Catholic intelligentsia, living out their faith not only on an emotional level, but intellectually.¹⁵ The Catholic university, he believed, was to be based on a foundation of Thomistic philosophy and Thomistic theology. Radziszewski recognized philosophy as the highest level of science, while arguing that its connection with the particular sciences should be maintained.¹⁶

Father Idzi Radziszewski's successors approached the subject in a similar way. This was how Father Jacek Woroniecki, who, like St.

¹⁴ He wrote: "Some part of our population has been won over to pseudo-scientists and popularizers of knowledge who were convincingly suggesting that there was an impassable divide between science and faith." Idzi Radziszewski, *Credo nowożytnego fizjologa* (ku pamięci zmarłego Eliasza de Cyon) [The Creed of a Modern Physiologist (in memoriam of the late Élie de Cyon)] (Włocławek: printed by Author, 1913), 5.

¹⁵ We read: "It has to be stated in all sincerity that intelligent classes are Catholic in name only, that intelligent Catholics who are able to draw conclusions on convictions they hold dear are but a handful, and a really small one for that matter". Idzi Radziszewski, *Uniwersytet katolicki w Polsce*, in idem, *Pisma* [Writings], ed. Stanisław Janeczek, Michał M. Maciołek, and Rafał Charzyński (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2009), 383.

¹⁶ This is one of the fundamental methodological differences between the Louvain neo-Thomism (Radziszewski et al.) and the theory of being that is currently advanced by the Lublin Philosophical School (Krapiec et al.). The latter is strictly Thomistic ('paleo-Thomistic', as an old joke has it), and developed by means of the apparatus of contemporary logic and the latest developments in the theory of science. Thanks to this, the theory of being is a standalone domain of human knowledge, independent of any particular science, religious creed, or any theology. It has its own formal object and its own method. It is a purely rational, realistic, and maximalistic philosophy, explaining

Thomas Aquinas, belonged to the Dominican order, viewed the university. The matter was defined no differently by the next rector of the Catholic University of Lublin, Father Józef Kruszyński.¹⁷ All this was within the recommendations of the Holy See and the Polish episcopate (the formal proprietor of KUL). In a special pastoral letter concerning the University of Lublin, the bishops pointed out that faith and knowledge flow from one source, having their roots in God the Creator.¹⁸

The 1920s and 1930s were marked by a fierce ideological struggle in Europe. While Marxist communism dominated in Russia, Darwinist racism increasingly reigned in Germany. Meanwhile, in Poland, the process of the ‘Catholicization’ of society’s elite, in which the Catholic University of Lublin had a special role to play, was progressing. The Holy See consistently recommended the development of Catholic universities based on Thomistic philosophy. Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Studiorum Ducem*, indicated that in times of ideological confusion,

the entire reality in the aspect of its existence and ultimate causes. Moreover, the theory of being does so in an indubitable and necessary manner, and is open and outward-looking towards all philosophical issues and all related questions asked by humans since time immemorial. Cf. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, “Introduction/Wprowadzenie” in Stanisław Kamiński, *On the Methodology of Metaphysics / Z metodologii metafizyki*, trans. Maciej B. Stepień (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2018), 5–14.

¹⁷ Father Józef Kruszyński (1877–1953) was an alumnus of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, and in 1925–1933 rector of the Catholic University of Lublin. He contributed immensely to obtaining further state authorizations for the university and looked after its expansion. Kruszyński’s main research interests centered on biblical studies. Cf. Grażyna Karolewicz, “Kruszyński, Józef ks.,” in *Encyklopedia 100-lecia*, 581; Krzysztof Kołodziejczyk, “Kadencja rektora ks. Józefa Kruszyńskiego (1925–1933) [The Rector’s Term of Office of Fr. Józef Kruszyński (1925–33)],” in *Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski 1918–2018*, vol. 1, ed. Grzegorz Bujak, Agata Mirek and Jarosław Rabiński (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2019), 125–132.

¹⁸ Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Lublinie [Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Lublin Archive] (AAL, Lublin, Poland), Kuria Biskupia Lubelska [Lublin Diocese Curia], *List Pastorski Biskupów Polskich w sprawie Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego* [Pastoral Letter of the Polish Bishops on the University of Lublin], Ref. No. 61 VIII 1: 226.

one should return to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas (he repeated the call: *Ite ad Thomam* (“Go to Thomas”).¹⁹ Following this line, the new rector of KUL, Józef Kruszyński (who was elected by the Bishops’ Council on June 17, 1927) noted that there can be no contradiction between God’s wisdom and man’s reason, since the latter is a gift from God. All science can therefore develop well only in the light of God’s truth. He pointed out that it was due to such an understanding of the world that universities were once founded, and such was also the genesis of the Catholic University of Lublin.²⁰ Kruszyński opposed those who, following the example of Enlightenment thinkers, condemned the achievements of the Middle Ages, including such figures as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Dominic de Guzmán. He noted that it was in the Middle Ages, and not in any other era, that universities were founded. The materialist worldview so prevalent in the 19th century led, in his view, straight to Bolshevism.²¹

In the 1930s, the current known as Catholic Social Teaching was vigorously developing at KUL. Great contributions to this field were made by scholars such as the next rector of the Catholic University of Lublin, Father Antoni Szymański,²² but also Czesław Strzeszewski.²³

¹⁹ Co-published with the study by Jacek Woroniecki in his book *Katolickość tomizmu* [The Catholic Nature of Thomism] (Lublin: Instytut Edukacji Narodowej, 1999), 91. Cf. Pope Pius XI, *Studiorum Ducem: On St. Thomas Aquinas*, [June 29] 1923, accessed Jan. 12, 2023, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius11/p11studi.htm>.

²⁰ Cf. [Józef Kruszyński], “Oświata katolicka [Catholic Education],” in [idem and Jacek Woroniecki], *Oświata katolicka i uniwersytety katolickie* [Catholic Education and Catholic Universities], 9.

²¹ Cf. Józef Kruszyński, “Przemówienie J. M. Rektora na inauguracji roku akademickiego w U. L. dnia 3.X.1926 [Inaugural Address of His Magnificence Rector at the Solemn Opening of the Academic Year in the University of Lublin, October 3, 1926],” *Wiadomości Towarzystwa Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego* [Bulletin of the Society of the University of Lublin], April 1, 1927: 4–6.

The youth movement, inspired by Catholic Social Teaching, played an important role. Rector Szymański was very closely involved with *Stowarzyszenie Katolickiej Młodzieży Akademickiej* [The Association of Catholic Academic Youth], which, importantly, was formed on the basis of Thomistic thought.

Barbara Rut Wosiek wrote interestingly about this milieu:

These young people have truly sought a deeper, renewed moral guidance, and through their spiritual guides they have come across none other than St. Thomas. And he was received enthusiastically, like the best aid, best medicine, and the best weapon with which to fight for an entirely new type of religiosity.²⁴

With a strong footing in Thomistic philosophy, KUL responded to

²² Father Antoni Szymański (1881–1942). An expert on Christian democracy in Europe, he was involved in the establishment of the University of Lublin as early as 1918. One of the forerunners of Catholic Social Teaching (he is widely credited with the methodological structuring of this field of knowledge), author of the first textbook on this discipline (*Zagadnienie Społeczne* [The Social Question]). He held many ecclesiastical and university positions, including rector of KUL from 1933. He combined classical ethics with Catholic Social Teaching. This was a peculiar form of social ethics. In his work, he recognized the dangers of various ideological currents, from liberalism to communism and Nazism (his works include *Bolszewizm jako prąd kulturalny i cywilizacyjny* [Bolshevism as a current of Culture and Civilization], *Gospodarstwo socjalistyczne w Sovietach* [Socialist Economy in the Soviet Lands], and others). Cf. Grażyna Karolewicz, “Szymański, Antoni, ks.,” in *Encyklopedia 100-lecia*, 444.

²³ Cf. Antoni Szymański, *Zapiski* [Notes] (digitalized manuscript), 20–30, accessed Jan. 15, 2023, <https://dlibra.kul.pl/publication/47168>.

²⁴ Barbara Rut Wosiek, “Św. Tomasz w środowiskach młodzieży akademickiej i młodej inteligencji polskiej okresu międzywojennego, [St. Thomas in the Circles of Academic Youth and Young Polish Intelligentsia in the Interwar Period,” in *Studia z dziejów myśli św. Tomasza z Akwinu* [Studies in the History of the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas], ed. Stefan Swieżawski and Jan Czerkawski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1978), 353.

Pope Pius XI's exhortations regarding ideologies that were degrading the spiritual life of Europe. Here we are talking about both communism and national socialism. Inspired by the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, the scholars of KUL have issued a number of publications showing the dangers of both. The collective work *Kultura i cywilizacja* [Culture and Civilization] demonstrated the errors of German national socialism,²⁵ while the volume entitled *Bolszewizm* [Bolshevism] pointed out the errors of communism.²⁶ The authors of the texts were people such as Józef Pastuszka, Father Antoni Szymański, Czesław Strzeszewski, Father Zygmunt Surdacki and Ignacy Czuma. The subject of the communist threat was also raised by Father Stefan Wyszyński, who was a young graduate of the Catholic University of Lublin at the time.²⁷

The Communist Era

After the Second World War, the Catholic University of Lublin was the only free university in the entire communist bloc and became famous for resisting Marxist influence at the ideological level. Primate Stefan Wyszyński, who shortly after the war became the Bishop of Lublin and the Grand Chancellor of KUL, later becoming the undisputed leader of the Catholic Church in Poland, consistently raised the importance of Thomistic philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin. On March 7, 1976, during the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Faculty of Christian Philosophy, he stated that the works of St. Thomas

²⁵ Cf. *Kultura i cywilizacja. Praca zbiorowa z 1936* [Culture and Civilization: A Collective Volume of 1936] (Lublin: Uniwersytet, 1937).

²⁶ Cf. *Bolszewizm. Praca zbiorowa* [Bolshevism: A Collective Volume] (Lublin: Uniwersytet, 1938).

²⁷ Cf. Ryba, *The idea of Catholic University*, 103–104.

represented an almost Copernican revolution in the history of human thought. The incorporation of Aristotle's achievements into Christian thought led to the "nuptials of philosophical and theological reasoning." Wyszyński urged the staff of KUL not to be discouraged by the opinions of many scholars (including Christian ones), especially in the West, who contested Thomism. As he stated:

No human mind has ever given such an example of a teacher of balanced philosophy.²⁸

At a time of tremendous pressure of Marxist philosophy and ideology, the Lublin Philosophical School was formed. Its founders were Stefan Swieżawski, Józef Kalinowski and Father Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec (the latter having exerted the greatest influence in the formation of this school).²⁹ They gathered around them a group of scientists cultivating philosophy in the Aristotelian-Thomistic current. This happened despite the fact that in the West since the 1960s, including in church circles, there was a radical turn away from the Thomistic current. The goals of the Marxists were quite obvious. In 1950, Adam Schaff, the main representative of the Marxist current in Poland, wrote:

²⁸ Cf. Stefan Wyszyński, "Prymat osoby nad rzeczą. Z okazji 30 rocznicy powstania Wydziału Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej KUL 7 III 1976 [The Primacy of the Person over the Thing: On the Occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Faculty of Christian Philosophy]," in idem, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981* [Social Teaching from 1946 to 1981] (Warszawa: Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, 1990), 714–718. Excerpts translated in Ryba, *The idea of Catholic University*, 189–190.

²⁹ Cf. Andrzej Maryniarczyk and Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Lubelska Szkoła Filozoficzna, [The Lublin Philosophical School]," in *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii* [Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy], ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, vol. 6 (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2005), 532–550.

The prerequisite for the complete ideological victory of the Marxist-Leninist worldview in Poland is, among other things, overcoming the ideological influence of philosophical trends that are foreign to us in terms of social class. This pertains, in the first place, to Thomistic philosophy, that is, philosophy with a clear fideistic face, which is the official philosophy of Catholic schools.³⁰

What we were dealing with back then was a general intellectual confrontation between Marxism and Thomism, the outcome of which largely determined the future of Catholic Poland.³¹ The founders of the Lublin Philosophical School also recognized the negative effects of 19th-century scientific positivism, which led to the reduction of the scientific questions to the dimension of ‘know how’—a knowledge dedicated to transforming the natural world and the technocratic transformation of societies.³² Knowledge of the full truth about man was possible only on the basis of classical philosophy. It was in the spirit of the truth thus learned that the humanization of the university and the understanding of what the culture of the Western world is in essence was possible.³³ Zofia J. Zdybicka writes about the founders of the Lublin Thomistic School in this way:

A group of people prepared by a profound reading of ancient and medieval classical texts, sensitive to the threats to the full truth about the world and

³⁰ Adam Schaff, *Narodziny i rozwój filozofii marksistowskiej* [The Birth and Development of Marxist Philosophy] (Warszawa, Książka i Wiedza, 1950), 403.

³¹ Marek Czachorowski et al., *Polska filozofia chrześcijańska XX wieku. Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec* [Polish Christian Philosophy of the 20th Century: Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2020), 17.

³² Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Rozmowy o uniwersytetach [Conversations about Universities],” *Znak* [The Sign] no. 30 (1970): 798–803.

man, saw that the abandonment of classical philosophy was a great harm done to man and culture. Hence the resort to classical philosophy.³⁴

A former professor of the Catholic University of Lublin, later Pope John Paul II, put the matter no differently. In his encyclical *Fides et ratio* he wrote:

More radically, Thomas recognized that nature, philosophy's proper concern, could contribute to the understanding of divine Revelation. Faith therefore has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it. Just as grace builds on nature and brings it to fulfilment, so faith builds upon and perfects reason. Illumined by faith, reason is set free from the fragility and limitations deriving from the disobedience of sin and finds the strength required to rise to the knowledge of the Triune God.³⁵

Under communism, the Lublin Philosophical School not only engaged in direct polemics with Marxist philosophy (although such events did take place),³⁶ but, above all, practiced in a totalitarian state

³³ Mieczysław A. Krapiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet* [Man, Culture, University], (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 1982), 10; Imelda Chłodna, "Rola uniwersytetu w kulturze w ujęciu Mieczysława A. Krapca OP [The Role of the University in Culture as Seen by Mieczysław A. Krapiec, OP]," *Człowiek w Kulturze* [Man in Culture] no. 19 (2007): 228; Henryk Kiereś, *Służyć kulturze* [To Serve Culture] (Lublin: Instytut Edukacji Narodowej, 1998), 170–171.

³⁴ Zofia J. Zdybicka, "O wierność rzeczywistości i pełną prawdę o człowieku – Polska Szkoła Filozofii Klasycznej [For Allegiance to Reality and the Full Truth about Man: Polish School of Classical Philosophy]," *Summarium* no. 9 (1980): 110.

³⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical *Fides et ratio* (1998), accessed Dec. 4, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html.

³⁶ Cf. *Wobec filozofii marksistowskiej. Polskie doświadczenia* [In front of Marxist Philosophy: Polish Experiences], ed. Antoni B. Stępień (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1987).

a philosophy completely contrary to what Marxism imposed. This was a phenomenon unprecedented in the entire Communist bloc. The clergy and lay people educated in such a spirit have subsequently played a huge role in social life, including in the process of decommunization after 1989 and in shaping the cultural face of the Polish Third Republic.

Father Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec held the office of rector of the Catholic University of Lublin for more than a dozen years, striving to develop the multi-faceted accomplishments of the Lublin Philosophical School. His successor, Father Stanisław Wielgus, who was in charge of the university at the time of the fall of communism, also noticed the crisis of contemporary culture, which was a derivative of the chaos on philosophical (academic) grounds. He opposed not only totalitarian Marxism, but also the postmodern vision of doing science, which led to extreme cognitive and moral relativism. Such a philosophy, in his view, undermines the foundations of a Euro-Atlantic civilization founded on the pursuit of objective truth and objective goodness.³⁷ The Lublin Philosophical School continued to develop with great intensity in the years after the fall of communism, and became the most serious center of Thomistic thought in the country and one of the most important in the world. Its influence on the life of the Church in Poland, as well as on cultural struggles, cannot be overestimated. The best evidence of this is the fact that Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II, came from this environment.³⁸

³⁷ Stanisław Wielgus, *Historyczne koncepcje i paradygmaty uniwersytetu oraz jego model na dziś i jutro* [Historical Concepts and Paradigms of The University and Its Model for Today and Tomorrow], (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2009), 44.

³⁸ Cf. Andrzej Maryniarczyk and Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Czym jest Lubelska Szkoła Filozoficzna?* [What is the Lublin Philosophical School?], accessed Jan. 8, 2023, <http://sapientia.kul.pl/czym-jest-lubelska-szkola-filozoficzna>.

Conclusion

The Catholic University of Lublin was established to repel ideological currents that were dangerous from the point of view of the Catholic Church. The founder of KUL, Fr. Idzi Radziszewski, inspired by the teaching of Pope Leo XIII (encyclical *Aeterni Patris*), sought to make Thomistic philosophy the foundation of the intellectual life of the university. The other rectors of the interwar period understood this. Having such intellectual instruments, KUL joined the battle for the consciousness of the young generation of the interwar period, intellectually opposing the then-fashionable currents triumphing in the neighboring countries (Marxist communism, racist national socialism).

After the Second World War, the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) had to operate in the extremely hostile environment of the atheistic communist state. The Lublin university was not only the only free university in the entire communist camp, but was able to remain faithful to the thought of its founding fathers. After all, it was at this time that the Lublin Philosophical School, firmly rooted in the Aristotelian-Thomistic current, was established. This happened despite the radical departure from Thomistic metaphysics in the Catholic universities of the Western world after the Second Vatican Council. Against the backdrop of the world, the Lublin Philosophical School not only amassed a remarkable academic record, but also became a tool for the victorious ideological struggle that the Church fought against the communist authorities. It has also been a formidable force for various struggles against contemporary ideological currents (postmodernism, cultural neo-Marxism). It can be simply said that as long as realistic philosophy is cultivated at KUL, the university is fulfilling the purpose for which it was established.



The Role of Thomistic Philosophy in the Cultural Mission of the Catholic University of Lublin

SUMMARY

The article discusses the influence of the Lublin school of Thomistic philosophy on the scientific and cultural life of Poland and the world in the 20th century. The author shows that the Lublin university, from the very beginning of its establishment, based its model of scientific life on the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. This resulted from papal teaching (Leo XIII, Pius XI). The philosophy was developed remarkably during the communist era, when the Lublin Philosophical School was formed. It produced numerous publications and created an environment that had a great influence on the intellectual life of Poland. The Lublin milieu, based on Thomism, entered into an effective discourse with the ideological currents that swept the Western world. In the inter-war period, this was Bolshevik Marxism and National Socialism. In modern times, this discourse is conducted with the postmodern current and the neo-Marxist philosophy of the Frankfurt School.

Keywords: Catholic University of Lublin, Thomism, the Lublin Philosophical School, Idzi Benedykt Radziszewski, Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec

REFERENCES

Sources

Archive Materials

Archiwum Akt Nowych [The Central Archives of Modern Records] (AAN, Warsaw, Poland), Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], *Protokół dyplomatyczny. Przemówienia posła (ambasadora) Skrzyńskiego podczas składania listów uwierzytelniających i odpowiedzi*

papieża, 1922, 1924 [Diplomatic Protocol, Addresses by MP (Ambassador) Skrzyński during the presentation of credentials, with papal responses, 1922, 1924], Ref. No. 808.

Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Lublinie [Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Lublin Archive] (AAL, Lublin, Poland), Kuria Biskupia Lubelska [Lublin Diocese Curia], *List Pasterski Biskupów Polskich w sprawie Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego* [Pastoral Letter of the Polish Bishops on the University of Lublin], Ref. No. 61 VIII 1.

Szymański, Antoni. *Zapiski* [Notes]. Accessed January 15, 2023, <https://dlibra.kul.pl/publication/47168>.

Printed Sources

Bolszewizm. *Praca zbiorowa* [Bolshevism: A Collective Volume]. Lublin: Uniwersytet, 1938.

John Paul II. Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (1998). Accessed December 4, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html.

Pius XI. Encyclical *Studiorum Ducem: On St. Thomas Aquinas*, [June 29] 1923. Accessed January 12, 2023, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius11/pi11studi.htm>.

Kiereś, Henryk. *Służyć kulturze* [To Serve Culture]. Lublin: Instytut Edukacji Narodowej, 1998.

Krąpiec, Mieczysław A. *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet* [Man, Culture, University]. Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 1982.

Krąpiec, Mieczysław A. “Ewolucjonizm, ale jaki? [Evolutionism—Yes, But Which One?].” In *Ewolucjonizm czy kreacjonizm* [Evolutionism or Creationism]. Edited by Piotr Jaroszyński, 7–40. Lublin: Fundacja ‘Lubelska Szkoła Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej,’ 2008.

Krąpiec, Mieczysław A. “Rozmowy o uniwersytetach [Conversations about Universities],” *Znak* [The Sign] no. 30 (1970): 798–803.

[Kruszyński, Józef]. “Oświata katolicka [Catholic Education].” In [Józef Kruszyński and Jacek Woroniecki]. *Oświata katolicka i uniwersytety kato-*

- lickie. Szkice kazań na „Dzień Uniwersytecki”* [Catholic Education and Catholic Universities: Sermon Outlines for the ‘University Day’], 3–11. Lublin: Uniwersytet, 1929.
- Kruszyński, Józef. “Przemówienie J. M. Rektora na inauguracji roku akademickiego w U. L. dnia 3.X.1926 [Inaugural Address of His Magnificence Rector at the Solemn Opening of the Academic Year in the University of Lublin, October 2, 1926],” *Wiadomości Towarzystwa Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego* [Bulletin of the Society of the University of Lublin] April 1, 1927: 4–6.
- Kultura i cywilizacja. Praca zbiorowa z 1936* [Culture and Civilization: A Collective Volume of 1936]. Lublin: Uniwersytet, 1937.
- Leo XIII. Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy). Accessed January 11, 2023, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_lxiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html.
- Newman, John Henry. *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated: I. In Nine Discourses Addressed to the Catholics of Dublin, II. In Occasional Lectures and Essays Addressed to the Members of the Catholic University*. 3rd edition. London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1873.
- Radziszewski, Idzi. *Credo nowożytnego fizjologa* (ku pamięci zmarłego Eliasza de Cyon) [The Creed of a Modern Physiologist (in memoriam of the late Élie de Cyon)]. Włocławek: [printed by Author], 1913.
- Radziszewski, Idzi. *Geneza idei religii w ewolucjonizmie Darwina i Spencera* [The Origins of the Religious Idea in the Evolutionism of Darwin and Spencer]. Translated and edited by Władysław Świder and Michał M. Maciołek. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2012.
- Radziszewski, Idzi. *Uniwersytet katolicki w Polsce* [The Catholic University in Poland]. In idem, *Pisma* [Writings]. Edited by Stanisław Janeczek, Michał M. Maciołek, and Rafał Charzyński, 371–383. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2009.
- Wielgus, Stanisław. *Historyczne koncepcje i paradygmaty uniwersytetu oraz jego model na dziś i jutro* [Historical Concepts and Paradigms of The

- University and Its Model for Today and Tomorrow]. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2009.
- Wobec filozofii marksistowskiej. Polskie doświadczenia* [In front of Marxist Philosophy: Polish Experiences]. Edited by Antoni B. Stępień. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1987.
- [Woroniecki, Jacek]. “Uniwersytety katolickie [Catholic Universities].” In [Józef Kruszyński and Jacek Woroniecki]. *Oświata katolicka i uniwersytety katolickie. Szkice kazań na „Dzień Uniwersytecki”* [Catholic Education and Catholic Universities: Sermon Outlines for the ‘University Day’], 12–32. Lublin: Uniwersytet, 1929.
- Wyszyński, Stefan. “Prymat osoby nad rzeczą. Z okazji 30 rocznicy powstania Wydziału Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej KUL 7 III 1976 [Primacy of the Person over the Thing: On the Occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Faculty of Christian Philosophy].” In idem. *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981* [Social Teaching from 1946 to 1981], 714–718. Warszawa: Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, 1990.

Studies

- Chłodna, Imelda. “Rola uniwersytetu w kulturze w ujęciu Mieczysława A. Krąpca OP [The Role of the University in Culture as Seen by Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, OP],” *Człowiek w Kulturze* [Man in Culture] no. 19 (2007): 227–242.
- Czachorowski, Marek, Tomasz Mamełka, Paweł Mazanka and Zbigniew Pańpuch. *Polska filozofia chrześcijańska XX wieku. Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec* [Polish Christian Philosophy of the 20th Century: Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2020.
- Janeczek, Stanisław. “Radziszewski Idzi Benedykt.” In *Encyklopedia 100-lecia KUL*. Vol. 2. Edited by Edward Gigilewicz et al., 247–248. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018.
- Karolewicz, Grażyna. “Kruszyński, Józef ks. [Father Józef Kruszyński]. In *Encyklopedia 100-lecia KUL*. Vol. 1. Edited by Edward Gigilewicz et al., 581–582. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018.

- Karolewicz, Grażyna. "Szymański, Antoni ks. [Father Antoni Szymański]." In *Encyklopedia 100-lecia KUL*. Vol. 2. Edited by Edward Gigilewicz et al., 444–445. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018.
- Kołodziejczyk, Krzysztof. "Kadencja rektora ks. Józefa Kruszyńskiego (1925–1933) [Rector's Term of Office of Fr. Józef Kruszyński (1925–33)]." In *Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski 1918–2018*. Vol. 1. Edited by Grzegorz Bujak, Agata Mirek and Jarosław Rabiński, 125–132. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2019.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *Bóg – filozofia – uniwersytety. Wybrane zagadnienia z historii katolickiej tradycji filozoficznej* [God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition]. Translated by Anna Łagodzka. Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 2013.
- Maryniarczyk, Andrzej. "Introduction / Wprowadzenie." In Stanisław Kamiński. *On the Methodology of Metaphysics / Z metodologii metafizyki*. Translated by Maciej B. Stępień, 5–14. Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2018.
- Maryniarczyk, Andrzej and Mieczysław A. Krąpiec. *Czym jest Lubelska Szkoła Filozoficzna?* [What is the Lublin Philosophical School?]. Accessed Jan. 8, 2023, <http://sapientia.kul.pl/czym-jest-lubelska-szkola-filozoficzna>.
- Maryniarczyk, Andrzej and Mieczysław A. Krąpiec. "Lubelska Szkoła Filozoficzna, [The Lublin Philosophical School]." In *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii* [Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy]. Vol. 6. Edited by Andrzej Maryniarczyk, 532–550. Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2005.
- Ryba, Mieczysław. *The idea of Catholic University in the Reborn Poland*. Translated by Maciej B. Stępień. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo von Borowiecky, 2018.
- Schaff, Adam. *Narodziny i rozwój filozofii marksistowskiej* [The Birth and Development of Marxist Philosophy]. Warszawa, Książka i Wiedza, 1950.
- Szostek, Andrzej. "Woroniecki Jacek OP." In *Encyklopedia 100-lecia KUL* [Encyclopedia of the 100th Anniversary of the Catholic University of

- Lublin]. Vol. 2. Edited by Edward Gigilewicz et al., 561–562 Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018.
- Wosiek, Barbara Rut. “Św. Tomasz w środowiskach młodzieży akademickiej i młodej inteligencji polskiej okresu międzywojennego, [St. Thomas in the Circles of Academic Youth and Young Polish Intelligentsia in the Interwar Period.” In *Studia z dziejów myśli św. Tomasza z Akwinu* [Studies in the History of the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas]. Edited by Stefan Swieżawski and Jan Czerkowski, 351–366. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1978.
- Woroniecki, Jacek. *Katolickość tomizmu* [Catholic Nature of Thomism]. Lublin: Instytut Edukacji Narodowej, 1999.
- Zdybicka, Zofia J. “O wierność rzeczywistości i pełną prawdę o człowieku – Polska Szkoła Filozofii Klasycznej [For Allegiance to Reality and the Full Truth about Man: The Polish School of Classical Philosophy],” *Summarium* no. 9 (1980): 109–115.