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**THE DISPUTE ABOUT THE VISION OF MAN
IN THE RESEARCH AND DIDACTIC ACTIVITY
OF PROF. ZOFIA JÓZEFA ZDYBICKA USAHJ:
AN ATTEMPT TO RECONSTRUCT
THE PEDAGOGICAL DIMENSION
OF THE PHILOSOPHER'S LIFE AND WORK
AS A VOICE IN THE DISCUSSION ON THE ISSUE
OF CONSERVATIVE PEDAGOGY**

S u m m a r y: The article is devoted to reconstruct the pedagogical dimension of the life and work of Zofia Józefa Zdybicka USAHJ. This is done by revealing the values that guided the researcher in her life, her commitment to work for the community, but above all by her contribution to reading the issue of the philosophical foundations of pedagogy, in particular the relationship between these in the field of philosophical anthropology and the direction of educational practice. Hence, in the content of the article, elements of the biography and memories of the philosopher were recalled, showing her as a person devoted to the upbringing of young generations and a leading Polish Thomist associated with the academic community of the Faculty of Christian Philosophy of the Catholic University of Lublin, involved in disputes about the vision of man. The subject of the analysis is her research activity in two periods of modern Polish history: (1) when the communists were in power and (2) nowadays, when we see a strong influence of liberal currents on the intellectual formation of young people. We put forward the thesis that an attitude towards religion determined, and continues to determine, the axis of the dispute both in the times of the dominance of Marxist anthropology in pedagogy and in the vision of man, which is the backbone of the culture of late modernity.

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Is Zdybicka a conservative educator? You would have to ask the Professor about that. In the article, we indicate that a conservative value found in the philosopher's works can be seen as her statements for the need to secure the spiritual and transcendent dimension of human existence in upbringing. Analyses in the article are based on several selected texts of the scholar, including *Participation of being. Attempt to explain the relation between the world and God* (1972); *Person and Religion. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (in Polish 1977; in English: New York 1991); *Religion and The Religion Sciences* (1988); *God or Sacred?* (2007); *Atheism Trap* (2012). The article consists of two parts. Part 1 presents the essence of the dispute about the vision of man from the perspective of Zdybicka's metaphysical research on religion. Part 2 presents a comparison of the two models of humanism: theocentric (which the scholar supports) and anthropocentric (in the Marxist and postmodern version) in the context of the criticism of atheism that the scholar conducted when Marxism prevailed in Polish educational systems (Part 2.1) and after the political transformation in Poland since the 1990s (Part 2.2), when the possibility of changing anthropological foundations in education opened up.

Key words: religion, metaphysics, atheism, conservative

Introduction: A Pedagogue and Philosopher

In today's world, we tend to look at man as a demiurge, who not only rules and controls the world but is also a self-taught pedagogue. Is it possible to think about life in a manner which is different from that promoted in our times? The life of Professor Zofia J. Zdybicka exemplifies this idea: "When I look back on my life from a longer perspective, as I have just turned 80, I see perpetual God's blessing in it."² Although seemingly her biography can be seen as an example of a female career in the world dominated by men, it has undoubtedly been determined by other values: service to God and charity deeply rooted in her religious life.

Professor Zdybicka is an Ursuline of the Congregation of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus, a leading Polish Thomist associated with the scientific circles of the Catholic University of Lublin,³ as well as the first Polish nun awarded a professorship. Following her vocation as a nun, she discovered her successive passions: scientific, educational and organizational.

In addition to her scientific activities, she was engaged in the life of her congregation and the Church: she was, inter alia, a member of the General Council of her congregation (1963–1983) and (2001–2007), Mother Superior of a part of Lublin congregation (1983–2003). She took part in the works the Primate Social Council (1986–1990), in the Commissions of the Polish Episcopate (1986–1990): for Culture, for Catholic Teaching, for Dialogue with Non-Believers.

² The interview with Professor Z.J. Zdybicka conducted by Justyna Wiszniewska: "I was lucky to meet saints in my life" [Miałam szczęście spotkać w życiu świętych]. *Nasz Dziennik* 14–15, November 2009: 13.

³ Cf. Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, Andrzej Maryniarczyk, trans. Hugh McDonald, *The Lublin Philosophical School*, <http://www.ptta.pl/lsf/history.pdf> [accessed: 20.01.2023].

She joined the congregation in Pniewy soon after her maturity examinations (1948), adopting a religious name of Józefa. What impacted the decision was her fascination with the figure of Urszula Ledóchowska. Zdybicka became acquainted with the biography of Ledóchowska when learning in a commercial secondary school in Lublin. It made a long-lasting impression on her. "After reading it in one breath, I knew I had found a pearl" – she recollects years later.⁴ What most appealed to the young girl was the secret of the agony of Christ, a "proof of endless love," being the basis of St. Ursula's spiritual gift. Sister Józefa admired Ledóchowska's "personal fervour of love for the heart of Jesus and for people," her volition of love – "if only I could love" and "if only I could help others commune with God": these charismata were verified many a time during her hard and self-denying work carried out in extremely difficult conditions in many different countries.⁵ It was Ledóchowska's living faith – "strong unswerving love attracting people irrespective of their religious denomination, nationality or status"⁶ that convinced Zdybicka to the Congregation of the Ursulines.

The young sister was first responsible for the finances in the orphanage in Otorowo (near Pniewy). However, her great dream was to study. She soon realized her ambition: in the academic year of 1956/1957 she became a student of philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin. That was a time of changes for the university: it was then that new fields of study and new majors were introduced, such as Theoretical Philosophy, in which Sister Józefa became interested. The philosophy classes were conducted by, inter alia, S. Swieżawski, Fr. M. Kurdziałek, Fr. K. Wojtyła, Fr. S. Kamiński, as well as Fr. M. Krąpiec, who supervised her master and doctoral dissertations. Z. Zdybicka obtained her postdoctoral degree in 1970 and a professorship in 1988. Her working life was full of numerous research visits – both in Poland and abroad, as well as of educational activity, which included organization of scientific meetings. Her life was intensive, dynamic, but diametrically different from the one dictated by the canon of modernity, since it was experienced in keeping with the monastic vocation of an Ursuline of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus.⁷

The present article primarily focuses on the contribution of Zofia Zdybicka to philosophical underpinnings of pedagogy, and in particular on the relationships

⁴ Wiszniewska, "I was lucky", 14.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Full bibliography of Professor Z.J. Zdybicka's works, doctoral dissertations supervised by her, as well as the source literature on her output were presented in a book dedicated to her on the occasion of her 80th birthday anniversary: *Filozofia o religii. Prace dedykowane Siostrze Profesor Zofii Józefie Zdybickiej*, ed. Włodzimierz Dłubacz (Lublin: KUL i PTTA, 2009), 27-52. A multi-author bilingual (Polish-English) two-volume work was dedicated to her output. It was published as part of a series "Polish Christian Philosophy of the Twentieth Century": Jan Sochoń, Maciej Bała, Jacek Grzybowski et al., *Zofia Józefa Zdybicka* (Kraków: Ignatianum University Press, 2019 – <https://pchph.ignatianum.edu.pl>). These works are used as one of the sources providing information about her life.

between the theses in the area of philosophical anthropology and orientation of pedagogical and educational practice. Thus, the subject of our analysis is mainly the research activity of Professor Zdybicka, who concentrated on the phenomenon of religion. We argue here that the attitude to religion has determined the axis of dispute in the times of prevailing Marxist anthropology in pedagogy, as well as in the vision of man, which is the cultural basis of late modernity. Zdybicka's output seems to confirm the thesis, particularly in her definition of religion, which is based on the metaphysical theory of participation. As indicated in the article, the philosopher not only analyzed religious experience from the perspective of the experiencing subject, which is typical of contemporary philosophical thinking, but also conducted research related to the existence and nature of God. The exploration of the issue led her to formulating a thesis about the natural religiousness of man. Thus, she found herself in opposition to the theories viewing religion as a cultural phenomenon, the perspective that was adopted by Marxists and which is still very popular among those who consider religious experience a subjective phenomenon, the result of individual preferences of man. In this article, we will try to show that revealing the essence of the dispute related to the vision of man can open an authentic discussion about the shape of humanism as an inspiration for pedagogy. This can be done by exposing the issue of openness/closure of education to real, dynamic, dialogue-like and responsive person-to-person relationship between God and man (that is Zdybicka's definition of religion). We think that the resolution of the issue can provide a useful contribution to the discussion on the formula of conservative pedagogy.⁸

Axis of dispute

The output of Professor Zdybicka is extensive. Looking at it from the perspective of the discussed issue, five of her works deserve mentioning: *Participation of Being* [...] (1972), *Man and Religion* [...] (1977); *Religion and Religious Studies* (1988); *God or Sacrum?* (2007); *The Trap of Atheism* (2012). I think that the axis of dispute revolves around the interpretation of the fact of religion. Zdybicka proposed her own original

⁸ It needs to be added that this article continues the reflections on the issue of conservative pedagogy, which were presented in *Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna* 8 (2022): 103-127 ("Problem teocentrycznej antropologii w filozoficznej myśli Andrzeja Maryniarczyka SDB jako przyczynek do identyfikacji współczesnego nurtu konserwatywnego w polskiej pedagogice", co-autor S. Chrobak) and two earlier publications in *Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna* ("Problematyka filozoficznych podstaw pedagogiki w sporze Wydziału Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej KUL z marksizmem". *Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna* 3 (2017): 63-80; "Realizm filozoficzny Polskiej Szkoły Filozofii Klasycznej jako podstawa modelu wychowania otwartego na religię". *Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna* 2 (2016): 215-229). However, we are far from perpetuating "Catholic is conservative" patterns and resolving the questions: are spiritually active Christians mostly conservative or liberal? see Amir Azarvan, "An Introductory Look at the Impact of Christian Spiritual Practices on Political Views". *Studies in Spirituality* 2(2) Fall (2016): 32-43.

definition based on a deepened metaphysical analysis of the phenomenon. In the process of defining religion, the book devoted to the theory of participation (the first of the above-mentioned books) turned out to be extremely important since it shows the ontic basics of religion. Why? Professor Zdybicka did not restrict herself only to the analysis of religious experience from the perspective of the experiencing subject, which is typical of contemporary philosophical thinking; she also entered the path of metaphysical research (the problem of existence and nature of God). The exploration of the issue led her to the formulation of the thesis about natural religiousness of man. Thus, she found herself in opposition to the theories that reduce religion to a mere cultural phenomenon; according to this approach, which is characteristic of the post-metaphysical landscape of contemporary culture, it is possible to talk about religiousness of man, excluding the ontic basics of religion. Professor Zdybicka, however, was interested in the rationale explaining the existence of religion, and it was the theory of participation that paved the way for the argumentation and research. What are the main tenets of the theory? Professor Zdybicka draws on the Thomist ideas of Thomas Aquinas that prioritize existence as an act of being rather than an essence. The philosophical analysis posits that the compound internal structure of being can be explained by the fact that the rationale for existence is the being whose essence is existence. The being (the Absolute/God) is an indispensable and the only one reason for the existence of other beings that exist by virtue of participation in Him. The relationship still lasts. Zdybicka mentions three kinds of causality. First and foremost is instrumental causality which involves a necessary existence-related relationship to the Absolute. The other two kinds of causality include pattern-related causality that determine the functioning of beings and teleological causality that define their purpose.⁹ These three types of causality comprise the concept referred to as the participation of unnecessary beings in the Absolute Being/God. God is the maker of the existence of beings: He causes them to exist. He is their pattern: there are as many ideas in God as physical beings in the world. God grants existence to everything in keeping with His ideas and these actions are oriented at Him as the Most Perfect Being. He is also the ultimate purpose of the world, which has come into being. Beings exist; they are good, wanted and loved by God; when they realize their nature, they make their way towards Him as the ultimate purpose. In the case of rational beings, this happens when they consciously through cognition and love form a bond with God. Man is then able to open to God, aspire to be with God, acknowledge Him as the highest Good of his life and decide to lead a religious life. Zdybicka shows that participation as a relationship between God – the necessary being and unnecessary beings is, on the one hand, a real relationship (i.e. it concerns being granted an existence); on the other, it is an indispensable and one-sided

⁹ Zofia J. Zdybicka, *Partycypacja bytu. Próba wyjaśnienia relacji między światem a Bogiem* (Lublin: PTTA, 2017), 167-202.

relationship as it enters the structure of a derivative being; there is no existence that would not involve participation in the Absolute; since the world has come into being by virtue of God's free will, the relationship is asymmetrical and nonreciprocal; it is also a dynamic relationship since beings evolve and although engaged in various relationships, they are basically related to the Absolute.

Further research allowed Zdybicka to develop her definition of religion with an appropriate degree of generality typical of metaphysics. Thus, she acquired a starting point for ordering various interpretations of religion adopted within a variety of contemporary non-philosophical research of the phenomenon (e.g., in the area of sociology, psychology or religious studies). She proposed the following definition of religion:

[...] religion is an ontic person-person relation (relation "I" – "You") between the human person and the personal Absolute, in which the former participates as in the ultimate source of existence, and the ultimate end of life. The relation is real-existential, necessary, intersubjective (personal), »moral«, dynamic and composed of bilateral activities, variously perfecting the human subject.¹⁰

The book *Man and Religion* [...], in which the concept was presented, was not published for two years owing to censorship. It was the thesis, according to which religion is an area indispensable for every man that is intricately connected with the existence of man as a person, human nature, rationality, that was controversial. Zdybicka explains that

the censors insisted on adding a piece of extra information that religion was indispensable for a religious man or a Christian, which would negate the basic thesis of the book. After many attempts, I had a meeting with the censor in charge. He approached the problem with kindness, suggesting that the following annotation should be added at the back of the title page: "study aid for the students of the Catholic University of Lublin." This definitely narrowed down the circle of the target audience, but the content of the book was not distorted. I could agree to that and it helped. "How fortunate it is that you keep your spirits up!" he added in a low voice. He had to, however, account for the decision before a Soviet censor in Warsaw.¹¹

The subtitle of the aforementioned book was *An Outline of Philosophy of Religion*. It shows the contribution of Professor Zdybicka to developing the concept of philosophy of religion as an autonomous subdiscipline that is oriented at the theory of being. In keeping with the concept, the core of philosophy is metaphysical consideration of reality and, most of all, the concept of an existent being. The metaphysical formula of analysis adopted by Zdybicka allowed her to delineate specific lines of philosophical enquiry (e.g. in the issue of atheism, in the area of religious studies knowledge as a substitute for philosophy in the field of education,

¹⁰ Ead., *Człowiek i religia. Zarys filozofii religii* (Lublin: TN KUL, 1984), 307.

¹¹ Wiszniewska, "I was", 15.

in the area of Christian philosophy or in the areas that replace the concept of God with the concept of sacrum in their considerations). Years later, she explains what was important for her in philosophy:

I was mainly interested in metaphysics. I particularly focused on the issues of God and religion: I was convinced that these questions are the most significant for man and a lot of misunderstanding had accumulated around them in contemporary thought and culture. In addition to that, atheistic and antireligious Marxist philosophy was then a concrete and real threat. Marxists developed and disseminated their own religious studies, which showed that there was no God, that religion is a transient and historical fact; all this was meant to accelerate the elimination of religion from Poland. At that time, philosophy of religion as a separate discipline did not exist within classical philosophy. That is why I and others from my circle were convinced that the gap needed to be filled in. Thus, I focused my interests and investigations on the phenomenon of religion as a basic human fact and aimed at formulating philosophy of religion.¹²

The metaphysical theory of religion proposed by Zdybicka arose controversy among philosophers, initiating a dispute over man and the shape of humanism; it also had its didactic and educational implications.¹³ Professor Zdybicka tried to expose a difference in attitudes between those who although raised in existential uncertainty are open to seek God and the proponents of hard-line theses of theoretical atheism. She emphasized that the existence and nature of God are not the subject of direct cognition, which is diametrically different from the sensory cognition of the world. Accordingly, when presenting the problem in the didactic and educational process man needs to be left open to the issue of the relationship with God: “[...] Man comes to know God indirectly. The affirmation of God, even in the most spontaneous forms, always implies reasoning which contains a structural element as well as a mental process, which can partly be erroneous.”¹⁴ She also added:

Learning about God requires a great intellectual and moral effort on the part of man. The very structure of affirmation of God is triggered by a volitional, or even, emotional moment. The knowledge of God implies committed cognition. Man can acknowledge the existence of God or not; man can be willing or unwilling to affirm God. Man can adopt such a cognitive attitude by virtue of which negation of God can be entirely justified. The question about God (*utrum Deus sit?*) is not a rhetorical question or an apologetic device. It expresses a problem that is real and difficult, yet, at the same time, the most essential for man.¹⁵

¹² Ibid., 14.

¹³ Cf. Zofia J. Zdybicka, “Kulturowe zawirowania wokół człowieka XX wieku”, *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 2 (1995–1996), vol. 43–44: 55–68; ead., “Transcendentne odniesienie człowieka?” In: *Wychowanie osobowe*, ed. Franciszek Adamski (Kraków: Wyd. Petrus, 2011), 39–58.

¹⁴ Ead., *Pułapka ateizmu* (Lublin: PTTA, 2012), 217.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Professor Zdybicka notes that God will always remain a mystery for man, even for the one that affirms His existence. Drawing on the ideas of St. Thomas, she emphasizes that man can know that God exists, but cannot have comprehensive knowledge of who He is. The space for metaphysical discoveries is limited and a religious belief does not provide automatic solutions. She states: “Even for an ardent believer God is not so obvious; also, in this area idols can emerge. In addition, faith is a dynamic process: it can evolve or weaken. Having its supernatural source, it is – as everything in our life – exposed to rejection, regress, inadequate response on the part of man.”¹⁶ Zdybicka was aware of a number of difficulties faced by man as far as the issue of God was concerned. She, however, followed the path paved by Thomas Aquinas and focused her metaphysical research on the issue of atheism.

Atheism and the Shape of Humanism

The definition of religion developed by Zdybicka contains a message that will accompany the philosopher in every work, book, in her didactic and social activity. Since it concerns the need of providing human existence with both spiritual and transcendent protection, it can be treated as a legacy of conservative thought. On its basis, one can try to reach the following conclusion: being closed in the world of impermanent values, man does not attempt to pursue essential life goals. Thus, the humanistic model conditioned by the proposed definition of religion is theocentric. It constitutes the axis of dispute with anthropocentric humanism and atheism connected with it.

Professor Zdybicka was interested in the relationship between atheism and the shape of humanism, which impacted social life through politics and education. Since culture is determined by the sources of humanism, she tried to understand the reality in which she lived: the understanding of culture of the period involved exploring the essence of the humanistic model. The attitude to religion was emblematic.

Looking at Professor Zdybicka’s scientific output, it is possible to distinguish two phases of anthropological discussions in which she engaged. The first one, during the Polish People’s Republic, was characterized by her polemics with Marxism and humanism promoted by it. The second phase begins after the political transformations that took place at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s: it is then that Zdybicka focused her attention on new problems related to liberal cultural trends in Poland. It needs to be added that during those two phases, she was interested in atheism and its philosophical sources. Thus, she focused on the shift in philosophical thinking initiated in the seventeenth century (i.e. the change of the objective formula to

¹⁶ Ibid., 218.

the subjective one and the departure from realistic metaphysics), as well as on the ideas propagated by atheistic thinkers (e.g. in positivist, neopositivist, existential, psychological trends, in analytic philosophy or Polish Marxism). The philosopher tried to answer the following questions: “[...] What led to this basic alienation that was the most dangerous for man? What happened that Christian culture of great philosophical tradition eliminated and forgot God and went on to attribute His features and functions to man?”¹⁷ Zdybicka shows that atheism is a complex phenomenon determined by theoretical factors (philosophical reflection), as well as a host of other factors that are psychic, social and cultural in nature. The former implies the negation of God that is based on metaphysical reasoning (e.g. monism), epistemological argumentation (agnosticism) or axiological arguments.¹⁸ The latter relate to an attitude of man who lives as if there was no God since it is the worldliness that matters and the relationship with God has no real value. Professor Zdybicka also pointed to mutual conditioning of these two types of atheism: theoretical negation of the existence of God, in the form of agnosticism or any other system of values, eventually refers to life. In other words, the consequences of this kind of attitude are inevitable; they are most of all evident in moral conduct and the shaping of conscience.

Zdybicka presented a comprehensive analysis of atheism in *The Trap of Atheism* (2012). The eponymous term “trap” refers to the evaluation of culture in which man deprived himself of reference to God (or was deprived of this reference by didactic and educational processes). According to Zdybicka, atheism – supposedly championing a cause of man – did not reinforce human dignity; on the contrary, it downgraded it: “forgetting God leads to the confusion of man” – she writes in one of the chapters of the book. That is why she calls atheism a “trap” and points to its social and cultural consequences: the twentieth century, in which atheism was promoted, brought the recurrence of barbarism on an unprecedented scale – inhuman and totalitarian systems with new deities were created.

Professor Zdybicka formed her evaluation of atheism on the basis of her metaphysical research of the fact of religion and on her search for a formula of humanism that would be adequate to the truth about man explored in metaphysics; as already mentioned, she also took into account historical changes in philosophical thinking. She noted, inter alia, that relativism and subjectivism characteristic of the culture of late modernism, which are deeply rooted in the shift of philosophical thinking that goes back to the seventeenth century, are the main reasons for downplaying the issue of ontic basics of religion.¹⁹ One of these was the Cartesian shift towards

¹⁷ Ibid., 110.

¹⁸ Owing to the aforementioned relationships, Zdybicka proposed a deepened classification of theoretical atheisms – cf. *ibid.*, 84-91.

¹⁹ Cf. Zdybicka, *Pułapka*, 48-82, 110-139, 216-231.

consciousness (*cogito*), which directed the minds of philosophers towards idealism and found its continuation in the thought of Kant, Hegel, phenomenologists, and hermeneutics, for example. She noted, inter alia, the dependence of many forms of contemporary atheism on panlogical evolutionism of Hegel from the beginning of the nineteenth century: “The authors negating the existence of God directly referred to Hegel’s transcendental idealism, which regarded basic Christian dogmas as moments in which human transcendental subjectivity/self-consciousness within the world and history is being activated.”²⁰ According to Zdybicka, the Hegelian notion of the Absolute became a starting point for anthropomorphism of God and deification of man, which inevitably led to the rejection of God and creation of anthropological atheism (man in place of God)²¹, also known as positive atheism or humanistic atheism. Its theses were developed in Feuerbach’s naturalistic and materialistic theory, which inspired Marxists.

Zdybicka focused her research on the systems negating the transcendence of God, in which God is an immanent idea in relation to consciousness, the world and history. She was convinced that the reason for radical atheistic solutions lies in extreme modern rationalism and empiricism of the Age of Enlightenment, as well as positivist concept of science, which disparage metaphysics. The dispute conducted by her was, on the one hand, purely theoretical (philosophical argumentation), but, on the other, strongly inspired by the reality that surrounded her: it concerned the reality of culture – its present and future (the latter mainly due to its didactic and educational impact). The knowledge and wisdom allowed Zdybicka to distance herself in the evaluation of current affairs. The successive sections of the present article focus on her critique of atheistic humanism, the manifestations of which she could observe in Polish culture. Starting with the argumentation formulated when Marxist ideology was prevailing, the article goes on to discuss Zdybicka’s critique of the liberal trends of the so-called late modernity.

Critique of atheism and Marxist humanism

Marxism interpreted religion as a purely cultural product. It was thus considered (similarly to its subject God) a merely human product: in difficult socio-economic conditions, we tend to idealize reality and create God; religion strengthens the existent unjust social structures and destructively affects the revolutionary consciousness of the oppressed (it is like ‘opium’). To boost human confidence and awaken the consciousness of the group, it was necessary to reject the idea of God and initiate a fight against religion. The objective was not only to diametrically change social relations, but also the thinking of man that would enable them to

²⁰ Ibid., 60.

²¹ Ibid.

disentangle themselves from their “priest-like nature.”²² As well known, Marxism was by definition revolutionary, and the communist regimes, ideologically connected with it, openly opposed religion. Atheisation of society, being one of the forms, constituted deliberate actions that comprised various areas of life: education, science and culture. Zdybicka observed these processes and saw their consequences in the activities of academic circles, particularly those responsible for pedagogue education, in the propaganda activities of various unions and magazines, and, most of all, in the elimination of the Church from public life (a record of dramatic history). She wrote that “the confrontation between Marxism and religion was not merely restricted to a theoretical discussion. It often concerned concrete human life, concrete human events, including social and political ones.”²³ How can Marxist humanism be characterized? According to Zdybicka, Marxist anthropology put man in place of God. God was perceived as a competitive reality in relation to man. The ideas of Marxist humanism were to be implemented by depriving the idea of God of its imaginary divine attributes and returning them to man. It is man, not God, that is to be the creator of the truth; man is to have absolute freedom and be a demiurge of their own history and the history of the world.²⁴ Zdybicka tried to reveal the deceptive character of these declarations. She posed questions related to the rational foundation of the ideology and the truth related to the vision of man which it forcefully promoted; she questioned its progressive character. The philosopher pointed to the fact that in keeping with Marxism, philosophy focusing on action was becoming an ideology: it did not aim at revealing the truth about reality but targeted at changing it. That is why Marxism aggressively entered all areas of culture, trying to raise new man.

Zdybicka saw this “practical” dimension of Marxism in its approach to religion: Marxism was not concerned with exploring the truth about this phenomenon in its ontic aspect but with taking over social consciousness. Zdybicka noted that according to Marxists, the idea of God has a purely practical status: the longer it exists in the human mind, the longer it takes for a proletarian revolution to come to fruition.²⁵ If one maintains that there is God, one acts against the revolution, in the interest of the old order. According to Zdybicka, this interpretation stems from an arbitrary decision and is entirely argument-resistant. That was typical of Marxism: although often referred to as scientific philosophy, it did not manage to

²² To support the thesis, Zdybicka chooses the following quotation from K. Marx: “The aim now was the battle of secular man with a priest outside of them; it concerned the fight against their inner priest, against their priest-like nature” – *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (cf. Zdybicka, *Pulapka*, 63).

²³ Zdybicka, *Pulapka*, 185.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 125, 143.

avoid dogmas.²⁶ Entering a dispute with Marxism, Zdybicka analyzed the basics of its “dogmata” by pointing to their historical conditioning: she found them in modern philosophy, German idealism, positivism, and most of all – in the need for embedding it in socio-political reality, which departed from the classical paradigm of philosophy as a theory, that is, the cognition of the truth about reality for its own sake (“to know for the sake of knowing”). According to Zdybicka, a good example of Marxist dogma was imposing atheism on anthropology as the only right perspective, which was supported by a thesis of religious alienation, allegedly being in the way of attaining social progress and full humanity. The dogma was the basis of educational programmes of Polish socialist pedagogy and formulated theories of education, which, being deprived of the category of transcendence, closed man in time, history, and social conditions. The category of alienation (derived from Hegel and Feuerbach) asserted itself in the Marxist thesis that man externalizes (objectivizes) themselves in the form of things, materialized spiritual values and transformed social relations. Marxists maintain that when the processes of objectivization become deformed man-made products begin to threaten humans and rob them of their possession, as well as belittle and subordinate them. Thus, it was necessary to prevent different kinds of alienation, particularly religious alienation, the most dangerous of all since it made people passive: man lost the sense of social responsibility and was satisfied with any justification for inaction in front of imagined God. In this perspective, spiritual life of man and religious practice were to be an alleged proof of alienation: the idea of God – a human creation – rules man, making its being autonomous in the form of beliefs; it determines a cult. A large-scale atheisation was to provide an antidote to religious alienation; being, however, secondary to socio-economic alienation, it was predicted to disappear when the conditions of human life had improved. It was assumed that the elimination of private means of production and creation of classless society would allow people to free themselves from the illusion of religion. Marxist ideologists and decision-makers aimed at rapid revolutionary transformations and for that reason relentlessly tried to eradicate religion. Historical experience showed how: “religious people were destroyed, how everything connected with religion was eliminated from private and public life. Non-religious, or even antireligious, culture was built with the help of the forces of violence; this culture restricted human freedom and destroyed the humanity of man.”²⁷ Inhuman face of atheistic humanism and Marxist was tragically recorded in the history of the Polish nation.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., 173.

²⁷ Ibid., 190.

²⁸ Zdybicka knew that from her own experience. She belonged to, inter alia, the Fraternity of Fr. Stanisław Zieliński, which cherished the memory of the priest murdered by the Security Office in 1945. For

Putting evangelic service to a fellow man into practice, articulated in the love of God's heart, Zdybicka has always been very sensitive to the problem of the objectification of a human, inter alia, to various forms of social injustice; her evaluation of religion, however, is diametrically different from that of Marxists, who place social justice in the centre of their ideology. Drawing on a deepened metaphysical reflection and her knowledge of history of philosophy, she argues that it is not religion that constitutes the most dangerous form of alienation, but putting man in place of God and the popularization of the idea of humanism without God, which is done by Marxists. In her opinion, this perspective does not allow man to regain freedom: on the contrary, it makes humans slaves of history and culture and their existence is devoid of sense.²⁹ Marxist "soteriology" does not encompass all people; it only refers to the imaginary mankind – a futuristic being, and the everyday problems of individual people do not matter. It is the society of some indefinite future that receives its share of happiness, whereas ordinary man is left out, being aware of the end of their existence – death.

Rejecting God, the Marxist view of man makes humans face the absolute of matter, society and history; in this worldview, man is also seen as a transient phase of nature transformation, a replaceable moment in history or social arrangement. If the circumstances become transformed, man is being created, the products of human labour are included in the work results; yet man himself is a transitory phenomenon.³⁰

According to Professor Zdybicka, Marxism destroys the most important human values: human subjectivity and freedom. It reduces freedom to the awareness of the indispensable consequences of the laws of nature and social progress, subordinating the individual to a collective (a party or a state). Being Mother Superior of the Eastern Vicariate, she supported the mission of the Ursuline sisters in Ukraine and Belarus. She recollects:

Since 1988 I have frequently visited these countries and personally learned about hard life conditions of the populations. I am grateful to God that it was possible, even to a small extent, to help those tormented by communist ideology. Currently, our sisters, in the majority recruiting from the local populations, work in Kamyanets-Podilsky, Chernivtsi, Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk (Ukraine) and Minsk (Belarus). I left part of my heart there.³¹

Thus, Zdybicka was very critical about Marxists classifying religion as a dangerous alienation and pointing to atheism as a road to freedom. At the same time, she openly questioned the Marxist vision of man and humanism: she was convinced

four years, he was a catechist in Kraśnik and father confessor of young Zofia Róża Zdybicka – cf. Wiszniewska, "I was lucky", 14.

²⁹ Cf. Zdybicka, *Pułapka*, 131, 136, 177.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 177-178.

³¹ Wiszniewska, "I was lucky", 15.

that they do not take into account the essential dimensions of humanity, which, for her as a Thomist, signify subjectivity, autonomy, transcendence in relation to nature and society. She observed that if we want to get to the truth about man and religion, we cannot superimpose any interpretations and thus limit the research horizons, which is inevitable in Marxism, where philosophy is an ideology, serving practical goals.³² One cannot talk about man as some unreal species-being or envisage the new humanity where an individual can be fully identified with the social dimension. According to Zdybicka, such projects are as unreal as non-alienated society of the future. Searching for the truth about man requires a broader ontic perspective, which being provided by classical metaphysics, takes into account human experience of internal identify, being oneself, and a sense of dignity. However, Marxism is not only characterized by open political commitment, but also by the positivist model of science oriented at natural and social studies. In Zdybicka's opinion, the Marxist perspective comprises two anthropological theses that affect atheism and humanism. The first one refers to perceiving humans as natural beings, genetically identical to the surrounding world of matter, although having their particular property, that is, consciousness, which enables them to do purposeful work, such as the transformation of nature and themselves in a specific process of autcreation. The second one relates to the fact that man is socially conditioned; consequently, biology and history constitute two components of human existence. However, Zdybicka observes that Marxist concept of "man as a social being" does not mean that a human lives and evolves in a community; it implies that man is the product of society (even human nature is a function of social relations).³³ Thus, the idea of "comprehensive education" promoted by socialist pedagogy, as well as the formation of enlightened man with the scientific worldview seems debatable.

Opposing to the idea of comprehensive education and the formation of enlightened man with the scientific worldview, Zdybicka emphasized the role of anthropology which reveals not only the material but also spiritual aspect of human existence; she also stressed integral education that would meet the spiritual needs of man: the need for the truth, good, freedom, selfless love as a basis of building relations and communities. She sees religion as a bonding agent of values indispensable for full human development: "Acceptance of personal God and forming a bond with Him in religion strengthens man in the essential values – subjectivity, freedom, love; it also broadens the horizon of human hopes."³⁴ The researcher not only questions the Marxist idea about a dehumanizing function of religion; she also points to the positive role of religion in the development of man and culture, which is especially true in the case of Christianity.

³² Cf. Zdybicka, *Putapka*, 178.

³³ Cf. *ibid.*, 150.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 180.

Demonstrating her concern for the metaphysical truth about man, Zdybicka attentively follows the research on metaphysical methodology in her home academic environment (conducted by, inter alia, S. Kamiński, M.A. Krapiec, A. Maryniarczyk). In her research into religion and atheism, she referred to the issues that were the most interesting for her, such as metaphysical and epistemological realism, and tried to dispel the myth of Marxism as realistic philosophy and a carrier of real humanism. The philosopher frequently emphasized that the word “real” in the collocation needs to be interpreted as a statement referring to social commitment of this ideological formation, which aims at the transformation of social relations and achieving non-alienated state as an important prerequisite for human development. Zdybicka claims that Marxists are interested in the transformation of social and political reality, whereas Marxism as a philosophical system is a continuation of German idealism (from Kant through Fichte and Hegel to Feuerbach), according to which the idea, or thought, is primary in relation to non-subjective reality, whereas the object is the result of the subject and the thing in itself.³⁵ The philosopher also warned against the proposal of a dialogue, with which the Marxists turned to the Christian circles (she called these feigned actions) and against the Marxist doctrine infiltrating one’s worldview. She was convinced that it was necessary to thoroughly analyze the intellectual tissue of Marxism, as well as to explain the basics of Christian anthropology to the Catholic intelligentsia.³⁶

Analyzing the period of political changes in Poland, the researcher admitted that following its confrontation with Marxism, religion was considerably strengthened owing to the fact that in the times of the Polish People’s Republic the Catholic Church stood in defence of man: it demanded the protection of basic human rights and prioritized ethics over politics. She recognized the importance of such charismatic divines as Cardinal S. Wyszyński and Pope John Paul II (she devoted a separate book to the latter). She, however, realized that the years Marxist ideology had an impact on the Polish society.³⁷ Marxists tried to realize their model of man by all means, subordinating social structures and education to it. For several decades, the Poles were affected by their ideology. Large numbers of pedagogues and teachers were educated in keeping with the guidelines of Marxist anthropology. After 1989, this way of thinking did not stop to be obligatory: it adopted new forms in the name of the resistance to Christian values and the authority of the Church. “This struggle was reinforced with secular and liberal trends, popularization of the system of counter-values.”³⁸

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 145, 171.

³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 188. Also cf. ead., *Religia i religioznawstwo* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1988), 327–329.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 190.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

Critique of atheism and humanism of the era of late modernity

Atheism is not only the realm of Marxism: that is why it did not disappear from Polish culture with the change of the political system. Thinking about the world in the categories of “without God” found its breeding ground in many intellectual trends of Western culture at the very onset of the Age of Enlightenment. Zdybicka was aware of these conditions since she not only focused on analyzing atheism, particularly its nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophical theories, but also followed its secular manifestations and signs of indifference towards religious values in the large part of the Polish population. In her opinion, atheism was very attractive since it made human freedom absolute.³⁹ Christianity was assigned the label of oppressive religion: apart from being considered “opium”, sedating the consciousness of the masses, it was also regarded as an anachronistic cultural formation, restricting individual and social progress, human creativity and development. In the new political situation (liberal economy) such an attitude to religion could count on applause.⁴⁰ It was not, however, forcefully imposed on people (as it formerly was by Marxist ideology), but presented as an alternative that can be freely chosen. According to Zdybicka, it was symptomatic that during his pilgrimage to Poland in 1991 the Pope, proposing the Decalogue and the commandment of love as the subject of his homily,⁴¹ met with a cold reception on the part of the advocates of the “enlightenment programme”. She commented on the situation, using her research oriented at the culture-forming role of religion, in particular Christianity, with its personal model of culture and focusing on the worrisome trend of “privatization” of religion, the examples of which could be found in the literature and life itself.

A permanent motif in many of Zdybicka’s publications was the problem of subjectivization of the phenomenon of religion being the result of eliminating the problem of God from the area of existent being.⁴² As she observes, the term “religion” ceased to be favourably perceived in research procedures and hence replaced with the notion of “religiousness”. The Thomist emphasizes that these attitudes were motivated by humanities rejecting the possibility of discovering the truth about God on the basis of the existent world (i.e. rejecting the values of classical metaphysics) and adopting the Cartesian model of philosophy, scientism and technocratic values as canons for modernity, as well as sociological, psychological preferences in research. She emphasized, inter alia, that under the influence of

³⁹ Cf. ead., “Wolność ludzka i Bóg”. In: *Wolność we współczesnej kulturze*, ed. ead. et al., (Lublin: RW KUL 1997), 665–672

⁴⁰ Cf. Adrián Slavkovský, “The Holy and Dirty Money of Faith Shapes of Religion in Contemporary Society”, *Spirituality Studies* 1(1) Spring (2016): 113–121.

⁴¹ Cf. Zdybicka, *Pułapka*, 244.

⁴² Ead., *Bóg czy sacrum?* (Lublin: PTTA, 2007), 77 nn., 152.

subject's philosophy (consciousness), the notion of sacrum was popularized and replaced the notion of God. Zdybicka analyzed this issue in her publication *Bóg czy sacrum* (2007). She pointed to the role of Kant, who classified religion and morality as belonging to the realm of human experiences. The sacrum refers to something that is unrecognizable, though perceptible in our experience, the object of human intentions. Religion as an area oriented at such a value becomes a realm of irrational experiences, subjectively grounded in the subject's choices.⁴³ Zdybicka notices this line of research in the neo-Kantian trend, a theory of values which equates them with human decisions (Nietzsche, Weber), as well as in phenomenology. On the one hand, she appreciated the research into religion conducted by phenomenologists since they opposed atheistic tendencies and demonstrated the complexity of the phenomenon of religion; on the other, she pointed to their contribution to the popularization of the term "sacrum" as being equivalent to the term "God," which led to making religion tantamount to religiousness (in the latter there is no place for person-to-person relationship between two subjects: God and man. Owing to the increasing processes of secularization, the term "sacrum" was more acceptable than the term "God" since it did not imply any concrete religious or moral requirements. Besides, the researchers themselves referred to the sacrum in a variety of ways (e.g. Scheler, Heidegger, Söderblom, Otto, van der Leew, Eliade, Durkheim, Weber, Wach). Zdybicka, however, with the curiosity typical of a metaphysician posed questions about the ontic status of "sacrum," showing that a different line of research leads to relativism and makes the phenomenon of religion tantamount to a purely cultural event, which is close to the atheistic perspective on the issue:

Since the roots of religion can be found in the human subject and the resultant religious experiences, as proposed by phenomenologists, the sacrum is a kind of objectivization of the subject's religious acts. It was relativized and treated as the intentional object of religious acts and thus as the constituent object of consciousness. The sacrum thus understood was found within human consciousness and was, to some extent, shaped by it. In this perspective, the sacrum outside of human consciousness is indeterminate: it has a subjective character.⁴⁴

With this kind of justification, it is possible to talk about a positive role of religion in culture; it is, however, treated instrumentally in keeping with the atheistic worldview. Opposing the predominant interpretative traditions, Zdybicka thus argued that religion is not only connected with human consciousness, psyche; it does not constitute a discrete area of life, but – in light of the theory of participation – is a way of fulfilment of man, way of existence "from God," "in the image of God" and "towards God."

⁴³ Ibid., 8–9, 78.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 80.

Reflecting on the phenomenon of pushing the issue of God outside of the realm of rationality, Zdybicka pointed to the processes within Christian culture, such as the popularity of sacrological research and the phenomenon of the so-called Christian atheism. In Anglo-Saxon Protestant theology, being under the influence of linguistic empiricism and the requirements of contemporary culture, the notion of God was eliminated (it was referred to as death of God theology).⁴⁵ It was argued that since the contemporary society is strongly secularized, and to a great extent – atheistic, and thus nonphilosophical, it does not comprehend the language of theology. Consequently, the evangelizing mission needs to focus on Christ as a concrete historical category and leave out the philosophical issue of God. For Zdybicka, this theological model was debatable and she proposed a classical philosophy model with positive implications for theology and religion. She was particularly attracted by the teaching of John Paul II with its balanced relationship between faith and reason.⁴⁶ She appreciated the Pope's appeal aiming at restoring the complete truth about man.⁴⁷ The anthropological error expressing itself in cognitive and moral relativism and oriented at temporality and consumption was seen to be correlated with the lack of understanding of the truth about God and the relationship between God and His creation. She followed papal intellectual suggestions, focusing on revealing the ontic foundations of religion and culture.⁴⁸ She spoke in favour of humanism which prioritizes spirit over matter, an individual over society, morality over technology, and love over justice. In the secularized world, religion is separated from our secular life and falsely assumed to be part of our private life. Zdybicka observes that in this world we experience philosophical consequences of the argumentation in favour of agnosticism, horizontalization of cognition (Kant, Hume, Comte), depersonalization of God (J.G. Fichte, F.W. Schelling, G.W.F. Hegel), and deification of man (K. Marks, F. Nietzsche, J-P. Sartre). She argues that the conviction becomes reinforced by the philosophy of “late modernity,” with its cognitive and moral relativism, and praises in honour of human freedom: “According to the exponents of postmodernism, religiousness is a purely human phenomenon; they acknowledge that humans build their own sacrum and impose a meaning on it. Religiousness thus understood – Zdybicka observes – would be embedded in human needs, closed in human immanence. Postmodernists posit “reasonable immanence” and talk

⁴⁵ Ead., *Pułapka*, 206–212.

⁴⁶ Ead., *Bóg*, 143–174.

⁴⁷ Ead., *Pułapka*, 233–251.

⁴⁸ Ead., *Bóg*, 85–86; also cf. ead., “Kultura i religia. Czy możliwa jest kultura bez religii?”. In: *Spór o wartości w kulturze i wychowaniu*, ed. Franciszek Adamski (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński 1991), 223–236; ead., “Religia drogą spełnienia się człowieka”. In: *Osoba i realizm w filozofii*, eds. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, Katarzyna Stępień (Lublin: PTTA 2002, no 3/4, 93–112); ead., “Rozumienie człowieka a wyjaśnienie faktu religii”. In: *Zadania współczesnej metafizyki*, no 5 (*Błąd antropologiczny*) (Lublin: PTTA, 2003), 345–362.

about “religion of reason” with no reference to any transcendent order. That would be some indefinite ‘religion of the spirit’.⁴⁹ Their anti-metaphysical attitude separates philosophy from the idea of God and – owing to the fact that the truths about being, person and God are intricately connected with each other, it follows, in keeping with the postmodernist line of thinking, that humans are not able to discover the truths about themselves and human life loses its fundament and purpose.⁵⁰ Humanism and Marxism, likewise, have made human freedoms absolute and stripped humans of their dignity. Professor Zdybicka was aware of the fact that the content-related lack of precision when defining the *sacrum* allows contemporary man to seek detail-customized solutions and match them to individual pendants and desires. The *sacrum* adapted to one’s individual needs is only a vague concept that aims at satisfying our spiritual needs for the meaning of life; it is also a means of personal realization and peak experience in life.⁵¹ Being deprived of God as a reference point, our life disappears and becomes distorted. Evaluating contemporary culture, Zdybicka emphasizes that the *sacrum* thus understood is well-fitted to atheistic culture: “Examining the contemporary situation of thought and culture in terms of knowing God and understanding religion, a thought by G.K. Chesterton comes to mind: ‘The first effect of not believing in God is to believe in anything’ – in mages, charismatics, searching for *sacrum* in the religions of the East, magic and Satanism.”⁵² She laments that metaphysics, with its instruments that help reveal the values of different religions in terms of their truths about being and man, is forgotten today. Human dignity and rationality call for being thoroughly researched when it comes to the issues that are the most essential for human life; for that reason, the Thomist untiringly emphasizes that:

to be true, religion needs to have an interpersonal character – it needs to refer to God, who is a person chosen by free and conscious man to be the ultimate goal of life (the fundamental decision). It follows that a different understanding of the subject of religious worship is inadequate in relation to man-person.⁵³

Professor Zdybicka wrote extensively about Christian values and Christian culture, observing that contemporary globalist trends tend to be averse to Christianity since it stresses a transcendent and personal dimension of man

⁴⁹ Ead., *Bóg*, 85–86; also cf. Ead., “Problem ostatecznego celu życia człowieka i sposób jego realizacji”. In: *Spór o cel*, eds. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, Katarzyna Stępień, Paweł Gondek (Lublin: PTTA 2008), 165–180; ead., “Rola religii w kształtowaniu osobowego modelu kultury”. In: *W kierunku religijności*, ed. Bohdan Bejze (Warszawa: ATK 1983), 283–295.

⁵⁰ Cf. ead., *Bóg*, 153.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 87.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 191.

and acknowledges the existence of transcendent God.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the decisions of man who has problems making the right choice from a whole gamut of cultural and religious offers are often arbitrary; being unable to discover the phenomenon of our existence, we have no chance of discovering and pursuing the selected values, which make our life meaningful and authentically human:

Man is able to discover the truth about God and to love Him. As a rational being, man is by nature *capax Dei*. Humans are by nature oriented towards good, endowed with dynamism, which helps them reach the ultimate goal to which they are potentially destined (Full Good). This is the capacity of human cognition and human love; these aspirations are an indispensable part of human nature.⁵⁵

Discussing the interrelationships between various areas of culture (science, morality and art) and religion, Zdybicka emphasized that personal cultural patterns are best phrased in the Gospel, which states that Christianity is not against man.⁵⁶ That is why as opposed to the extreme atheistic anthropocentric model she pointed to the Christological one: “only living faith in Christ, responding to God’s love with love can save man and human culture.”⁵⁷ Zdybicka observed that separating oneself from real human dimensions: transcendence, ability to distinguish good from evil, and to discover the truth leads human mind in the direction of nihilism. In her opinion, postmodernism bears a testimony to the ultimate consequences of subjective tendencies, which have permeated European culture since modernity: “Man freed from the truth and good (morality), liberated from permanent beliefs and places is a citizen of the world, without home and homeland, without nurture (anti-pedagogy), not caring for ideals and values, having neither the ability to reflect on the surrounding reality nor anything to identify with [...]”⁵⁸ The Thomist notes that in a culture of absolute freedom man has become liberated from responsibility, duties and cultural limitations. Man can live in an arbitrary way, treating neither themselves nor the world around seriously. For Zdybicka, this is a manifestation of the most modern form of barbarism: “One can say that the mental process which has led to the liberation of the human mind from metaphysics and religion has given rise to the loss of mind. Forgetting God, ‘the death of God’ have given man ‘the sickness unto death’, the void of nihilism. *Homo sapiens* becomes *homo demens*.”⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 194 and ead., “Globalizacja i religia”, *Człowiek w Kulturze* 14 (2002): 31–41.

⁵⁵ Ead., *Pułapka*, 249.

⁵⁶ Cf. ead., *Religia i religioznawstwo* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1988), 139–254, 303–317.

⁵⁷ Ead., *Pułapka*, 251.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

Conclusion: A Conservative pedagogue?

Looking at Zdybicka's evaluation of atheistic humanisms, at her reflections shaped by observing the realia of Polish culture both at the times of Marxist ideology and after the political transformations, it is possible to discern a distinct proposal oriented at pedagogy. Professor Zdybicka appears to be clearly speaking in favour of the need for metaphysical education in education systems and against metaphysical "illiteracy", which is a legacy of the Enlightenment. As can be noticed, the starting point for her argumentation is the thesis concerning the value of realistic metaphysics. She thus challenges the rejection of metaphysics based both on a conviction that it is a thing of the past and the claim related to the insurmountable barriers of cognition, which metaphysics encroaches. The researcher is also very critical about the current state of culture, which being inspired by atheistic humanism, is devoid of metaphysical perspective.

For me, Professor Zdybicka represents the attitudes and values discussed in her works in the language of metaphysics; she is the person who can communicate to her students the truth about the values that are important for her, differentiating in her narration between faith and reason. Christian narration about God is based on experiencing God, who reveals to man the truth about Himself. This kind of evidence is provided in the Bible and philosophy supports it drawing on a purely human effort of discovering the truth. Zdybicka is able to show the complementary character of these two orders. Consequently, different perspectives on human life, including education systems, are not to be treated as obligatory. Man is not a demiurge. The Christian idea of Divine pedagogy, though marked with secrets, is not devoid of rational foundations. The dispute about the vision of man results from the dispute about religion, and – in the background – about metaphysics.

The above considerations can be concluded by quoting the words of Professor Zdybicka, who tried to expose this type of dispute in the history of European culture. In her opinion, metaphysics, the knowledge of ultimate causes of being,

pointing to the ontic basics of religion, discovers [...] that religion is the way of human existence since deriving from God man is also on the path "towards God", who is actually existent and close; it is not any unknown God or the idea of God, the product of human thought. Besides, [metaphysics] also shows that it is only personal Absolute, personal being that is an appropriate "subject" of religious relationship, subject of worship and guarantor of moral life.⁶⁰

Is Professor Zdybicka a conservative pedagogue? The question should be posed to the professor herself. As shown in this article, her statements in favour of the need of safeguarding spiritual and transcendent dimension of human existence

⁶⁰ Ead., *Bóg*, 160.

in education may be considered conservative. In the article, we have emphasized that whether Zdybicka's research activity will be classified as important for defining conservative pedagogy depends on the anthropological key used by contemporary conservative thinkers and their vision of man. Zdybicka herself is not Professor of Pedagogy, but Philosophy. Nevertheless, her works constitute a valuable contribution to the dispute on the shape of pedagogy – irrespective of whether we are the philosopher's opponents or proponents. We are convinced that her biography, even if we look at its concise outline presented in this article, lets us appreciate pedagogic implications of her research. Her scientific publications and the testimony of her life: her brave youthful choices, determination in discovering the truth about man, commitment to the life of Academy and the Church, wise attitudes and values present in her life speak in favour of the thesis.

Translation: Maria M. Boużyk, Elżbieta Lesiak-Bielawska

Spór o wizję człowieka w działalności naukowo-dydaktycznej prof. Zofii Józefy Zdybickiej USJK. Próba rekonstrukcji wymiaru pedagogicznego życia i pracy filozofki jako głos w dyskusji nad kwestią pedagogiki konserwatywnej

Streszczenie: Artykuł został poświęcony rekonstrukcji wymiaru pedagogicznego życia i pracy Zofii Józefy Zdybickiej USJK na drodze odświeżenia wartości, którymi kierowała się w swoim życiu badaczka, jej zaangażowania na rzecz społeczności, ale przede wszystkim jej wkładu w odczytywanie filozoficznych podstaw pedagogiki, a w szczególności zależności między tezami z obszaru antropologii filozoficznej a ukierunkowaniem praktyki wychowawczo-edukacyjnej. Stąd w treści artykułu zostały przywołane elementy biografii i wspomnień filozofki pokazujące ją jako osobę oddaną sprawie wychowania młodych pokoleń oraz czołową polską tomistkę związaną ze środowiskiem akademickim Wydziału Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, zaangażowaną w spory o wizję człowieka. Przedmiotem analizy jest jej aktywność badawcza w dwóch okresach współczesnej historii Polski: (1) gdy komuniści sprawowali władzę oraz (2) współcześnie, gdy notujemy mocne oddziaływanie prądów liberalnych na formację intelektualną młodzieży. Stawiamy tezę, że stosunek do religii wyznaczał, i nadal wyznacza, oś sporu zarówno w czasach dominacji marksistowskiej antropologii w pedagogice, jak i wizji człowieka, która jest osnową kultury późnej nowoczesności.

Czy Zdybicka jest konserwatywnym pedagogiem? O to należałoby zapytać samą Siostrę Profesor. W artykule wskazujemy, że za konserwatywną wartość, którą znajdujemy w pracach filozofki, można uznać jej wypowiedzi na rzecz potrzeby zabezpieczenia w wychowaniu duchowego i transcendentnego wymiaru ludzkiej egzystencji. Analizy w artykule są oparte na kilku wybranych tekstach badaczki, m.in.: *Partycypacja bytu* [...] (1972); *Człowiek i religia* [...] (edycja polska 1977; edycja angielska 1991); *Religia i religioznawstwo* (1988); *Bóg czy sacrum?* (2007); *Pułapka ateizmu* (2012).

Artykuł składa się z dwóch części. W pierwszej zostaje przedstawiona istota sporu o wizję człowieka z perspektywy metafizycznych badań nad religią prowadzonych przez Zdybicką, a w drugiej porównanie dwóch modeli humanizmu: teocentrycznego (za którym optuje badaczka)

i antropocentrycznego (w wersji marksistowskiej i postmodernistycznej) w kontekście krytyki ateizmu, którą filozofka prowadziła w okresie dominacji w polskich systemach kształcenia marksizmu oraz po przemianach ustrojowych w Polsce od lat 90. ubiegłego wieku, gdy otworzyła się możliwość zmiany podstaw antropologicznych w edukacji. Jak badaczka dowodzi, zmiana wcale nie jest łatwa, co potwierdza też cykl seminariów Polskiej Myśli Pedagogicznej i dyskusja wokół kwestii sensu wyodrębnienia pedagogiki konserwatywnej z różnych nurtów współczesnej polskiej pedagogiki i jej zdefiniowania. Artykuł jest rozwinięciem referatu wygłoszonego na VIII Seminarium Polskiej Myśli Pedagogicznej, poświęconego przedstawicielom konserwatywnej myśli pedagogicznej w Polsce (7.10.2022).

Sł o w a k l u c z o w e: religia, metafizyka, ateizm, konserwatywna pedagogika

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