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The need for the cultivation of classical philosophy

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THE NEED FOR THE CULTIVATION OF CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY

1. Introduction 2. Some mistakes of the present-day culture. 3. Classical philosophy as a remedy for the disease of nihilism. 4. Classical philosophy prepares the way for religion. 5. Conclusions

Key words: classical philosophy, culture, nihilism, religion

1. INTRODUCTION

Views on the need for the cultivation of classical philosophy, especially metaphysics, are not homogeneous. One of the approaches observable today is the negation of the value and need for philosophy as knowledge of actually existing reality. The advocates of this approach hold that the natural sciences are sufficient as they exhaust the cognitive area characteristic of scientific cognition, and thus there is no place left for philosophy seen as a rational discipline studying the objective reality; reality existing independently of the knowing subject. There is also, however, another position relating to the need for the cultivation of classical philosophy, a philosophy that is also sometimes called philosophy of the object. This position holds that such philosophy is most topical, especially in regard to culture, which philosophy integrates, purifies, and makes sense thereof.

The article attempts to answer the question “Why is it worth cultivating classical philosophy?” The answer has three points. The first presents some negative features characteristic of the culture of the most developed countries of the West on the threshold of the third millennium. It should be remembered, however, that this concerns not only

western countries, but also the millions of people who are influenced by the cultures of these countries. The second point deals with the way classical philosophy is understood and the role it plays in overcoming nihilism. Finally, the third point shows the possibilities of utilising philosophy in theology.

2. SOME MISTAKES OF THE PRESENT-DAY CULTURE

Today one commonly not only hears of the shortcomings of contemporary culture, but also experiences on a daily basis. Sometimes its condition is summed up in the words “contemporary culture is sick”. Usually, we understand culture (Lat. *colo,-ere* – to cultivate, *cultura* – cultivation, tilling) , in contrast to nature, as a range of collective human artifacts, both spiritual and material. In other words, these are the ways in which man acts and the results of such actions. Culture consists of art, science, morality, philosophy, and religion.

Today much is said about the crisis of contemporary culture, understood as a significant breakdown in the process of its development. This breakdown results undoubtedly from a coincidence of several factors, but it is directly conditioned by man: man not as an abstract but as a concrete person, as a characteristic cultural creation, mainly though not exclusively, in the “layer” of consciousness and volition. This “layer” comprises the totality of knowledge and beliefs within the scope of morality, religion, art, science or philosophy, the understanding of these disciplines and the related system of values.

If we say metaphorically that “contemporary culture is sick”, then it seems appropriate to say that contemporary man is, in a sense, sick as well. The sickness of man comes down to the “deviations” in all that constitutes personality, especially in the intellectual layer. It is worth quoting here the principle *agere sequitur esse*. Of course here “*esse*” is understood not as a primary phenomenon but is in part a cultural creation.

The crisis of contemporary culture and its foundation – human “*esse*” – was created, as it seems, by a steady decay of the absolute, stable and hierarchical world of values and rules. Particularly significant was the abandonment of good and truth as the aim and

as the reason of existence of any human action. This abandonment is not a phenomenon resulting from arbitrary human decisions, but a phenomenon justified through philosophy, for matters such as the rudiments of religion, morality, art, science, and the like, lie within the province of philosophy. The philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, mainly his criticism of Christianity and the idea of God, together with his conception of the “*übermensch*” (overman), the eternal return, the will to power, and, most of all, his criticism of the European nineteenth century morality, are considered to be the preparation and initiation of contemporary postmodern culture with its features of “crisis”¹. Giovanni Reale points out that all the spiritual problems that worry the world today originated from one source, from that which Nietzsche called, at the end of the nineteenth century, “nihilism”. By means of “nihilism” Nietzsche attempted to describe the condition of the following century, the twentieth century, or even the two centuries to come. As far as the twentieth century is concerned, Nietzsche turned out to be a prophet of ill omen, yet absolutely truthful. One can only hope his predictions about the twenty-first century will not be proven right, though this hope seems to lack foundation.

The essence of nihilism was formulated by Nietzsche in a few sentences. The first of them is well known: “God is dead and we killed him”. God died in our hearts as we turned our back on God. Yet such a “death of God” is not common atheism. It is burdened with consequences, as it means the rejection of all the values in which the West believed. This becomes immediately evident when we realize that values are hierarchical; when the foundation (God) is removed, the whole hierarchy collapses, and *ipso facto*, all the values. This is why Nietzsche wrote: “There is absolutely no Lord above us; the old world of values was theological – it has collapsed. In short, there is no higher authority; since God cannot exist, we ourselves are God...We must assign to ourselves the attributes we assigned to God”². Nine main masks worn

¹ J. Woronoff, *Editor's Foreword*, w: C. Diethe, *Historical Dictionary of Nietzscheanism*, Lanham, Matyland, Toronto, Plymouth, UK 2007², p. V.

² Translated from Polish: „Nie mamy już absolutnie żadnego Pana nad sobą; dawny świat wartości był teologiczny - on się zawalił. Krótko mówiąc, nie mamy ponad sobą żadnej wyższej instancji: skoro Bóg nie może istnieć, teraz my sami jesteśmy

by nihilism can be identified in outline. These are serious errors troubling contemporary culture.

The first error is the *pursuit of greater, even absolute, freedom*, in other words the *absolute autonomy of man*. According to Kant, autonomy means, above all, self-determination and the rejection of all forms of dependence on authorities that seem to be foreign and to limit our freedom. The source of this pursuit of greater autonomy, which originally was not negative in character, dates back at least to the sixteenth century, when different forms of freedom were gradually gained. First was the pursuit of religious freedom, initiated by Luther in 1517 and continued in the period of the Reformation. Almost at the same time man strived for freedom of scientific thought, especially within the natural sciences and the humanities, which were developing dynamically. The obstacles encountered by Copernicus and Galileo are characteristic examples of such pursuits. Another discipline, in which the autonomy of man was emphasized, was philosophy. Ideas of freedom were developed especially in the eighteenth century, in the Enlightenment period, when the freedom of philosophical thought was very much emphasized by Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau and Kant³. Man's pursuit of greater autonomy has now become even more vigorous. This is evident in various environments and disciplines of life. It seems that contemporary man strives for absolute freedom and certain philosophers of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, who propagated various conceptions of man's liberation, brought about this state of affairs. It was most often a matter of liberation from Christian religion, and, more precisely, from Christian morality.

The second feature of contemporary culture is *scientism* and the related *cult of science and technology*. It is this particular mentality, widely popularized today, that regards something as "true" only if it can be checked and verified by means of experience, experiment or mathematical calculations. It is easily seen that contemporary culture

Bogiem... Sobie musimy przyznać atrybuty, które przypisywaliśmy Bogu". (J. Reale, *Zło nękające współczesnego człowieka i lekarstwo, które można na nie znaleźć*, tłum. I. Zieliński, Ethos 56(2001), 16 nn).

³ J.M. Aubert, *Jak żyć po chrześcijańsku w XX wieku*, tłum. E. Braun, T. Braun, Warszawa 1986, 15-17.

and related technology justify the view that “knowledge is power”. The cult of science and technology has spread throughout various environments. The natural sciences are becoming more authoritative, hence, the conviction that everything can be regulated and examined by scientific rules, which further creates the illusion that the horizon of man’s life ends at science and technology.

The third feature-error is ideology. It is the negation of objective truth. Ideology does not acknowledge objective truth, and if it does, then objective truth does not play a leading role, for truth is whatever is commonly regarded as truth, is what is decided upon by politicians or by powerful mass media. It is in politicians’ interests to tell the masses what the truth is in order to maintain or gain power. Truth is devoid of its own power; it is power (and therefore violence) that enforces its own truth. The metaphysical foundations of reality are undermined here, as it is claimed that truth does not exist, that there is no absolute structure of things, no essence or substance of things. The hypothesis that things have their own structure is totally redundant.

The fourth error, related to the one mentioned above, is the *acceptance of violence as a privileged method of solving man’s problems*. It is a well known fact that the twentieth century was the bloodiest in the history of man. We entered a third millennium marked by terrorist attacks, and the collapse of the World Trade Centre towers in New York became the symbolic beginning of a new wave of violence. Besides the old forms of violence: military interventions or class war: there emerged new types of violence, world terrorism and the differences between men and women, between parents and children and between old and new generations, which have recently been strongly highlighted.

The fifth error encompasses *voluntarism* and *praxism*. Voluntarism (*voluntaris* – of the will) is a view that gives priority to volition over reason and overestimates the significance of free will. This approach highlights that man is a creature endowed with reason, but also free will. Hence, it is claimed, man should not deal as much with thoughts and reflections, but above all act. The principle of the whole of life is *action*. The high value assigned to action is reflected in activism, the conviction that a true contribution matters comes down to direct action. In philosophical terms one might say *to be – means to act*. The

overestimation of the worth of man's action reduces values to practice. Things and nature do not have a metaphysical status of their own, their sense is totally reduced to their "utility". Many contemporary people estimate the value of almost everything by asking: "what is it for?" and "how can I possess and manage it?"⁴.

The sixth error is *temporalism* and the myth of "*material welfare*" that replaced the spiritual felicity held to be unreal. Time is treated very seriously. It is as precious as wealth. The emphasis is put on what is "here and now", what is present, which is distinct from what is continuous and permanent. Stable values such as those in the Decalogue, "do not kill", "do not commit adultery", or values such as love, fidelity, and honesty, fade into the background in favour of what is present. The triumph of the "present time" has been intensified by the development of fast transport, mass media and telecommunications.

It is no surprise that such a state of affairs results in a lack of interest in far-reaching plans as they involve a long-term engagement, also in neglecting the past or the future, in reducing life to the present-day and in the urge for profit. The attitude *carpe diem* – seize the day – originating in ancient times and then abandoned, is making a return. The source of temporalism lies in individualism and egocentrism. It is the rejection of the eternal truths present in ethics, morality and religion in favour of the here-and-now.

Another result of the phenomena discussed is the rejection of the word "happiness"; a concept regarded as sheer myth. Happiness is identified with "well being", when a great number of disposable material goods is produced.

The seventh error is forgetting true love. It seems that this issue is not widely discussed, but it is a serious problem affecting the young generation and family life in particular. Nietzsche tried to destroy love by maintaining that: "Love is a subtle parasite, it is a dangerous and bad infestation of one soul with another soul – sometimes even in the body... – unfortunately at the expense of the host"⁵. Nowadays the situ-

⁴ J. E. Smith, *Doświadczenie i Bóg*, tłum. D. Pesh, Warszawa 1971, 200.

⁵ Translated from Polish: „Miłość jest subtelnym pasożytem, jest niebezpiecznym i niegrzecznym zagnieżdżeniem się jednej duszy w innej duszy – niekiedy także w ciele... – niestety – kosztem gospodarza”. (G. Reale, op.cit., 18).

ation is even worse, since the media have propagated and praised love (eros) as an antidote to the “evil of civilization”. However, it turns out that the offered remedy contains subtle dangers hidden in the recesses of erotic love. Sexual debauchery paralyzes more and more people, including teenagers and even children.

The eighth error is forgetting the purpose or end. The negation of the existence of the end in the ontological sense is one of the characteristics of nihilism. The world is perceived as governed by chaos and its creation as a pure coincidence. When the question of the end disappears, then the same fate awaits the question about meaning. The words of John Paul II (*Fides et ratio*⁶, 1998) are of great significance: “One of the most significant aspects of our current situation, it should be noted, is the ‘crisis of meaning’. (...) The contemporary world tries to eliminate the questions about the sense of life. For many contemporary people live as if they have liberated themselves from this fundamental question. One thing however is certain: the currents of thought which claim to be postmodern merit appropriate attention. According to some of them, the time of certainties is irrevocably past, and the human being must now learn to live in a horizon of total absence of meaning, where everything is provisional and ephemeral. (...) [A]nd now, at the end of this century, one of our greatest threats is the temptation to despair”.⁷

The ninth error of contemporary culture is materialism, the reduction of all manifestations of being to the dimension of physical reality: all that exists is either physical reality or its epiphenomenon. Secularism, the way of life *si Deus non daretur*, together with the reduction of man and things to economic reality are exceptionally sophisticated examples of this general metaphysical state.

⁶ It is well known that the encyclical was widely commented on in the press. “The New York Times”, for example, pointed out the astonishing fact that at the close of the twentieth century the Pope encouraged trust in human reason and presented reason as the ally of faith, while it was common then to think that reason was the biggest threat to faith.

⁷ Jan Paweł II, *Fides et ratio*, par. 81 and 9.

3. CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY AS A REMEDY FOR THE DISEASE OF NIHILISM

Some contemporary philosophers, including Edmund Morawiec, claim that the remedy, albeit one of limited scope, lies in a return to philosophy. If philosophy is supposed to provide the remedy for the crisis of the contemporary culture, then the question arises of which philosophy. Morawiec, like the Lublin School, is in favour of classical philosophy, and especially of a solid metaphysics. “Solid” means one that makes use of adequate argumentation, otherwise it will never go beyond mere declaration and will have no power to convince. Classical philosophy is understood as objective and rational knowledge that seeks the ultimate reasons of experienced reality. These properties differentiate it from other types of philosophy such as the philosophy of the subject (originating with Rene Descartes), and the philosophy of subjectivity (which developed in the twentieth century in various versions of existentialism, mainly due to Martin Heidegger). One might well ask how philosophy can rescue culture from crisis when it itself is in crisis. It should be noted, however, that the crisis in classical philosophy has been at least partly overcome. Initially this crisis consisted of many thinkers’ perceptions of the former academic presentation of Thomist philosophy as overly abstract and methodologically unclear, out of date and unsuited to contemporary methodological requirements. This traditional presentation was used in textbooks by Gredt, Di Napoli, Boyer, Dezza, and Adamczyk⁸. As it is well known, the traditional version of Thomism was accompanied by a neo-Thomistic tendency of constant searching, a return to the sources, a creative development of philosophy and its positioning relative to contemporary philosophical achievements, in particular those of the methodology of science. Thanks to research in primary sources conducted by Jacques Maritain (+1973) and Etienne Gilson (+1978), it became apparent that the scholastic textbooks on Thomism, published on a large scale after the 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Leon XIII, did not

⁸ See E. Morawiec, *Odkrycie egzystencjalnej wersji metafizyki klasycznej* [*The discovery of an existential version of classical metaphysics*], Wydawnictwo UKSW, Warsaw 2004, 219 nn.

follow Aquinas' line of thought and were very much influenced by Aquinas' commentators, such as Cajetan, John of St Thomas, Suarez, and Christoph Wolff, who was called a Protestant scholastic, and was fashionable across Europe for some time. He highlighted the importance of abstraction and deduction in philosophy.

Thomism began to head in a new direction, that of existential Thomism, a more authentic Thomism purified of the influences of idealism and abstraction. Officially, existential Thomism seems to have been initiated by Gilson's *L'être et l'essence*, published after the war in 1945. In Poland this version of Thomism (and classical philosophy in general) has been creatively developed ever since, especially in the field of metaphysical methodology, in two centres. The first, the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), is represented by Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, Stanisław Kamiński, Antoni Stępień, and Andrzej Maryniarczyk. The other, the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (UKSW), is represented by Mieczysław Gogacz, Edmund Morawiec, and Edward Nieznański.

Nowadays, the neo-positivistic, narrow conception of philosophy having been overcome, it is commonly accepted that philosophy is a distinct type of cognition, on the grounds not only of its subject, but also that of its objectives. Philosophy has a distinct domain of research and distinct research methods that, like the methods of the other sciences, are rational operations. The grounding of the distinct character of the domain of philosophical research in, on the one hand, the contemporary state of science and, on the other hand, in human life, is highlighted. When it comes to the state of science, one can no longer reject the thesis that scientific cognition abounds with conclusions drawn from metaphysics and the philosophy of cognition. The particular sciences imply conclusions that go beyond scientific cognition.

When it comes to problems which emerge from human life, it is highlighted today that man is faced with many very important existential issues that can neither be rationally solved, nor even reasonably formulated in the particular sciences. Dealing with this complex problem, it should first be noted that the reality surrounding us is differentiated, hence the question about grasping ("scientific vision") the whole of reality, including the reality that lies beyond sensible cogni-

tion. There emerges the question of the whole; our desire to confront the whole and to answer the questions: “Why does it exist? Is it structured? What is the meaning or purpose of its existence? Is it possible that there are other things except for the ones that we experience sensually?”

How can this reality be captured? In other words, how can the whole world be dealt with? We need to decide on an appropriate point of view, an appropriate aspect under which to research this reality. There is a range of possibilities, and we need to choose one. We will not find it on the basis of collecting material from the particular sciences. Nor is the whole captured when objects are considered on the basis of their potential essences, as this involves the categorization of reality. The correct perspective on reality is to consider it *qua* existing. This is why classical philosophy can offer answers to the above questions concerning the existence of the world.

The fact that there is a field of research that cannot be dealt with using the framework of the particular sciences has been noticed by many contemporary philosophers and scientists. It is worth citing some opinions of some famous and recognized theoreticians of science. Wittgenstein writes “We feel that if all possible scientific questions were answered, then the fundamental problems of our lives would not be even touched”. Wittgenstein recognizes the existence of a real field, lying beyond the field of the detailed sciences, that is beyond scientific cognition. Einstein states “Especially in the periods of scientific breakthroughs, philosophy has heuristic roles in science, but it always provides scientific theories with the principles of categorization”. Feyerabend says “Philosophy is the most desired starting point for scientific criticism”, and Elzenberg, “Philosophy is dynamite for the explosion of empirical knowledge”.

Another piece of evidence of the need for the cultivation of classical philosophy is the fact that the most general theory of reality, classical philosophy, is by virtue of its subject matter related to the whole of culture. It integrates and makes sense of culture because it discovers the meaning of man’s existence and actions, and the existence of the

reality surrounding him. Thus, it is not merely needed: it is absolutely necessary⁹.

It should be highlighted that the knowledge drawn from classical philosophy has several important properties. It is a realistic knowledge. This property follows from the fact that classical philosophy takes into account the actual states of affairs and has cognitive contact with actual reality. It is a rational knowledge. This rationality is founded on its respect for the fundamental laws of being and thinking that are the principles of identity, contradiction, excluded middle, sufficient reason and purpose. Finally, it is a universal knowledge. Its universalism follows from the fact that classical philosophy passes beyond the limitations of categorization and concerns everything that exists. Why should we base the treatment of contemporary culture on this philosophy? Because it gives us thorough and conclusive knowledge of the world, and very often a supratemporal perspective on the studied object.

Nor should it be overlooked that the fully developed type of cognition described above is not only a conclusive explanation of reality, but also makes it easier for man to take an appropriate axiological approach, because it uncovers the deepest truths. This philosophy elicits engagement. Truths become a good (a value), and thereby a driving force of human creativity. The final result of philosophical reflection is to demonstrate the Absolute as the first cause of all being and as the highest good, making Him the final and real objective of all human action. In this conception of philosophy, the ethical system of values is motivated ontically, not merely cognitively or pragmatically. This is possible because it is the result of deciphering reality in its deepest structure.

4. CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY PREPARES THE WAY FOR RELIGION

According to Dietrich von Hildebrand, the loftiest mission of philosophy is to serve religion, by preparing and clearing the way. Philosophical cognition reaches its peak in the recognition of the ex-

⁹ E. Morawiec, P. Mazanka, *The Classical Metaphysics of the Existential Version*, Wydawnictwo UKSW, Warsaw 2006, 97-100.

istence of God and His natural properties. Its highest level is insight into the existence of the absolute personal Being, who has created all beings, whom every being imitates and to whom every being is assigned¹⁰. It is well known that one cannot be a good theologian without solid philosophy. Neither is it possible to preach the Gospel without philosophy, which is in this case a form of pre-evangelization. Philosophy is needed, because in many environments people are not open to the word of God. Under the influence of various secular currents they have lost “the sense of faith” (Jurgen Habermas). They no longer understand the language of theology, which has lost its convincing power. Contemporary philosophical orientations such as linguistic empiricism do not permit sentences with the word “God” to be regarded as statements of fact. The main problem for the empiricist, says Paul van Buren, lies not in what is said about God, but in that God is talked about at all. It is not known “what” God is, and there is no way to understand how the word “God” is used. Nietzsche’s claim that God is dead is obsolete, since nowadays it is the word “God” that is dead, as are the notions of moral norms, eternal truths, essence and substance. Buren’s, and likewise Wittgenstein’s, non-acknowledgement of the cognitive value of religious language results in the rejection of the God of Revelation and the God of natural theology alike¹¹.

The great role that classical philosophy has to play is evident here. Any deeper analysis of Revelation and any argumentation against contradiction draws from philosophy¹². The history of theology is marked with examples of co-operation between theology and philosophy. For example, the whole of modernism is, basically, no more than a transplantation of Bergsonism and pragmatism into theology (on the grounds of which much was made of the insufficiency of abstract conceptual cognition and the role of intuition in truth-recognition, etc.). Likewise today, in the age of theological renewal and searching, some academic centres are under the influence of, for example, philosophical existentialism in the posing and interpretation of theological issues

¹⁰ D. von Hildebrand, *What is philosophy*, London and New York 1991, 187.

¹¹ P. van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, New York 1963, 103.

¹² John Paul II explicitly discusses the objectives of the contemporary philosophy in the encyclical *Fides et ratio*.

(there is an emphasis on concrete human existence and existential *être pour soi*, on the relationship between Revelation/Redemption and concrete human existence, resignation from the abstract and systemic presentation of truth, etc.).

After the period of theological experimentation, through which the Church passed after the Second Vatican Council, it is becoming clearer that a return to classical philosophy is needed (evidenced by the statements of John Paul II and Benedict XVI). The platonico-aristotelian philosophy undertakes the objective mission of a *praeambulum fidei*; it is and has been rightly regarded as preparation for Christian revealed truth, though it itself cannot say anything about the truth and reality of Revelation. The final achievement of classical philosophy, and metaphysics in particular, is related to the issue of the Absolute. Without the assumption of the Being-in-itself, the origin, existence and action of things in the surrounding world are incomprehensible. For the structure and nature of being is such that cannot comprehend and explain itself. Without necessary Being, contingent and non-necessary being would involve a contradiction. God, as the reason guaranteeing the non-contradiction of existence, must be engaged in every newly formed being, either in its substantial or in its contingent form (e.g. in every human action). Existential metaphysics alone among scientific disciplines undertakes the issue of the scientific proof of the existence of God and explains His omnipresence and action in creatures. Metaphysical premises, based on pure reason and not Revelation, explain the biblical thesis that “in God we live, move and are”.

Metaphysics allows us to penetrate the nature of God, that is, it discusses not only the existence of God, but also His actions in the world, the maintenance of the world's existence, God's influence on the actions of creatures and rational beings, and hence also Divine Providence. Metaphysics explains the deepest (existential) dependence of the world on God. Consequently, the philosophy of being becomes the philosophy of God and explains the intrinsic nature of God and His intrinsic infinite richness. Being-in-itself is infinite in its perfection, and the philosophy of God is, in fact, a reflection on *esse subsistens*, together with a reflection on the properties of created being. Thus the

theses that God is eternal, is a Mind, a Will, a Good, a Beauty, a Power, a Person all result logically from philosophical reflection.

On the one hand, metaphysics is a defence against agnosticism, and on the other hand, it makes it possible to avoid the anthropomorphization of God, highlighting as it does the difference between the existential structure of God and creation, and thus the impossibility of the adequate cognition of God. Metaphysical considerations, in the systematic aspect, end with the establishment of the properties of absolute Being and of the way contingent beings participate in the Absolute's perfection¹³. As a result, the philosophy of being not only allows the contemplation of the highest Truth and Good, but also forms the basis for natural piety and optimism, and prepares for Revelation. It can also be said that metaphysics teaches us to be humble, for humility is a sense of dependence, or, in other words, living in truth.

A special role in the cognition of the Absolute is played by reference to the analogy of being, which consists in the similarity of all beings in terms of essence and existence. Establishing the analogy between beings makes it possible to construct a hierarchy of being and to define the ultimate source of the existence of the whole of reality, as well as to describe this source in a rational way.

The analyses presented above show clearly that the cooperation of philosophy and theology is indispensable. It can be claimed that just as there is no mathematics without physics, so there is no theology without philosophy. It is obvious that to study only the source of Revelation is not sufficient, though it is necessary. Of course, what is also required, to an extent, is a rational interpretation of Revelation. A thinking man wants to know that what he believes is not contradictory to what is rational. Without the theses about substance and accident, extension and location, Eucharist theology, for example, would be in a difficult or even hopeless situation. It's difficult to defend Revelation by claiming that God can cause contradictions; that the fundamental laws of being and logic apply to creatures but not God.

Thus, principally, philosophy helps theology negatively, by showing that faith does not involve contradictions, and by defending it from

¹³ W. Chudy, *Poznanie istnienia (bytu) w ujęciu tomistów egzystencjalnych*, *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 18(1982)2, 46.

the accusations of irrationality. Thanks to philosophy, the truths of the faith, strengthened by the unquestionable theses of metaphysics, show and reveal their deeper meaning and their beauty.

Of course metaphysics is not devoid of mysteries, e.g. the mystery of *esse subsistens*, the immediate vision of which is beyond our reach. We must come by imperfect means, by analogy, to some inadequate knowledge of God. It is the same at every step: the mystery and uniqueness of existence, matter, life, and the like. We can say that philosophical cognition consists in the formulation of theories in the interpretation of being that save facts from absurdity, but not from mystery. Philosophy, and art and science in general, sprang from wonder.

Classical philosophy can also be used in the renewal of philosophical anthropology. The existential type of philosophy, as opposed to the abstract type that has stopped taking concrete individuals into account, is characterized by a great respect – so to speak – for individuals. In the concept of being, though it is not a sharply-defined concept. The plurality and distinctness of particular individuals are marked clearly. Every being is important and taken into consideration. Every individual, especially every person, is related individually to God as its reason, justification and end. Classical metaphysics is therefore a good tool for anthropology, which today demands that the roles of the individual man and of a rightly conceived community be made prominent and emphasized. The being, and relation to the individual, of a rightly conceived community find their proper interpretation in the philosophy of being, especially in the theory of relations.

Finally, since metaphysics encompasses the whole structure of being, all the particular sciences can be assigned to their appropriate place. There is no contradiction between philosophy and the sciences, since their subject matters are different; the particular sciences deal with the essence and the content of being. This is why the particular sciences do not directly explain the existence of God, and thus cannot claim to be the court of last instance in this matter. Additionally, metaphysics gives an insight into the whole of being, into its essential and existential aspects, enriched and made distinct by the particular sciences. The sought-after synergy of all the sciences is visible, and each science can be assigned to its place.

5. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, it should be stated that if a return to classical philosophy is proposed as a remedy for the crisis of contemporary culture and contemporary man, it is because this philosophy, through its emphasis on the role of real truth and real good as the justifications of the cognitive and moral orders respectively, places what we call culture on a basis of realism and secures the foundations of culture against subjectivism, relativism and pragmatism.

It should be borne in mind that man is a being, a person who, above all, desires to live in truth and good, and to discover the meaning of his own existence by means of these values. Classical philosophy facilitates this task. This philosophy gives man a very important truth about himself, namely that he is not merely historicality, that he has a nature, and essence, that is a person who constitutes a certain ontic foundation of historicality itself and guarantees the identity of the human being. Man learns also that he is not the absolute centre of the surrounding world, that he ultimately comes from and goes towards the Absolute, who is the highest Truth, Good and Beauty, and the highest Love. The final end of individual existence can be the subject of study not only of theology, but also of solid philosophy. Schelling rightly observed that there is no sense in asking how man can reach God, the real question is why and how man could depart from God. The answer to this question is known: man departed from God because he appointed himself “the measure of all things”, the absolute centre of the world. The antidote lies in the philosophy of the object, which since antiquity has regarded God and not man as “the measure of all things”.

Religion assumes what is given by Revelation; it lies outside the realm of philosophy, above and not beside it.

Religion implicitly assumes all the fundamental truths of philosophy, such as the objectivity and autonomy of being, the impossibility of reconciling being and non-being, objectively binding values, the existence of personal being, the freedom of human choice, the fact that the valuable should be affirmed by the person, the fact that a higher value should have priority over a lower one, etc. Becoming clearly aware

of such fundamental truths, and reinforcing their solidity is the foundation of what is religious in man.

The philosophical reflections leading towards the significance of the universe guide the human mind into the depths of reality, in Plato's words, "to his own home"¹⁴. They lead his gaze beyond the contingent world, beyond what is temporal and coincidental, towards what is eternal, towards the meaning of things in themselves, the meaning that they have because they are reflections of God and are subordinated to God. In this way, philosophy can prepare man for divine Revelation. The greatness of the need for philosophical studies, and of their rank, are therefore evident. True philosophy leads man to think and liberates him from all supposed self-sufficiency. By cultivating philosophy, man becomes the man of the desire that Saint Augustine expressed when he said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee"¹⁵. It can be said that a true philosopher is, like Plato, *παιδαγωγος εις Χριστόν*: a teacher leading towards Christ.

Translated by Magdalena Tomaszewska

O POTRZEBIE UPRAWIANIA FILOZOFII KLASYCZNEJ

Streszczenie

W artykule próbuje się odpowiedzieć na pytanie: dlaczego warto uprawiać filozofię klasyczną? Odpowiedź składa się z trzech punktów: w punkcie ukazano negatywne cechy współczesnej kultury krajów Zachodu. W punkcie drugim, pokazano sposób rozumienia filozofii klasycznej i jej rolę w przezwycięzeniu nihilizmu. W punkcie trzecim wskazano na możliwości wykorzystania filozofii w uprawianiu teologii.

Autor proponuje powrót do filozofii klasycznej w podejmowaniu próby uzdrowienia współczesnej kultury i człowieka, dlatego, że filozofia ta, poprzez akcentowanie realnej prawdy i realnego dobra, jako racji uzasadniających z jednej strony porządek poznawczy, z drugiej porządek moralny, ustawia kulturę, na bazie realizmu. Zabezpiecza również kulturę przed subiektywizmem, relatywizmem i pragmatyzmem.

¹⁴ Plato *Phaedrus*, 247 e.

¹⁵ Saint Augustine, *Confessions* I, 1.

W ramach tej filozofii człowiek dowiadyuje się bardzo istotnej prawdy o sobie, mianowicie, że nie jest wyłącznie samą dziejowością, ma bowiem swą naturę, istotę, jest osobą. Dowiadyuje się również, że nie jest absolutnym centrum otaczającego świata, że ostatecznie wyszedł i zmierza w kierunku Absolutu, który jest najwyższą Prawdą, Dobrem i Pięknem, co więcej, jest najwyższą Miłością. Ostateczny cel osobowego istnienia może być więc przedmiotem badań nie tylko teologii, ale również dobrze uprawianej filozofii.

Słowa kluczowe: filozofia klasyczna, kultura, nihilizm, religia