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THE CULTURAL ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY A Philosophy of Culture Approach

The condition for the personalist character of academic life, with its diverse manifestations, as well as the cultural and social tasks it fulfills, is a specific type of community. Its purpose is selfless, yet responsible (justified) cognition and communication of truth. The university has an integrating character, i.e., the research it conducts addresses the entire human culture in its spiritual as well as material aspects.

In my article I shall emphasize the crucial role of the university (university education) in the context of the ongoing changes in contemporary culture. Analyzing this issue, I shall indicate the need for humanizing universities in the face of the crisis of university education which has intensified all around the world in recent years.¹

First, I shall explain my understanding of the key concepts, i.e., those of culture and the university. Culture shall be understood in a broad sense as activities and works of man conceived as a personal (rational and free) being.² A philosophical understanding of culture consists in explaining and justifying—by presenting its ultimate constitutive factors—the human way of acting, grounded in the rational and free nature of the human being. I shall consider the university as a group of teachers and their students participating in a particular course of studies at a particular location. The university is a comprehensive and methodical practice of acquiring scientific knowledge and of its transmission at the possibly highest level in a particular cultural epoch, hence the character and the scholarly level of a given university signifies the cultural level of the community in which the university is active.³ In European culture, the university, committed to the pursuit of the truth, has been the main center for developing and spreading knowledge. The task of the university is to serve the human being who, as a person, can fully develop his or her capacities only on the foundation of truth acquired through rational cognitive effort

¹ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Rozmowy o uniwersytetach,” *Znak* 30, no. 6 (1978): 798–803.

² On the definition of culture from a philosophical point of view, see Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Kultura,” in *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, vol. 6 (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2005), 132–8.

³ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Uniwersytet,” in *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, vol. 9 (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2008), 605.

and free social dialogue.⁴ This view pertains to the personalist philosophy of the university, i.e., the philosophy that emphasizes the university's being grounded in the personal structure and dynamics of the human being. Based on the ancient Greek ideal of science, the practice and development of which was closely connected with the personal development of the human being,⁵ the philosophy in question also accentuates the personal dimension of university culture and of science, as well as the personal character of values fostered in academic life.

The same ideal provided the foundation for the initial model of the university: the medieval *universitas studiorum*, based on the formula: *fides quaerens intellectum*.⁶ The first universities in Europe were established in the context of Christian culture, which synthesized the philosophical accomplishments of the Greeks and the achievements of the Romans in the field of law. Christian culture was focused on the cognitive inquiry into the nature of man and the roots of his actions in a community.⁷ The most important ideals developed in ancient Greek culture and subsequently instrumental in the creation of universities in the Middle Ages were those of the love of truth, sharing the truth, and friendship. The ideals in question have never been entirely abandoned in academic practice.

The term '*universitas*' originally described a circle of researchers sharing their knowledge.⁸ The university patterned on the medieval idea of the *universitas* is expected to fulfill two fundamental functions: (1) the assimilative function, since the university makes it possible for the exact sciences, philosophy,

⁴ See Andrzej Wawrzyniak, "Od redaktora," in Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet*, ed. Andrzej Wawrzyniak (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1982), 10.

⁵ It was in the Greek culture that the significance of reason in human life was discovered. The emergence of philosophy and of the arts and sciences, as well as their high social status were consequences of that discovery. Aristotle stressed the unique value of rational cognition; significantly, he began his *Metaphysics* with the words: "By nature all men long to know." Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 980 a, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 4. Aristotle claimed that, in our cognition, we proceed from experience to art conceived as knowledge of the general, then to knowledge, and finally to wisdom, i.e., knowledge of the ultimate causes: "Human beings who naturally desire to know, gradually develop their natural inclination, beginning with everyday experience, passing on to art, next to science, to finally reach the science of sciences: the 'first' philosophy, or metaphysics, which pursues rational answers to the most important human questions. From experiencing sensations shared with animals the human being ascends to wisdom that reaches divine matters (theology)." Piotr Jaroś, *Człowiek i nauka: Studium z filozofii kultury* (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2008), 33–4. All quotations are translated by Marcin Garbowski.

⁶ See Andrzej Wawrzyniak, "Posłowie: O filozofię uniwersytetu," in Krąpiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet*, 479.

⁷ See Krąpiec, "Uniwersytet," 605.

⁸ See Mieczysław Markowski, *Pierwowzory uniwersytetów* (Olecko: Wydawnictwo Wszechnicy Mazurskiej, 2003), 66–73.

and theology to co-exist in one structure, (2) the integrating and world-view function, i.e., the function of ordering and integrating knowledge in the epistemological sense; the integrating function being particularly important in the wake of an increased specialization in education.⁹

The present paper will be divided into the following parts: (1) considerations focused on the philosophical issues related to the human being and culture, (2) remarks on philosophy as the fundamental academic discipline and on the role philosophy in university education, and (3) reflections on the institution of the university, in particular the contemporary Catholic university.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the reflection on the university from the perspective of the philosophy of culture, it is necessary to refer to the philosophy of the human being conceived as an autonomous subject of cultural activity, capable of knowing the truth and grounding his or her personal life (lived in love and freedom) in the primary value of truth. In the context of the relationship between the human being and the university, the person is seen as a being that pursues the truth through cultural activity and in cooperation with others.

Therefore, the philosophy of culture approach to the issue of the university should be based on metaphysics and on philosophical anthropology: these disciplines enable an explanation of the multi-faceted fact of being (existence) of man and render an existential concept of person possible. The latter rests on the ultimate, objective (metaphysical) interpretation of the human being as a specific being endowed with a distinctive, personal form of existence. The human person, upon this view, is autonomous and fulfills himself or herself through acts of decision in the context of the existential-axiological reality.¹⁰

In the present discussion of the problem of the university, the above-described concept of philosophical anthropology has been adopted (1) in the analyses of the personal openness of the human being (with all his or her po-

⁹ The views discussed above were proposed by a prominent representative of the Lublin School of Philosophy Mieczysław A. Krąpiec. They show numerous affinities to the concepts developed by John Henry Newman, José Ortega y Gasset, and Karol Wojtyła. See special issues of academic journals dedicated to the theme of the university: *Znak* 30, no. 6 (288) (1978); *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 11, no. 3–4 (1968); *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 21, no. 2 (1978). See also Alasdair MacIntyre, "Catholic Universities: Dangers, Hopes, Choices," in *Higher Learning & Catholic Traditions*, ed. Robert E. Sullivan (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), 1–22.

¹⁰ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Człowiek—dramat natury i osoby," in Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet*, 15–41; Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Człowiek i wartości," in Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet*, 43–57; Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Karola Wojtyły *Osoba i czyn*," in Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet*, 81–101.

tentialities) to reality as such, to the world of persons, and to one's own being in the pursuit of truth conceived as the key personal value,¹¹ (2) in the concept of a work of culture as a sign of the intrapersonal creativity of the human spirit and in the theory of the intellectual foundations of personal activities,¹² and (3) in indicating that the co-being of persons constitutes a space where human beings can fulfill themselves in an axiological dimension and where their dignity and completeness as persons who transcend any political or social structures can be affirmed.¹³

It should be emphasized that initially universities focused their research on the human being conceived as a sovereign entity and on the factors enhancing the rationality of human actions.¹⁴ The sovereignty of the human being is manifested in his or her pursuit of personal objectives, i.e., (a) finding the truth through natural and supernatural cognition, (b) accomplishing the good through free acts of will, (c) creating beauty in the processes of poietic cognition, (d) establishing contact with God, thus developing the relationship of sanctity.

Human beings, who exist as persons in the real world, are ends in themselves as they have been created by God in his image and likeness; as such, human beings fulfill their lives exclusively through God. It is therefore necessary to understand the ontic structure of man, the rationality of his actions, his freedom and its limits. To develop this type of knowledge, well-organized, specialized studies are indispensable.

In the context of philosophical anthropology and the philosophy of culture, the personalist meaning of the university becomes evident. Consequently, the university should be understood as a distinguished path taken by those who are motivated to get to know the truth about the reality; in this sense, the university can be understood as a unique mode of a methodic pursuit of truth, adequate to the ontological structure of the human being, on the one hand, and to the human being's vocation to perfection, on the other.¹⁵

The condition for the personalist character of academic life, with its diverse manifestations, as well as the cultural and social tasks it fulfills, is a specific type of community. The shape of the *universitas* as the community of those

¹¹ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Człowiek i wartości," 43–57.

¹² See ibidem; Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Człowiek twórcą kultury," in Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet*, 103–15; Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Kultura i wartość," in Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet*, 117–23.

¹³ Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Osoba i społeczność," in Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet*, 161–71; Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek i społeczeństwo*, in Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet*, 125–71.

¹⁴ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Uniwersytet," 607.

¹⁵ See Wawrzyniak, "Posłowie: O filozofię uniwersytetu," 486.

who teach and those who are taught: *universitas studiorum et studentium*, was worked out already in the Middle Ages.¹⁶ Its purpose is selfless, yet responsible (i.e., justified) cognition and communication of truth. The university has an integrating character, i.e., the research it conducts addresses the entire human culture in its spiritual as well as material aspects.¹⁷

In reference to spiritual culture, one must emphasize the fundamental role the university plays also at a national level by cultivating Christian culture as a foundation for national identity. In-depth reflection on this theme is an important task of the university: the task that can be accomplished only in a socially organized fashion.¹⁸ In particular, the university should actively engage in research into the constitutive elements of Christian culture as this culture is *par excellence* humanistic.

The humanistic dimension of research should also be preserved in the case of the natural sciences and technology, where the human aspect can easily be lost. Although the achievements of theoretical physics and technology are genuinely impressive, they may become hazardous to human beings.¹⁹ Therefore there is a real need for research and analyses referring both to the

¹⁶ When the university emerged in the Middle Ages as an institution of higher education, the term 'university' did not refer to buildings, administration, bureaucracy, ideology, specialization, or versatile education, but designated a spiritual relationship between the professors and the students which made it possible for the latter to learn to see better and to understand more. The University of Paris was defined as *universitas magistrorum et studentium Parisius commorantium* (the community of teachers and students living in Paris). See Palémon G l o r i e u x, "L'enseignement au Moyen Âge: Techniques et méthodes en usage à la Faculté de Théologie de Paris, au XIII^e siècle," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 35 (1968): 72. The university was above all a community. Without such a community—one of teachers and students—there is no university, despite there being buildings and administrative staff. See Piotr J a r o s z y ń s k i, "Edukacja na rozdrożu cywilizacji," in: *Filozofia i edukacja*, ed. by Piotr Tarasiewicz and Imelda Chłódna (Lublin: Fundacja "Lubelska Szkoła Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej," 2005), 18. The university organized according to the original medieval formula is the best model of serving truth in a community—the model that optimally corresponds to the dignity of truth.

¹⁷ See Henryk K i e r e ś, "Uniwersytet," in: *Służyć kulturze* (Lublin: Instytut Edukacji Narodowej, 1998), 170–1.

¹⁸ "Of course, this is done by people and in people. The results of the work done at the university are 'materialized' in particular human individuals who then become responsible citizens, representatives of their nations and members of the Church... To be faithful to its vocation, as well as completely independent in the sense of an educational institution, and to fulfill its essential goals, the University must continue its commitment to research and truth." Mieczysław A. K r ą p i e c, "Nauka w służbie prawdy: Rozmowa z Rektorem KUL-u ks. prof. dr. M. A. Krapcem OP," in *Kierunki* 26, no. 49 (1980): 1.

¹⁹ "The very organization of the natural sciences and technology, as well as the advancements of science, have gained such a level of autonomy that they threaten to escape human rational control and begin their own independent mechanical activity. Despite having been created by man, they may enslave him and become seriously dangerous." Mieczysław A. K r ą p i e c, "O naukowy profil Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego," *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 11, no. 3–4 (1968): 52.

ontic structure of the human being and to the human being as seen from various perspectives, significant to particular individuals as well as to the society as a whole. Such inquiries are helpful in bringing out the fact that the human being is the end of moral actions and of production rather than simply a means to an end. Such realization of the truth about the human being, about their activities and works, makes a deeper understanding of the sense of culture as such possible.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY?

Seen from the philosophical point of view, reflection on the university is situated within the general understanding of the fundamental relationship of the human being to truth. The problem of the university can be best addressed by philosophy, which is one of the oldest domains of rational knowledge. The epitome of all arts and sciences, philosophy lies at the foundations of any scientific pursuit, also in the methodological sense. As a type of evaluative knowledge, philosophy does not provide a new cognitive content, but teaches to understand the world, granting the human being a deeper, explanatory view of the reality. The responsibility of philosophy towards the academic community and, indirectly, towards the contemporary world for addressing fundamental existential questions grows with an increasing concern for the humanistic profile of culture.²⁰

It is thus necessary to reconsider the presence of philosophy in academic life and the way it supports the university in fulfilling its cultural and social functions. When the university was emerging as an institution, philosophy was recognized as the foundation and the keystone of the edifice of the knowledge and academic education it provided.²¹

The epistemic value of philosophy for the knowledge students can gain at universities is also worth noting. A knowledge-generating and formative role can be played only by a philosophy that offers rational answers to existential questions posed by man in his search for truth about himself. The classical *philosophia perennis* is an instance of such a philosophy, as it relates all knowledge to the human being and the theoretical considerations to the actual

²⁰ See W a r z y n i a k, "Posłowie: O filozofię uniwersytetu," 489.

²¹ See Mieczysław A. K r a p i e c, "O potrzebie filozofii," in Mieczysław A. Krapiec, *Człowiek, kultura, uniwersytet*, 225–30. Allan Bloom's attempt to defend the classical humanities against the unrestrained growth of specialized teaching is also worth noting. See Allan B l o o m, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987); see also Imelda Chłodna, *Edukacja amerykańska: Drogi i bezdroża* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2008).

reality. This philosophy is universal and rational: it aims to demonstrate, in the ontological sense, both the greatness and the contingency of the human being. Above all, *philosophia perennis* is a realist philosophy, which shows how the personal development of an individual and the growth of the society is related to the rational explanation of the reality.

Such a realist, universal and rational philosophy can combine all the individual cognitive aspects of particular scholarly disciplines and particular philosophical systems in one all-encompassing image of the reality. Such a philosophy is the only discipline that helps assess cognitive accuracy of theories, hypotheses, scientific and philosophical systems that embrace partial truths about human beings and the world. A knowledge of this philosophy (or, at least, of the philosophical disciplines that explain how individual disciplines have been constituted) is a condition for a deeper understanding of the arts and sciences studied at the university.²²

There is a clear need for teaching philosophy to students of mathematics and natural sciences.²³ Likewise, elements of philosophy are necessary in teaching the humanities and theology.²⁴ Another task philosophy fulfills and one that must not be forgotten is to provide the crucial areas of science with methodological insights.²⁵ A person with an academic background and representing a high level of intellectual formation needs to be acquainted with philosophical problems, basic methods of philosophical analyses, and fundamental philosophical literature. Denying university students access to philosophy is tantamount to depriving them of the foundations of rational culture and making

²² See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Rola filozofii w działalności uniwersytetu," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 20, no. 50 (1966): 1–2.

²³ "Including lectures in philosophy in the curricula of highly specialized areas of physics and technology has been motivated by the intention not only to provide a deeper historical knowledge of the foundations of particular areas of contemporary science, but also to make university students understand the role of philosophy in developing creative intuition and imagination, to explain how philosophy restores the unity of the reality broken by science into small segments, and to emphasize strictly humanistic function of philosophy, i.e., its ability to enrich the human being as such. The versatile history of philosophy, and a multiplicity of philosophical theories and interpretations greatly broaden the intellectual horizons of future specialists who will be working creatively in a variety of fields." Ibidem.

²⁴ "A humanist, on the other hand, remains focused on the products of human intellect, i.e., on intentional beings. To know the structure of this kind of being and, in particular, of human thought from which everything (that falls within the scope of the humanities) originates, is thus indispensable for humanistic education. Such knowledge can only be found in philosophy. As to the importance of philosophy for theology: the theology developed over the last two thousand years is, in fact, a philosophical interpretation of the Revelation. And thus all attempts at freeing theology from philosophy are based a misunderstanding." Ibidem: 2.

²⁵ "Philosophy ..., which studies cognition as such, provides the first foundations for a more specialized knowledge proper to different types of formal, real, natural, and humanistic disciplines." Ibidem.

it impossible for them to understand the meaning of the world, the existence of man, and the significance of scientific knowledge.²⁶ Thus it is important to promote the development of philosophy so that it could serve its cultural functions to the greatest possible extent.

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY AND ITS SPECIAL ROLE IN CULTURE

To conclude, let us consider briefly the role Catholic universities play in contemporary culture.²⁷ The fact that science, by providing the foundations for present-day economic and social structures, shapes the entire contemporary civilization, makes the role of Catholic universities particularly important. An unprecedented growth in the importance of science in the life of societies throughout the world is the reason why we need to focus on universities as scientific centers. The integrity of academic staff and the quality of their research affect, to a great extent, not only the economic-social development of particular countries, but also the character of their culture. As nowadays science provides the foundation and form to the life of our civilization, the world-view predominant in social environments in which universities and research centers operate becomes particularly important.²⁸ Therefore, the necessity for in-depth

²⁶ Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *O potrzebie filozofii*, 230.

²⁷ From November 29th to 30th 1972, Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, then rector of the Catholic University of Lublin, participated in a conference organized by the Congregation for Seminars and Institutes of Studies and attended by the delegates of Catholic universities from around the world. The Catholic University of Lublin was the only university from behind the Iron Curtain represented at this conference. The purpose of the conference was to establish *The Charter of Catholic Universities*. The charter "stresses the distinct elements of the university in its traditional understanding (the role of research, teaching and preparing for life in a society), emphasizes the traditional autonomy of the university, incorporates the contemporary stipulations that the entire academic community should participate in managing a university, developing its policy and study curricula; above all, however, the charter postulates a commitment of the academic community to the Christian message. The commitment in question is to be expressed in the presence of theology in the academic curriculum and in all matters inseparably connected with theology as the rational explanation of the Revelation of Christ, both at the level of cognition and that of aspirations pursued in particular social and cultural circumstances. Catholic universities are also the necessary and indispensable factor involved in the work of evangelization undertaken by the Church in contemporary society." See *Tygodnik Powszechny* 27, no. 2 (1973): 3.

²⁸ Krąpiec believed that this issue has become particularly important in the developing countries and nations: "They are poorer than the developed countries and they have less time to make up for the economic, social and general civilizational retardation. Universities and research centers in those countries are, out of necessity, state-run and they assume in the societies in question the role of driving powers that accelerate civilizational change. Poorer societies ... cannot afford to progress slowly, making errors and sustaining losses. They engage major social resources (a large part of their national gross domestic product) in the arts and sciences and demand from them effective solutions

reflection on the human being is, side by side with the increased importance of science in modern civilization, another ‘sign of the times.’²⁹

In those days, when the social and civilizational face of humanity was not shaped by science, the first European universities were Catholic universities. The community of the faithful cannot afford to stop organizing humanities-oriented universities. The problem of man, currently becoming the most important and the most urgent problem to resolve, is, in its deepest sense, inseparably connected to the Gospel and to the entire context of faith.³⁰

While reflecting on the cultural role of the Catholic university, it is necessary to emphasize its personalist character. The personalist perspective, adopted in theology and philosophy, is based on the knowledge concerning the ontic structure of the human being, the most important forms of human activity, the specific human creative powers, and the conditions in which the human being acts.³¹ It is only from this perspective that the question: ‘Who is the human being?’ can be answered.

The process of solving the problem of man should take the form of a co-ordinated effort of research teams, created by various university faculties and inter-faculty bodies, working together on crucial problems. In this way Catholic universities would guarantee integration of all scholarly disciplines and all types of knowledge.

In the Catholic university, the first place belongs to theology, which, as the *doctrina sacra*, is the “study of man in the aspect of salvation.”³² Among

leading to comprehensive development of those societies.” Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Uniwersytet Katolicki i rozwój narodu,” *Seminarium* 26, no. 4 (1974): 794.

²⁹ See John Paul II, The Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities: *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990).

³⁰ “In the face of the immense progress of science and the development of the contemporary civilization based on science and technology, the human being as such becomes the most important problem to be resolved on an academic level. The questions concerning the ontic structure of the human being, their destiny, the meaning of life, artifacts essentially related to human creativity, and the entire human cultural niche call for research in numerous scholarly disciplines. Such research is possible only in well-organized Catholic universities, in which where theology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and law, as well as the philologically and historically-oriented humanities will be able to produce an integrated image of the human being as such and to contribute, each in its own way, to the explanation of the ‘human phenomenon.’ Such a vast array of humanistic interests in research and teaching creates a special academic milieu in which the professors, as well as the students become particularly perceptive about the problem of man—today the most important problem for the entire civilization of the globalizing world.” Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Uniwersytet katolicki i rozwój narodu,” *Seminarium* 26, no. 4 (1974): 796–7.

³¹ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Rozmowy o uniwersytetach”: 801.

³² See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Uniwersytet katolicki i rozwój narodu”: 799. The functioning of the ecclesiastical departments (e.g., of theology, philosophy or canon law) in the Catholic university is regulated by the Apostolic Constitution on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties *Sapientia Christiana* of 1979.

the humanities, theology is the only discipline that enables the human being to grasp, in a rationally justified way, the deepest meaning of life, conduct, suffering, and work. As a discipline, theology presupposes the natural understanding of man and the world philosophy provides.³³ The understanding of man is accomplished by way of analyzing cognitive, volitional, creative, and religious activities through which man creates the realm of culture, i.e., the environment where the human person can develop and reach maturity.³⁴ The analyses in question are undertaken within the scope of various academic disciplines.

In its rational effort, theology relies on the research results of the humanities, particularly of philosophy. Thus it is impossible for a Catholic university to function effectively without a faculty of philosophy. Philosophy constitutes the foundation for interreligious dialogue, as well as for the dialogue with non-believers, and it may also become a basis for their agreement.³⁵ Philosophy can indicate a neutral ground where such an agreement on issues important to the human being, such as human values, basic conditions for human activity, freedom, and communication, may be reached.³⁶ Undoubtedly, philosophy exerts a humanizing influence on the academic community, due to a predominant position of philosophical anthropology. The influence in question concerns the very foundations of the understanding of man, his existential-personal structure, activities, and the meaning of human life in general.

Philosophy has also provided the context for the emergence of the humanities. In these disciplines an in-depth understanding of man is achieved through the study of human artifacts considered as reflections of the human spirit.³⁷ The study of the humanities at a Catholic university should aim to fill the 'gaps' in human knowledge, i.e., address problems that cannot be solved by the contemporary civilization based on science and technology. In this respect, the role of Catholic universities is to conduct, particularly in the fields of philosophy

³³ On the role of theology in university education, see John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/idea/>.

³⁴ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Uniwersytet," 607.

³⁵ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Uniwersytet katolicki i rozwój narodu": 801.

³⁶ The multiplicity of philosophical systems has made it necessary to develop a metatheory of philosophy which will emphasize and describe more precisely the specificity of philosophical knowledge, justification, and explanation. The difference between science and philosophy will thus become clear at as early a stage as possible, i.e., the stage of developing the conceptual apparatus, performing acts of judgement, constructing theories, and adopting criteria of the meaningfulness of philosophical sentences. This will ultimately contribute to the integration of human knowledge by making it possible to assess the value of philosophical inquiries undertaken within different philosophical systems." Ibidem: 802.

³⁷ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Uniwersytet," 607.

and theology, a theoretical inquiry into humanistic problems in order to find the ultimate foundations for the meaning of a human life.³⁸

In this context, two important characteristics of the university, also of the Catholic university, should be mentioned. The first of them is autonomy. The arts and sciences should be completely independent. Any form of instrumentalizing the arts and sciences is unacceptable, they must be developed without any constraints.³⁹ The autonomy of the arts and sciences is closely connected with their openness, i.e., being free from either external or internal determinants.⁴⁰ Absence of internal determination presupposes the concept of open science, i.e., of science that is not understood merely instrumentally (or developed to acquire the know-how), has its own, distinct methodological status, and in order to continue progressing, constantly reflects upon its methods. External indetermination, on the other hand, means that science is not influenced by any ideology and precludes any form of cultural monism.

Therefore the functioning of universities, and in particular of Catholic universities, requires a concerted effort of methodologists—an effort undertaken not only in view of the good of their own universities, but for the benefit of whole society—to spread the knowledge of the specificity of the various domains of the life of the human spirit, thus promoting cultural pluralism.⁴¹ Pluralism, freedom of research and publication, open dialogue, and making clear distinctions (following the guidelines offered by methodology) between various domains of spiritual life are indispensable for cultural openness.

Generally speaking, the role of Catholic universities consists in offering practical solutions to the problem of the co-existence of faith and knowledge and in explaining their autonomous development within their proper areas. As

³⁸ As Zenon Grocholewski notes, various disciplines taught at Catholic universities should be enriched by philosophical reflection and by the light of the Gospel. See Zenon Grocholewski, "Rola wyższych uczelni katolickich z perspektywy pontyfikatu Jana Pawła II," *Horyzonty Wychowania* 5, no. 9 (2006): 26.

³⁹ Krąpiec referred to the situation of the Catholic University of Lublin: "We have gained experience during the interwar period, characterized by a good development of the autonomous arts and sciences in Poland, including the growth of universities. All the good we had experienced was included in our statutes that helped us persevere and, in the difficult years following the Second World War, develop our activities in the field of research, teaching, and formation. The good in question was the sovereignty of research and administrative autonomy." Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Nauka w służbie prawdy: Rozmowa z Rektorem KUL-u ks. prof. dr. M. A. Krąpcem OP": 1.

⁴⁰ See *ibidem*.

⁴¹ "The arts and sciences must defend themselves against all incompetence by clearly defining their subject, purpose, and method. The arts and sciences must defend also other domains of the human spirit in order not to render thinking impossible to fellow human beings. Thinking becomes impossible if one cannot express one's thoughts with words, because a thought can achieve its clear and complete meaning only when it finds its ultimate expression in words." Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "O otwartość uniwersytetów," *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 21, no. 2 (1978): 12.

those areas tend to ‘overlap’ to a certain extent in the life of a human being, the role of Catholic universities can also be described positively as creating an adequate Catholic culture, while avoiding any kind of one-sided (e.g., fideistic or scientistic) approach.⁴²

The reasons for the existence of Catholic universities are thus self-evident. Their objective, which coincides with one the most important tasks of the Catholic Church, is to help the human being understand who he or she is, explaining the ontic structure of the human being and his or her destiny. Therefore the curricula developed at Catholic universities address the following most important aspects of the life of the human being conceived as person: (1) the aspect of salvation (studied by theology), (2) the aspect of the human person’s ontic structure and his or her conduct (studied by philosophy), (3) the aspect of living in a community (studied by law and social sciences), and (4) the aspect of creating artifacts (studied by the humanities). So designed, academic education encompasses the totality of human culture. Referring to the university, Pope Benedict XVI postulated a new “experience of *universitas*”⁴³ which would draw both on the ideas present in the classical culture and on the innovative efforts to find new potentialities and new limits of rationality.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that as the structure and objectives of the Church, as well as the nature of the human being and his or her conduct have not changed in time, the essential objectives of academic education remain as they have always been. They are rooted in the understanding of man as an autonomous, sovereign being. The need to educate human beings and create humanistic culture persists. Also, two major goals pursued by the university are still valid: to understand who the human person is and to defend humanness and help it flourish. Those two goals coincide with the objectives of the realistically conceived culture.

Translated by *Marcin Garbowski*

⁴² See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Konfesyjność uczelni i wolność nauki,” *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 1, no. 1 (1958): 19.

⁴³ See Benedict XVI, “Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections.” Meeting with the representatives of science, Regensburg, September 12, 2006, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Imelda CHŁODNA-BŁACH, The Cultural Role of the University: A Philosophy of Culture Approach

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The article addresses the role of the university in culture. Discussion of this issue is becoming particularly important nowadays, especially with a crisis of humanistic knowledge, on one hand, and the fact that higher education is increasingly becoming mass education, on the other. The author underlines

the humanistic function of the university in the society and in culture. This function is rooted in the personalistic foundations of the university and gives meaning to the tasks it fulfills, such as advancing research and teaching, forming the intelligentsia, providing professional training, spreading knowledge, and promoting culture. The reflection offered in the paper is divided into three parts: (1) considerations focused on the philosophical issues concerning the human being and culture, (2) remarks on philosophy as the fundamental form of scientific cognition and on the role of philosophy in academic education, and (3) reflection on the institution of the university, in particular, the contemporary Catholic university.

Keywords: culture, person, education, university, philosophy, philosophical anthropology

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Imelda CHŁODNA-BŁACH, Rola uniwersytetu w kulturze. Ujęcie filozoficzno-kulturowe

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W artykule ukazano, jaką rolę uniwersytet pełni w kulturze. W dzisiejszych czasach, kiedy z jednej strony zauważamy kryzys wiedzy humanistycznej, a z drugiej strony umasowienie szkolnictwa wyższego, problematyka ta nabiera szczególnego znaczenia. Autorka podkreśla humanistyczną funkcję uniwersytetu w społeczeństwie i kulturze. Funkcja ta odwołuje się do personalistycznych podstaw uczelni i nadaje sens pełnionym przez nią zadaniom: rozwijaniu nauki i nauczania, kształtowaniu inteligencji, kształceniu zawodowemu, upowszechnianiu wiedzy i promowaniu kultury. Podejmowane rozważania koncentrują się na następujących zagadnieniach: (1) filozoficznym ujęciu człowieka i kultury z perspektywy antropologicznej; (2) filozofii jako podstawowej formie poznania naukowego i jej funkcji w edukacji uniwersyteckiej; (3) refleksji nad instytucją uczelni, zwłaszcza współczesnej uczelni katolickiej.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura, osoba, edukacja, uniwersytet, filozofia, antropologia filozoficzna

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