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Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński on Universities and Philosophy

Abstract: The article discusses the writings and speeches of the Polish Primate, Blessed Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, on academic life. The article addresses the very idea of the university and academic work in service to the community. This topic has received scant attention so far.

Keywords: academic life, Cardinal Wyszyński, community service, university idea

The figure of the Blessed Cardinal Wyszyński is most frequently associated with his remarkable but difficult episcopal and primatial ministry in communist Poland. The strenuous years of his pastoral ministry, when he was Bishop of Lublin (1946-1948) and later Archbishop of Warsaw and Archbishop of Gniezno, as well as Primate of Poland (1948-1981), marked the subsequent stages of his life. There are a large number of publications dedicated to the Primate of the Millennium: his teaching, his attitude, and his role in the Church and world history. Numerous details and themes have been extracted from his vast legacy, but the theme of university teaching and the idea of a university have not been sufficiently addressed. An important book that offers an approach to this subject is *Veritatem facientes in caritate*, edited by Bishop Andrzej Dziuba and published in 2006. It contains a collection of Wyszyński's statements and speeches on academic work, the academic community and university life. In my view, the Primate's thoughts on the meaning and role of universities can be particularly helpful in assessing the current situation of our higher education. In this paper, I would like not only to draw closer the understanding of the idea of a university as it appears in the Primate's writings and speeches, but also to ponder on how and to what extent his reflections on tertiary education are still valid in our times, in the university

milieu of the 21st century, especially on the University that was named after him. However, if the Cardinal's thoughts are to be presented in an appropriate way, it should be recalled what a university is and what its role in a society is supposed to be.

1. Truth and freedom – the cornerstones of Universities

The university appears in European history as a place where general knowledge was taught. What is important but forgotten today, is the fact that from the very beginning, the university has had both an intellectual and a moral purpose, manifesting itself in an authentic desire to seek knowledge as well as to convey truth and wisdom. This is how the main purposes of a university can be briefly summarized. All its other functions – didactic, educational, culture-making – do not, despite being its integral part, constitute its fundamental mission. The university's first duty is to discover the truth, to explore scientific probabilities and to refine methods that expand our knowledge of the human person and of the world. It is here that the objective edifice of wisdom is being built, based on proven statements, and substantiated by the power of rational arguments. Although we know that these tasks are also normally assigned to religious and political institutions, and today they should be of primary concern for the media, the role of colleges and universities remains irreplaceable [Szadkowski 2015: 46-48].

These tasks can only be fulfilled under the condition of freedom. University must be free, both as an institution and as an environment. It cannot put its knowledge at the service of any external agents. This condition was strongly emphasised by Professor Kazimierz Twardowski, the founder of the Lwów-Warsaw School. He claimed that a university does not accept any masters; it only values experience and reasoning to arrive at well-founded judgements. A university ought to fence itself off from everything that does not serve the purpose of achieving verified and well-substantiated academic truth. It should maintain the autonomy between rational inquiry and ideological, political, and economic trends [Twardowski 1933: 4]. As an institution dedicated to the service of the one, most important value – the truth – it cannot have any other organisation over it, particularly not one that would usurp the right to impose on it anything within the scope of competence of science. Only on this condition can the university milieu be free from any political, religious, economic, and especially ideological pressure. This is one of the fundamental conditions of the properly understood power and independence of the university milieu [Stróżewski 2013: 257]. Universities, that grew out of the aspirations of medieval scholars and doctors to serve scientific truth, objective

knowledge, and the advancement of methods of thought should be independent and sovereign because their purpose is to transform minds. University education is supposed to transform students into a new kind of person, who can reason, enquire, critically analyse the world and ideas, able to formulate judgements, apply sound reasoning, compare and reflect on the contents of various branches, areas, and fields of study. This is the true mission of the university, and solid knowledge derives from it – the formation of minds so as to enable them to strive for truth [Newman 1990: 203; MacIntyre 1987: 204]. This is why, in addition to knowledge, moral attitudes, objectivity, honesty, thoroughness, diligence, responsibility, trust and maturity are so important in universities. Within this model, a university community is something more than a mere gathering of pragmatists – it is a *koinonia*, a community of values and goals, in which truth and goodness constitute the binding power of harmony, the supreme ideas being the paragons that motivate human cognitive pursuits [Goćkowski 1997: 22].

2. University in the times of profit and digitalization

Having recalled the ethos and purposes of a university, we realise that it constitutes the most valuable and irreplaceable good for culture and civilisation. Intellectual perfection, to which the Faculty of Humanities contributes significantly, is a value in itself [Stróżewski 2013: 262]. However, it must be said openly that today's colleges and universities, in their recommendations and goals, do not have much in common with the above-mentioned model of a university. It is naïve to think that academic studies are in our times an intellectual adventure of selfless search for truth, where philosophy and metaphysics, theory of cognition and ethics, logic and methodology constitute the crown of knowledge as well as shape attitudes and worldviews. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Modern universities are regarded as public sector organisations rather than traditional and historically exceptional institutions. They are subjected to the intense pressure of evaluation which confronts their efforts with a permanent cost-effectiveness ratio calculation and enforces competitive activities in the field of public financial resources. For this reason, most educational pathways seek to establish a connection between a university degree and labour market trends. In the Anglo-Saxon world, the concept of “entrepreneurial university” [Clark 1998: 22] has emerged. Higher education has become an investment in oneself, so it should be quick, effective, and sufficient to ensure a rapid return of the costs incurred. Only a few decades ago, young people who were enrolling in a humanities course wanted to satisfy their own curiosity and thirst for knowledge, to mature intellectually and emotionally. Today, everything is being subordinated to pragmatism of creating a CV with regard to a future job.

“Universities have become passages in which students appear and disappear while taking a second major, starting working, gaining experience, working as volunteers – everything fluctuates because the all-embracing pragmatic approach has a final say on everything” [*Kronos* 2011: 218-242].

Market pressure that can be seen in non-marketable faculties, such as philosophy, theology, classical philology, contributed to the fact that students themselves do not regard their university studies as an exceptional time in their lives, dedicated to reading books or refining their writing skills [Gawin 2014: 228]. This has resulted in graduates becoming less competent. As the quality of education deteriorates, simple statements, often based on uncomplicated images and visions of the world, take the lead. Analytical reasoning, that is subtle, precise and theoretical thinking, perishes in this cultural cacophony. Teachers and students focused on pragmatic knowledge and professional success do not need such thinking. This is particularly evident in the case of philosophy, which is not an easy, quick or spectacular discipline. It does not simplify but complicates, revealing the complexity of ontological, cognitive, and ethical issues. In today’s world of media-induced simplification, people want to get simple and easy messages, uncomplicated and clear answers. Our time is generally characterised by anti-intellectualism that affects not only philosophy but also high culture in general. Cultural messages are becoming increasingly pictorial and emotional, whereas philosophy is a rational and diligent communing with a text, a meditation upon the word, a reflection [*Filo-Sofija* 2013/2014: 240].

Another important problem of modern universities is the ideologization of science, which manifests itself in restrictions on freedom of scientific research and the treatment of socially controversial issues. Disruption of lectures, disciplining of lecturers, forcing university employees to resign from their teaching or administrative positions are already taking place in Western universities. All this is motivated by ideological trends that imply a rejection of the centuries-old culture and traditions of Euro-Atlantic civilisation, as the Quebec-based Canadian sociologist Mathieu Bock-Côté points out in his book *La révolution racialisée: et autres virus idéologiques* (Paris 2021). He shows exactly how the process of ideologizing science started, first by changing the concepts and then by reconstructing the key social relationships that for centuries had formed the anthropological and historical foundations of our civilisation. This deconstruction, Bock-Côté argues, affects such fundamental categories as man, woman, family, marriage, sexuality, nation, tradition, relationships, responsibility, future. The totality of the process of ideologization means

that those who disobey it will suffer social death, civic degradation, media-induced humiliation. This is a new form of exclusion, of deprivation of fundamental human rights and civil liberties, which is also taking place in today's universities. States and communities seem to be submitting to a single legitimate ideology that aspires to reshape all major ideas and relationships. An example of this is the concept of 'woke' (being 'awakened', 'aware'), born in America – a fanatical form of diversity discourse and the imposition of a sacralised minority viewpoint on everyone else. Woke, along with the Black Lives Matter movement, is about finding racism and exclusion in every traditional idea and concept. It is the ideological weapon of political correctness, which is increasingly present in education and directed against the ideals of a civilisation created largely by white people [Bock-Côté 2021; Rhodes, 2022; Vis, Faulkner, Noble, Guy 2020: 247-266].

Another phenomenon, already diagnosed and described in universities, is the loss of analytical skills and abstract thinking in young people born after 2000. They are the “digital generation” (I-Generation), characterised by a heightened sensitivity and low scientific competence – the iPhone, iPad and Internet generation – glued to their smartphones as they use electronic devices virtually non-stop. These young people who never stop using their digital devices are often immature; they live in a virtual reality rather than in the real world, preferring virtual contacts to personal ones. They are anxious (often suffering from depression, neurosis, loneliness, traumatic experience), non-religious (considering religion meaningless), isolated (avoiding civic engagement), unrestricted (open to new sexual and moral attitudes), and inclusive (accepting everything, open and libertarian) [Twenge 2019: 11-12]. American professor of English Mark Bauerlein argues that the observation of these phenomena leads to the conclusion that the dumbest generation, that is largely ignorant of culture, science and ethics, is now entering adulthood. The consequences of this situation are serious. Uneducated and incompetent young people can quickly become dangerous adults, susceptible to manipulation, supporters of conspiracy theories, followers of ideologies [Bauerlein 2022: 10-45].

3. Cardinal Wyszyński about the tasks of a university

This is the vision of education that emerges from contemporary observations and analyses. However, back in those days when the young Fr. Wyszyński was studying Catholic social doctrine and doing his doctorate in canon law at the Catholic University of Lublin (1925–1929), the world was very different [Dziuba 2021: 24]. Education and academic teaching were also different. Even in the post-war

communist Poland, the university ethos was solid, honoured, and respected. Being a student was associated with special recognition and ennoblement. University environments were genuine places of wise and creative debate (especially before the Second World War but also in the post-war period, when, in spite of Marxist propaganda, there were valuable models of study and teaching). Let us try to analyse some of Blessed Stefan Wyszyński's post-war statements on the idea of a university and the academic work carried out within it.

Wyszyński began by pointing out that the role of universities is not so much practical as educational. The university ethos is built on relationships; they are the beginning of the journey to knowledge and wisdom. Without them, teaching itself becomes a merely technical way of transmitting knowledge. Without a professor-student, master-disciple relationship there can be no proper climate for seeking answers to the most important questions about the human person and the world.

“In order to achieve the intended goals a university must bring its ideals and ways of influencing closer to the domestic, family, motherly, fatherly atmosphere. Academic institutions are then rightfully called *Alma Mater*, as if they were the second mother” [Wyszyński 1990: 870].

Diligent study should always go together with a social disposition because those who teach should always be oriented towards those who live around them. For this reason, as the Primate points out, those who acquire knowledge never do so for their own sake only, even if they do not use the help of other people. Study is ultimately a manifestation of service to others for their benefit and should “bring a hundredfold fruit” to society, the nation and the homeland.

In addition to the creation of a sense of community and service to others, the primary duty and goal of a university is truth. However, to create in academic institutions suitable conditions for the search and discovery of truth, there should be freedom of thought, justice in decisions and love in relationships:

“While reflecting on the historical past of the University at Wawel, we said that it was born out of love for truth. In its form of organisation, it defended the right to freedom, worked to strengthen justice and proclaimed the truth in love. John XXIII recalled these principles in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. He told the modern world, busy with its petty arguments over minor problems, that the most important issue for the human family are the genetically basic rights of a human

person – the right to truth, to freedom, to justice, to love, and to respect. These forces, implanted in man by the Creator Himself, constantly resound with the insatiable hunger of the whole human family, which, feeling it, seeks to satisfy it. For it is only under these conditions that it can make progress, aware of its most fundamental right and, at the same time, its obligation: truth, freedom, justice and love” [ibid.: 244].

A university as a place for debate, research, argument and discussion is thus multifaceted in the way it thinks and proposes solutions. For this reason, justice and love must be added to the purposeful search for truth. In academic institutions, as the experience of medieval Europe demonstrates, conflicts and difficulties should be resolved in only one way: *veritatem facientes in caritate* – by “proclaiming the truth in love”. It is especially important when serving science is undertaken by Christian believers, for Christ said: “This is the first and the greatest commandment. You shall love” (Mt 22.38). You shall love God and your neighbour. The Primate spoke of this during his visit to the Jagiellonian University in 1964, when it was celebrating its 600th anniversary:

“At the Jagiellonian University all the available branches of knowledge were combined, and truth was taught in love. This is the reason why it was called *Universitas magistrorum, Universitas – ac studentium*, because love always creates *universitas*. Love is naturally associated with a university, because the truth can only be practised in love” [ibid.: 248].

It was clear to Wyszynski that the significance and success of various academic institutions depended on their testimony to the truth. Solely upon the foundation of truth can fair, lasting, and deeply human relationships be built.

“The real power and strength of a university is closely connected with the extent to which this university abides in the truth, its professors remain in the truth, and those who come to it receive the truth. The high dignity of any academic institution – Catholic or lay, university, high school or elementary school, or even a conversation between a mother and a child on her lap – is founded on truth” [ibid.: 245].

The Primate pointed out that it was precisely this search for truth that gave rise to the medieval universities, including the Krakow Academy (founded in 1364), which later became the Jagiellonian University. The founders of these institutions

understood that to fulfil their mission, which was to satisfy the thirst of the younger generations for truth and wisdom, they had to create a true *universitas studiorum*. For this reason, a university is not, and cannot be, a mere technical college. According to the Primate, modern academic institutions should overcome the selfishness of “paid wisdom” and defend the connection between true wisdom (not just knowledge) and sincere love for a human being. The Cardinal makes it clear:

“We may have hundreds of thousands of people with diplomas. Do not ask, however, how many of them are wise in the Christian sense of the word, how many of them are able to love, wherever they are and whatever social task they are given” [ibid.: 871].

Therefore, we cannot allow universities to end up accepting a kind of antinomy between the modern organisational structure of academic institutions divided into separate specialist academies and the education in truth, which leads to serving society and the nation. The consent to this antinomy would be unjust, says Wyszynski, because if the young people who want to become students are fascinated by exploring the world, learning about man and society, we cannot disappoint their hopes. They have the right to be led to the truth, to see their lives in the light of what the great masters of knowledge and wisdom have discovered and experienced.

“At the bottom of these crises, we encounter the look of young eyes full of hope meeting a certain evasiveness practised by the eyes of adults who want to be mere scholars, while they should be teachers and fathers. I do not want the young people to be angry with me, but I am critical of the ugly word *paternalism*. There is no way, within a family, national or state culture, to lead the young generation into the future without the attitude of the benevolent father’s eyes. The professors, therefore, must not lose sight of their educational task, and the young people should not be afraid if there is someone with a profound life experience who wants to be kind to them in a fatherly way” [Dziuba 2006: 168].

4. The role and significance of philosophy at the university

The Primate understood that a university cannot abandon its duties – scientific, educational, social – but also that in order to fulfil them it was essential that the methodology employed would take into account the teaching of the humanities. Speaking about this, Wyszynski referred to the experience of the Catholic

University of Lublin that from the beginning of its existence – due to the demands of the second Rector of the University, Fr. Jacek Woroniecki OP – required that the curriculum of studies in each faculty should include courses in philosophy and ethics. In this way, every branch of specific knowledge was supported by humanistic content which confronted young minds with other fields of knowledge¹.

It is a little-known fact that Wyszyński paid special attention to this aspect of education in his post-war sermons – he knew that depriving university students of the foundations of philosophy and ethics would lead to a serious danger:

“There will be a new type of scientist with a narrow specialisation, who will excel in their field of expertise but who will not have a common language with the general problems of the human family. Truth and the search for truth require the creation of a common language. A person with an academic background at a certain level must be able to synthesise the scientific disciplines” [Wyszyński 1990: 245].

This explains the strong emphasis in the Primate’s speeches, sermons and statements on the promotion of philosophy and theology, especially in the Catholic university environment. Having witnessed the indoctrination and ideologization that was implemented in the minds of young students and scientists in Poland by

¹ Fr. Jacek Woroniecki – one of the leading teachers of faith and morals in inter-war Poland, the professor of moral theology, one of the rectors of the Catholic University of Lublin, the lecturer at Angelicum and the author of the famous *Catholic ethics of education*. Fr. Woroniecki actively promoted the spread of moral education and basic philosophical theses in all the university faculties. This postulate was implemented at KUL before the Second World War. See: [Woroniecki 1917: 207-219; Woroniecki 2024: 15-45]. This is how the students remember Fr. Woroniecki’s lectures: “Fr. Woroniecki always made it clear in various ways, even with his behaviour, that maintaining of an adequate level of religious knowledge is crucial for intellectuals. Krystyna Deptuła (née Gąsiorowska), a graduate of Polish Philology at KUL, recalls the time of her studies: Fr. Jacek Woroniecki taught ethics to the first year students from all the faculties in the large auditorium. We loved Fr. Jacek’s lectures” [*Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski w latach 1925-1939 we wspomnieniach swoich pracowników i studentów* 1989: 255]. In March 1919 Fr. Jacek Woroniecki began to teach moral theology as a full professor at the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Canon Law. Students on these Faculties were under obligation of attending certain lectures on theology (moral theology: Fr. Jacek Woroniecki). [...] For the people from the city there were so-called *publica* – public lectures given by some professors for the students of all faculties. In April 1919, after his arrival to Lublin, Fr. Woroniecki began to give lectures about character education: history and theory. In 1920/21, he lectured on the questions of spiritual life [...] The pedagogic group curriculum included many general courses necessary for the preparation of teachers. (Fr. A. Szymański in 1923 about Fr. J. Woroniecki 1924-1929)” [*Księga Jubileuszowa 50-lecia Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego* 1969: 32, 41-42, 243].

Marxist ideology, Wyszyński was aware of the importance of teaching philosophy free from this doctrine, addressing substantively the ethical issues (today especially bioethical issues) and sometimes directly philosophical ones². This experience led him to demand that every faculty should offer its students the basics of philosophy and ethics. On the 30th anniversary of the Faculty of Philosophy at KUL he pointed to philosophy as a science that teaches how to find a proper balance:

“[St. Thomas Aquinas] – the teacher of the philosophy of balance. The mentor who teaches us about the component of our personality that is often lacking in modern people, since they are divided into different paths by specialising in different fields of knowledge. Strange laws and powers are revealed in them, but they are so far apart that it becomes impossible to bring them together into one whole. That is why the person who is tired from the excess of specialised knowledge cannot discover the inner balance through the balance of the universe” [Wyszyński 1990: 715].

As we can see, Blessed Cardinal Wyszyński strongly emphasised the role of the humanities – especially philosophy and theology – in the university education. The Primate knew that a natural place for philosophy and the humanities to appear has always been a community of free people, curious about the world and seeking the truth. It was so in Plato’s Academy, Aristotle’s Lykeion, the medieval *quodlibeta* of masters and bachelors on the slopes of Sainte Genevieve hill in Paris. It was a way of fulfilling the duty of educating both students and professors in the responsible pursuit of scientific activities, research inquisitiveness, intellectual honesty, and faithfulness to what is good and right. For about two and a half thousand years, philosophy has played a crucial role in the history of European culture, hence its primary role in both general and university education [Grzybowski 2018: 91-104]. Wyszyński knew that the supreme importance of the humanities stemmed from the fact that these disciplines made it possible for students to acquire the appropriate intellectual virtue. The Primate was well aware of this and often emphasised it:

“For the inauguration of the new academic year, the Academy of Catholic Theology has gathered in the temple, a forge of wisdom and love. It shows us that the whole effort of the Academy should follow the path of love and wisdom. It should embrace the whole person. Looking at the directions of development of the Catholic doctrine, we can trace a principle that demands an equal amount of

² About Marxist ideologization of philosophy at post-war universities, see [Pandura, Kuliniak, Ratajczak 2021].

place for thought, faith and action. For the normal development of any scientific discipline, it is exceedingly important to recognise the need to give philosophy its proper place. Catholic teaching maintains that philosophy should occupy a specific position within the framework of academic education, facilitating both scientific and personal development” [Dziuba 2006: 168].

The importance of philosophy was obvious to Wyszyński due to his own experience as a young man, his meetings with Fr. Korniłowicz at KUL, then through his ministry at the Educational Centre for Blind Children in Laski, founded by the Mother Czacka and Fr. Korniłowicz, as well as to his experience of post-war Marxist propaganda that used philosophy as a tool of indoctrination. He also understood that without philosophy young people would be left defenceless against the ideology and manipulation in the field of understanding man, society and state as proposed by Marxism-Leninism. Therefore, he insisted:

“With increasing frequency, we conclude that only a life based on the philosophy of a human person guarantees the proper development of the individual and of social life. A philosophically educated person – although there is more to life than philosophy – is able to find a perfect framework in which to place all their idiosyncrasy and life goals. Catholic universities have always ensured that philosophy occupies the first place in their educational system; in our time, it is of the utmost importance to make it the philosophy of the human person” [ibid.: 100].

One of the chief postulates that the Church should constantly pursue is the restoration of Christian philosophy. The Primate argued:

“In a tangled web of questions, needs, aspirations, and requests the philosophy of the human person should play a leading role. If we were to assume that the Aristotelian-Thomistic approach is a march into the future, it would be imprudent to break too hastily with the wonderful starting point of this philosophy. It defines the position of philosophy of the human person remarkably well. The recognition of a personhood and a person-oriented approach are postulated as the foundation for the development of a person, a family, social, economic, professional and also political life” [ibid.: 168].

We can see that already in those times, in the confrontation between the Church and communist ideology, Wyszyński realised that neither an individual, nor a family, nor a nation and state, nor even professional life can be saved from crisis

if we do not make an effort to understand a human person, their exceptional dignity, their rights and responsibilities [ibid.: 169].

5. Fear of philosophy

However, back then and now, many people do not understand the essential role of philosophy in education, in social life, in the media. There is even such thing as fear of philosophy. Primate Wyszyński was aware of this.

“There was a time when philosophy was so feared that it was taught only at the Catholic University of Lublin. Subsequently, it became evident that a nation devoid of philosophical discourse is a nation of slaves. Such a nation cannot create knowledge and progress. Finally, it was understood that to move the Polish land from its foundations, philosophers should be restored” [Wyszyński 1976: 165].

Good social practices, Wyszyński stated, cannot exist unless the truth triumphs in both social and personal life. But this will never happen without a proper philosophy that gives priority to a human person. The Primate knew this very well. Speaking at the 30th anniversary celebration of the Faculty of Philosophy, Wyszyński said to the eminent Polish historian of philosophy Professor Władysław Tatarkiewicz³, whose textbooks educated the whole generations of post-war students:

³ It should be reminded that the expulsion of Professor Tatarkiewicz from the University of Warsaw, as a result from the “civil denunciation” by Marxist philosophy students (Baczko, Holland, Kołakowski, Krasnosielski, Rybczyńska, Śluccki, Śladowska, Jarosz), deeply disturbed the academic environment. The infamous seminar took place on 20 March 1950, the day after Sunday Mass in the Academic Church of St. Anne in Krakowskie Przedmieście, where Primate Wyszyński gave a sermon. After the Mass, there was a student demonstration in honour of Wyszyński. The day after that, the Marxist students at the University were belligerently disposed and debated very aggressively with Professor Tatarkiewicz and the students opposed to Marxist philosophy (Bronisław Dembowski, the professor’s assistant at the time, was also present). The supporters of Marxism read out the manifesto in which they wrote: “At the meeting held the day after the antinational and antipeace manifestation organized by that part of the Church hierarchy that puts interests of imperialism and war before the interests of Poland, peace and democracy, speeches were made [at the seminar of prof. Tatarkiewicz] that used the arguments taken directly from the well-known pastoral letters and sermons. [...] The Professor’s failure to interfere in this provocative effort of transforming the Seminar meeting into a reactionary rally, as Miss Czekajewska’s speech can be described, is surprising”. For the text of this letter-manifest with the comments of participants see: [Przegląd Filozoficzny. Nowa Seria nr 4 1995: 85-101; Pandura, Kuliniak, Ratajczak 2019: 180-199; Dembowski 1997: 306-309]. Prof. Tatarkiewicz dedicated to this event one sentence in his *Diary*: „At the seminar, Kołakowski speaks on behalf of the members of the party. I answer calmly: absolutely unexpectedly and incomprehensibly” [Tatarkiewicz 2019: 403-404].

“Professor, I have never been a “professional” philosopher, so it comes as a great surprise to me that I have been awarded the title of Doctor *honoris causa*. My life has always urged me to put certain theoretical postulates into practice. This is why I quickly moved into the field of Catholic Social Teaching, especially Catholic Social Policy. There, I found out that Catholic social policy cannot function without the sound philosophical principles, especially without a correct understanding of a human person” [Wyszyński 1976: 165].

This threat of a “distorted view of a person” has serious consequences. Ideological claims threaten the whole development of personal culture, the culture of the human mind, national and social culture, and even political culture. When there is no place for philosophy, especially the philosophy of the human person, many evil things are bound to happen. It makes fostering well-cultivated philosophical discourse extremely important. In Catholicism, the role and significance of philosophical discourse anthropology is special because Christ, the Man-God, addressed Himself to a human person. God became man and has made a man an object of His enormous trust and respect endowing him with divine dignity [Dziuba 2006: 168].

It was not by accident that the Archbishop of Warsaw stressed with such force the relationship between a university as *universitas studiorum ac magistrorum* and philosophy and theology.

“It seems to me that the full humanisation of life demands that our universities, technical colleges and polytechnical schools should have contact with educational institutions in the field of moral and theological disciplines. Only then will full humanisation be possible. [...] Institutions such as the Medical Academy will come to harm if they have no contact with moral, theological, religious and cultural problems. They are necessarily too narrow since they have too much content in their courses and cannot look *per suprema principia* – which is now so much exposed in various kinds of anthropology” [ibid.: 229].

Primate Wyszyński realised that a diligent study of the humanities is not easy, as it requires not only broad and deep knowledge but also an accomplished personality. It has long been recognised that humanism is the “late fruit of mature age”, and its goal is a “humanist” – the one who understands what the “humanity of a man” is all about. Humanism embraces all that is contained in the rational and free human nature and to what a man transcends cognitively and morally in his interaction with the world. True humanism, therefore, is pursued for the sake of

cognition itself and the contemplation of truth, all of which should contribute to the moral formation of a wise and righteous human being. This humanistic message may only be effective in faculties of philosophy, theology or those related to the broadly defined humanities and classical culture [Fedorowicz 2016: 19; Kiereś 2003: 650]. However, the mere presence of philosophy (or, in the case of a Christian academic institution, also theology) in any faculty provides an opportunity for a holistic view on existential and religious questions and problems that everyone has experienced ⁴.

At universities, the Primate concludes, theology should be combined with morality, philosophy with truth, and culture with progress, since this is the proper way to prepare young people, through the attitude of study, work, sacrifice, service, life assessment, personal order, to responsibility and service to society [Dziuba 2006: 168]. Universities are not only places of acquiring professional competencies and academic titles that will enable one to get a good, well-paid and interesting job, but they are, above all, places where service to others begins, service to those for whose benefit the effort of studying, and later the effort of working is undertaken.

“Due to their service, you have the means to serve those generation that will come after you. In this way we are inscribed into the human family where the greatest power is love” [ibid.: 134].

This mutual enrichment of the successive generations of university students, in a spirit of service and with the aim of revealing the gift that is the human person, offers an opportunity to engage in authentic scientific endeavours and to create mutual social responsibility.

6. Cardinal Wyszyński's ideas in the face of crisis of universities

The Primate's words sound very mature. Several decades ago, he identified the tendency that now affects the humanities, especially philosophy and theology. We can see how in the corporate business structure of today's higher schools both philosophy, with its ambition for formulating and posing difficult questions,

⁴ “That only is true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence” [Newman 2008: 164]. “Newman argued not only that the end of university education is excellence and enlargement of mind but that these cannot be achieved either by intensive training within one academic discipline or even within a group of several disciplines” [MacIntyre 2001: 1].

and theology, asking questions about God, are denied a future. A course in philosophy is only valued as a means of better preparing students for their future careers by teaching them eristics, logic or cognitive science. The assertion that an educated person, or indeed any thinking person in general, needs philosophy because it addresses fundamental issues pertaining to human existence, gives motivation for the search for meaning and offers various answers to the most important matters, is, regrettably, completely alien to the ethos of the modern research university [MacIntyre 2013: 238-241].

Is it not true that the crisis of the humanities has drawn the young and bright people away from the intellectual work – reading books, writing, asking crucial questions, disputing – in favour of the digital technology and quasi-business activity that can be reduced to gaining money from grants and projects for the corporations that universities have become?⁵ It is unclear whether there will be sufficient space within the system of centralised and globalised humanities, which is subject to the constraints of arbitrary grant allocations and the pressures of prevailing intellectual trends, to accommodate a rich, bottom-up, multifaceted narrative. The international grant system will by no means substitute the ability to think independently, while there is every indication that it can destroy that ability. Is the consistent undermining of libertarian instinct and critical thinking that stems from the creation of procedures, conditions and clauses aimed at trading academic freedom for material possessions, the result of this process [Nowak 2014: 15]? Still, in the name of the oldest non-technical academic institution we find not only *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* (community of teachers and students) but also *universitas studiorum*, that is universality and versatility of study. Both these meanings are inextricably intertwined. A university that embraces the community

⁵ It should be pointed out the serious requirements – both legal and administrative – that doctoral students at Polish universities have to meet. Not only are they obliged to write and defend a good doctoral thesis but also to provide a track record of their academic achievements. The mid-term evaluation of a doctoral student includes the timely implementation of the individual research plan and its adherence to the schedule of work on the doctorate, the assessment of the progress of work in the field of research material on which the dissertation is based (which is fairly obvious), but also such things as scientific-organisational activity, scientific research, participation in scientific conferences, publication of articles in high-impact journals and, which is more and more often emphasised, the preparation and submission of project funding proposals (grants). A young person who enters the field of their academic interests is not encouraged to live in the world of ideas and fascinations of their work but is trained to carry out today's university proposals – to collect points for publications and to obtain funds (grants), 25% of which are instantly taken by a university. This is a clear message to young scientists – while you are engaged in scientific activity, you ought to gain evaluation profits with which the university supports itself (clearly not interested in the spiritual life of an idea).

of students and professors from diverse academic backgrounds facilitates interaction, exchange of thoughts and views, meetings of different environments and groups [Mazurkiewicz 2017: 50].

It is painful to realise that universities are turning into a confederation of specialised companies, producing highly trained specialists with distorted and one-sided minds. Such a configuration of education that makes it a quick professionalisation-orientated path has become the driving force of the educational model that deprives young people of a broad cultural and humanistic horizon.

“Universities have made a similar mistake. They have responded all too readily to an invitation to treat students as consumers to whose demands they ought to be responsive. But it is a primary responsibility of a university to be unresponsive, to give its students what they need, not what they want, and to do so in such a way that what they want becomes what they need and what they choose is choice-worthy” [MacIntyre 2005: 15].

There is a marked tendency among contemporary educators to prioritize the quick and efficient training of a vast workforce of employable specialists, with scant regard for the acquisition of students' knowledge and acceptance of the universum of culture. The results are disastrous – we encounter people who are university graduates, formally educated but who do not know the basics of European culture, are unable to read the basic cultural codes, do not know what moral and social principles an educated person should observe. This is exactly what is happening in the USA, and the process has been aptly described by Mark Bauerlein [Bauerlein 2022: 10-45]. If the only end-product of education are excellently trained professionals, each of them focused on their own area of expertise, this results in distorted and one-sided development of the mind. It should be remembered, as MacIntyre points out, that “it is possible to have become a highly distinguished historian, say, or a physicist, and yet remain a fool” [MacIntyre 2001: 3] (the fact frequently confirmed by the experience of university committees).

Education has become a series of unrelated enquiries into sets of various subjects and, as a result, education now consists of introductions to these enquiries and of teaching basic skills needed to carry them out. Education thus conceived is aimed at the progress within specific areas of expertise. This way, higher education institutions become a place where the limitation of mind has become a precondition for success in any scientific discipline.

Recalling the words of Cardinal Wyszyński, we can realize that the hierarchy understood back then the consequences of this unfortunate process. The Primate against the potential pitfalls of the lack of the strong humanities at the universities because he was acutely aware that a deficiency in this area would lead to impoverishment of society and the weakening of intellectual vitality that is so important for every nation. He also protested strongly against the havoc wrought in education by Marxist ideology, which was attacking both Polish culture and religion. This objection to the ideologization of science is still relevant today, when we can see threats to academic freedom posed by both radical (mostly left-wing) social circles and public authorities. Free, informed, and objective debate is hampered by neo-Marxist ideas and various forms of political correctness.

7. Contemporary threats

If science is an eminent function of the whole of humanity, a university should serve it, while at the same time representing and implementing the great and important moral values in society. If the spirit of science is a spirit of objectivity, self-oblivion, immersion in truth, diligent effort of the will, arduous and scrupulous work, a critical but humble spirit – as I.M. Bocheński wrote over 70 years ago – then this spirit should cultivate virtues that we in our culture recognise as Christian virtues. A university should above all cultivate intellectual virtues, but they cannot be separated from moral virtues that are deeply associated with the pursuit of knowledge. If a university teaches wisdom (which is concerned with a worldview, understanding of universal truths and values that govern life as a whole), it also teaches humility and diligence. If intelligence (in the sense of understanding principles) and science (as a skill of theoretical thinking) reign in the university, there must also be an attitude of perseverance (fortitude), dialogue, cooperation and prudence in the effective and fair application of the rules [Bocheński 1952: 1; Mazurkiewicz 2005: 92]. A university should not only teach thinking and data processing but also true freedom of mind; it should liberate from prejudices, help to understand other people in their life situations, enable us to achieve the critical distance in the face of various ideologies.

A university is threatened by the tendency to marginalise theology and philosophy as well as the humanities in favour of narrowing the field of expertise, statism – the domination of bureaucracy, and ideologization.

The first of these threats has already been discussed and the relevant words of the Primate of the Millennium have been quoted, so I will only add a short fragment

about a connection between theology and philosophy at Christian universities taken from A. MacIntyre's book to corroborate the Cardinal Wyszyński's intuitions:

“Theology now stands in need of similar justification. Academic theology has also tended to become a collection of diverse enquiries, and the academic distinction within each of these has little or nothing to do with the ability to perform those integrative tasks that are central to theology's function within and on behalf of a Catholic university. What theology has to respond to in the first place are the incompleteness and the limitations of a purely philosophical view of the order of things: it has to show us nature from the standpoint of grace. And theologians will be unable to fulfil their tasks in the Catholic university adequately until they are able to view themselves and their discipline in the light afforded by a theology of revelation. The study of physics, history, or economics remains incomplete until it is to some extent illuminated by philosophical enquiry, and all education, including their philosophical education, is incomplete until it is illuminated by the insight rooted in theology” [MacIntyre 2001: 8].

Wyszyński spoke clearly about the threat of statism as early as in May 1981 in his speech to the Senate of the Academy of Catholic Theology:

“It is important not to allow any government official, administrator or state treasury dominate a university. There were times when the problem was solved by the provision of funds by a private foundation. Universities, as for instance the Catholic University of Lublin, were funded by various non-governmental sources, and this guaranteed them academic freedom. When a university is state funded, its every department is dependent on the state budget. It inadvertently lowers the standards. If statism is pursued by academic teachers who are only interested in being qualified purely administratively, then a *terminus ad quem* of all the efforts and endeavours of such an academic will be distorted and alienated. This fact may not be apparent in the face of the omniscience of the statist approach to science. The state can provide a considerable support for scientific research, should refrain, however, from intruding too deeply into the domain of functioning and socio-biology of the life of science. If the state is governed by cultural people, it knows that it must stop on the doorstep of a university and respect its independence” [Wyszyński 1990: 1039-1040].

The Primate points out: “if the state is governed by people of culture” then the state money that is given to academic institutions serve scholars and didactics,

but if the culture is lacking, a scholar and a student become slaves of the administration:

“It often happens nowadays that economic administration of the university is more important than a world-renowned eminent professor. Sometimes, this professor has to leave because the economy wins. It is even worse when it is politics that wins, when the state has its own people to make sure that academics think “correctly” – not in relation *ad veritatem* but in relation *ad politicam*. Unfortunately, this is often the case. It is regrettable that there are people who take it upon themselves to monitor minds that are by definition independent and free, and whose value and vitality no one can measure. You may say, dear guests, that I am going too deep into some Platonic speculations. But let us not forget that any academic institution – whether Catholic, private or state-owned – can only fulfil its mission when it is born of public demand, of native, national culture, of natural social evolution, of the development of the philosophy of culture” [ibid.: 1040].

The third threat is the current ideologization of politics, science and public debate. Universities, which should be areas of integrity, objectivity and intellectual honesty, have become places of struggle for cultural and civilisational influence rather than honest debate. The Primate repeatedly pointed out that the humanities, and philosophy in particular, are supposed to contribute to deepening of young people's reflexivity and knowledge, rather than manipulating them. His experience of Marxism may prove helpful in assessing the ongoing debate about the ideologization of science.

It follows that every academic institution has a duty to oppose the progressive fragmentation of knowledge, education and life. Curricula should be designed in such a way as to create an atmosphere conducive to integrating the different aspects of students' and professors' activities and in all these efforts, philosophy plays a prominent role. It is imperative that this subject is included in the curriculum of universities at all levels of study, including doctoral studies. Philosophy and theology cannot be transformed into a collection of specialised disciplines or become a component of ideological pressure.

If, as John Paul II said, the university is one of the masterpieces of human culture, there is reason to fear today that this extremely important idea is being distorted, that human development is being endangered. And yet education in its broadest sense, including university education at a certain stage, strives to release in man

his full spiritual potential – the potential of the mind, will and heart – in order to achieve the fullest development of the whole person. This is the role and purpose of a university for all times and cultures – a role clearly understood and strongly emphasised by Cardinal Wyszyński.

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