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Christian Tradition and (Post) Modernity in the Context of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's Personalist Concept of Culture (1)

1. Deconstruction of the Christian Concept of Culture and the Post-Conciliar Teaching of the Church – 2. Conciliar Interpretation of Christian Culture – 3. A Cultural Renewal or Crisis of Identity – 4. Conclusions

In his speech inaugurating the opening of the Second Vatican Council, John XXIII said: “In the present reality, Divine Providence leads us to a new order of human relations, which – regardless of people’s own efforts, and even beyond their expectations – is directed at the fulfillment of the highest and mysterious intentions of God. So everything, even human differentiation, leads to the good of the Church”¹. A similar belief in the “veiled” Christian orientation of the socio-cultural trends of the 1950s can also be found in the encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, which emphasizes “mutual recognition of rights and obligations in society” as a kind of so-called *praeparatio evangelii*. In this sense, in the face of global changes, humanity becomes aware of the importance of universal values such as truth, justice, love, and freedom, leading – in turn – to a better knowledge of the true, personal and transcendental God².

¹ Quotation after: Walter M. Abbott. 1967. *Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 712–713.

² John XXIII. 1963. *Pacem in Terris*, no 48–50. Cf. Andrzej F. Dziuba. 2001. Polityczny wymiar aktywności chrześcijańskiej w nauczaniu Księdza Prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego. In: *Nauczanie*

Despite such statements, in the encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, it is difficult to find a philosophical and theological or even sociological justification that mutual recognition of rights and obligations leads to a greater acceptance and respect for truth, justice, love and freedom, and ultimately a personal and transcendent God. In this context, many Christian commentators criticize the encyclical that one can adopt as the basis for mutual recognition of rights and obligations, e.g., the principle of Thomas Hobbes's contractualism, without being interested in truth, justice, mercy as well as freedom understood in the Christian sense, and – even more – in the transcendent God. Moreover, the mere combination of the above values, so that they have some strictly natural relationship with each other, requires the adoption of authentically Christian philosophical and theological assumptions³.

Also, in terms of “openness” to the world, as well as general optimism about the possibility of finding common ground for cooperation between Christians and non-Christians in the dimension of universal values present in contemporary culture, they did not seem to show the appropriate caution or a critical approach to the above issues. It seems, therefore, as in the case of John XXIII, that Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński also was not quite aware that the concept of universal values presented at that time was – in itself – somewhat unclear and, as a consequence, difficult to accept comprehensively⁴.

1. Deconstruction of the Christian Concept of Culture and the Post-Conciliar Teaching of the Church

In the opinion of many Western intellectuals, (post) modernity cannot be equated with anti-modernism. In their view, if understanding modernity leads through the negation of metaphysical and religious threads of the Christian tradition, at that point, (post) modernity tries to bring this negation to a completion. Ultimately, it is about freeing modernity from the remnants of metaphysical or pre-modern thoughts. In the sociological dimension, one can, therefore, speak of “deconstruction” as an attempt to free the modern cultural and social

społeczne Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, Materiały z sesji naukowej. Ed. Andrzej Garbarz, 45–94. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego.

³ Andrzej F. Dziuba. 2013. *Humanizująca funkcja kultury. Z nauczania kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego Prymasa Polski*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW, 29–40.

⁴ Giovanni Turbanti. 1992. “The Attitude of the Church to the Modern World at and after Vatican II”. *Concilium* 6: 92.

order from all “cultural relics”, including ecclesiastical and clerical forms of religiosity⁵.

At this point, deconstruction should not be equated with relativism. “Disenchanted the world” – according to many postmodern luminaries – does not mean giving up the truth, but rather the “illusion” in which contemporary Christian culture functions. In this context, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Martin Heidegger (as well as many others) “discovered” the falsity of metaphysical content within the cultural reality, exposing it – thus – as a result of human needs and desires. The normative potential of metaphysical “truths” (here one might speak of meta-structural truths) has been recognized either as the result of social mechanisms (Nietzsche) or unconscious desires (Freud) or an attempt to escape death (Heidegger). In short, in order to “live in the truth”, one has to renounce metaphysical “truths”, which subsequently will be considered as kind of “illusions”⁶.

In turn, in the context of the Church’s statements, “modernity” is understood as a specific cultural formation. In this sense, culture can be defined as – a kind of – understanding of human personality, social relations, individual mentality, a specific system of moral values operating in the context of a particular vision of man, society, nature, as well as the idea of good and evil. However, analyzing various aspects of contemporary (post) modern culture concerning its original roots, many modern Christian intellectuals use quite a defiant language describing them, among others, as a kind of “cultural mutation” (Charles Taylor), “a dangerous gap” (Alasdair MacIntyre), “heretical reconstruction” (John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock), or even a “secular parody of classical Christian synthesis” (William T. Cavanaugh)⁷.

⁵ Richard Rorty. 2009. Antiklerikalismus und Atheismus. In *Die Zukunft der Religion*. Ed. Richard Rorty, Gianni Vattimo, Santiago Zabala, Michael Adrian, Nora Fröhder. 41. Frankfurt am Main – Leipzig: Verlag der Weltreligionen. The term of the research stance called “deconstruction” combines two well-known but – apparently – contradictory concepts: “destruction” and “construction”. This contradiction ceases to be relevant when one considers deconstruction in terms of “social reality”. After the “destruction” of metaphysical contents, they can no longer legitimize the current social order. Thus, any temporary order will be treated as contingent because it is constructed through temporary patterns of socialization and enculturation. Conversely, if it has not been previously “discovered” that the normative social order is not the result or effect of a “truth” beyond humanity, deconstruction would have no application. The beginning and condition of the entire deconstructivist operation is the denial of a “truth” that transcends reality. In other words, it is to deny the Logos. Martin Heidegger. 2008. *Bycie i czas*, Tłum. Bogdan Braun. Warszawa: PWN, 25–33; Markus Lipowicz. „Chrześcijańska dekonstrukcja ponowoczesności? Albo: jak każdy znak może zostać odwrócony” (June, 9, 2020) file:///L:/Markus%20Lipowicz_Chrze%20cja% 20ska% 20dekonstrukcja %20ponowczesno %20ci.pdf.

⁶ Lipowicz. „Chrześcijańska dekonstrukcja ponowoczesności?”.

⁷ When analyzing contemporary culture, many modern Christian intellectuals use a defiant language instead. The difference between the concepts of “mutation”, “rupture”, “heretical reconstruction,” and “secular parodies” is generally small. “Heretic reconstruction” includes the concept of the so-called idea of “mutation”. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the doctrinal credibility

In other words, the lack of sufficient acuteness on the part of many prominent representatives of the doctrine of the Catholic Church caused the foundations of Christian “modernity” to increasingly crack under the influence of the invasion of cultural elements hostile to Christian culture. However, it should be emphasized that previously there was no cultural concept defining the specificity of “modernity”. There was only a historical category understood as modern philosophy⁸.

The Christian vision of culture represented by Primate Wyszyński should be situated in a similar current of the Church’s official teaching. In his opinion, the good of the human person verifies the greatness and importance of culture. For this reason, authentic culture has humanistic values, above all, human creativity undertaken with the human being in mind and directed at his fullness⁹. Due to culture, the human person enters into various relationships with people and with the world. “Therefore, the Church – emphasizes the Primate – although it shows us heaven, it is realistic, and although it puts the person above things (...), it is nevertheless based on earthly reality”¹⁰. Through involvement in cultural activities, a person expresses his relationship to the world. At the same time, it is a particular realization of God’s calling to subdue the land. The specificity of this vocation is expressed because man receives the privilege of participating in God’s work of creating the world.

However, in the context of the official decisions of the Church, it should be stated that the Council Fathers participating in the sessions of *Vaticanum II* generally did not fully understand the concept of modernism and the then-emerging postmodernism as a specific cultural formation constituting a severe challenge to Christianity. A popular interpretation, for example, *Gaudium et spes*, emphasizes that the above document should be understood as a programmed declaration of the Church towards the phenomenon of “modernity”. In practice, however, it is neither the earliest nor the deepest, nor the ultimate relation of the Church

of Christianity, the new notion of postmodern culture is simply heresy (William T. Cavanaugh. 1999. *Beyond Secular Parodies: Radical Orthodoxy*. London: Routledge, 182; Robert B. Pippin. 1987. “Blumenberg and the modernity problem”. *Review of Metaphysics* 40: (2): 535–557). On the other hand, MacIntyre’s cultural “dangerous divergence” refers to the analyzes of Elizabeth Anscombe. In her opinion, like many representatives of the British school of analytical philosophy, contemporary post-modern culture relates to elements of classical Christianity, but *in vacuo*, i.e., in isolation from their original theistic context. Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe. (1958). “Modern Moral Philosophy”. *Philosophy* 33 (124): 1–19.

⁸ Kenneth L. Schmitz. (1969) “Postmodernism and the Catholic Tradition”. *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 73:(2): 223–253,

⁹ Czesław S. Bartnik. 1981. „Zarys myśli teologicznej Kardynała Wyszyńskiego”. *Ateneum Kapańskie* 73 (97): 226–227.

¹⁰ Stefan Wyszyński. (1990). „Kształtowanie kultury społeczno-katolickiej w Polsce. Do prawników 15. 01. 1971”. In: *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*. Stefan Wyszyński, 437. Warszawa: ODISS.

to modernity, nor to the culture and faith that shape the post-Conciliar Church. Nevertheless, it occupies an important place due to its particular location in the historical context. Moreover, its “momentous” status expresses the conviction of the entire universal Church¹¹.

In fact, all commentators agree that the constitution on the Church *Gaudium et spes* is a compromised document that arose as a result of many debates, among others, the relationship between nature and grace, especially the tensions between the “creative” and “salvific” dimensions presented by Catholic theology. As stated by Walter Kasper, the conciliar constitution lacks clarity regarding, among others, the relationship between the human person made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26) and the person of Jesus Christ, shown, for example, on the basis of the letter to the Colossians (Col 1:15)¹².

On the other hand, Charles Moeller noted that in the last two phases of the drafting process, a decision was made to “center” opinions and maintained a balance between often different concepts. As a consequence, the document acquired a “dialectical” character with a specific difference¹³. As a result, *Gaudium et spes* cannot be read appropriately without applying a framework and overarching theological concept that would reconcile the contrasts and dissonances that occurred there. Nevertheless, the council fathers did not propose such fortifications. Therefore, the document became the subject of interpretive confusion, especially on the part of clergy and laity – often holding significant offices in the Church – who lacked a proper philosophical and theological formation and a deeper understanding of the specific historical context of contemporary cultural reality.

According to Roberto Tucci, during the Council’s preparatory phase, no in-depth pre-orientation sketch was drawn up regarding the second chapter of *Gaudium et spes*, in which the Christian understanding of the concept of culture would be presented. In turn, Henri de Lubac stated that many of the essential contents contained in several chapters of Part Two of the Constitution, many Fathers of the Council preferred to see either in a separate encyclical or in other different documents of the Church¹⁴.

¹¹ Jeffrey J. Langan. (1986). Political Hopes and political Tasks: A Reading of ‘Gaudium et spes’ after Twenty Years. In: *The Church and the Modern World: Two Decades after Vaticanum II*. Ed. Judith A. Dwyer, 102. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

¹² Walter Kasper. 1996. “The Theological Anthropology of Gaudium et spes”. *Communio* 23: 137.

¹³ Charles Moeller. 1969. History of the Constitution. In *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II. Vol. V*. Ed. Herbert Vorgrimler. Trans. Walter J. O’Hara, 60–61. Freiburg – New York: Herder & Herder.

¹⁴ Henri de Lubac. 1984. *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, San Francisco: Ignatius, 24.

However, not only was the content of the document the result of the theological compromise used but also its form became a kind of a specific “innovation” (Aidan Nichols)¹⁵: a novelty whose structure is unprecedented in the history of councils (Walter Kasper). Moreover, *Gaudium et spes* treats Christ more like “Omega” than “Alpha” (Edouard Hamel)¹⁶. However, regardless of the standard translation of the document’s title into *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, this text lacked a strict form of a constitution. In other words, the above document was not prepared in its strictly legal formula with an emphasis on the definition of critical terms. In particular, it lacks – despite repeated references – theological justification of such concepts as “modern man” or “modern world”. Moreover, as Francis George noted, even the notion of “Church” in the documents of the Council is characterized by a sort of “terminological inaccuracy”, as well as the ideas describing the “modern man” and “modern world”¹⁷.

Karl Rahner also noted that the Council in the above constitution unreflectively applied a way of expressing itself that was neither permanent dogmatic teaching nor one that fully complied with the official legal rules proper to documents of such high rank. Thus, it should only be understood as a kind of an appeal or “pastoral instruction”¹⁸. In general, the compromises used in the above document, numerous contrasts, unprecedented form, the lack of a clearly defined theological framework enabling a clear interpretation of the statements made, as well as terminological inaccuracies have contributed to severe difficulties in interpreting the teaching of the Council on the Christian vision of culture in the contemporary world.

The topic of contemporary culture in the interwar period was an essential part of the scientific research of Erich Przywara, influenced, among others, by the concepts of John Henry Newman (primarily his idea of *paideia*) and Hans Urs von Balthasar.¹⁹ In turn, in the pre-conciliar period, Romano Guardini – in line with

¹⁵ Aidan Nichols. 1998. *Catholic Thought since the Enlightenment: A Survey*, London: Gracewing, 157.

¹⁶ Edouard Hamel, 1988. The Foundations of Human Rights in Biblical Theology: Following the Orientations of “*Gaudium et spes*”. In *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives*. Ed. René Latourelle. Vol. II, 461–478. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.

¹⁷ Francis George. 1990. *Inculturation and Ecclesial Communion: Culture and Church in the teaching of Pope John Paul II*. Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 19.

¹⁸ Karl Rahner. 1979. “Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II”. *Theological Studies* 40: 726.

¹⁹ Erich Przywara. 1934–1935. “Dionysisches und christliches Opfer“. *Stimmen der Zeit* 65: 11–24; Erich Przywara. 1962. *Zwischen Religion and Kultur: Weg zu Gott*, Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag.

the above trend of scientific research – stated that the Western world was, unfortunately, wholly mistaken in believing that it was possible to shape culture without taking into account the fundamental norms and principles proper to its own Christian essence²⁰. This is, *prima facie*, the exact antithesis of the statement found in the constitution *Gaudium et spes*, where “(...) the Church affirms the legitimate autonomy of human culture”²¹.

Moreover, in the post-conciliar period, Romano Guardini, in his letters to Pope Paul VI, expressed his deep concern about the theological changes in the Church’s post-Conciliar thinking. As early as 1965, Guardini stated:

Even during my theological studies it became clear to me – and since then this belief has practically determined all my work – that what can convince people today is not so much the continuous modification of Christianity in the historical or psychological dimension, but the authentic and unfettered message of God’s revelation²².

Unfortunately, neither Romano Guardini, nor Erich Przywara, nor Urs von Balthasar was elected as the “periti” council. Also, the works of the English historian Christopher Dawson or the German sociologist Max Weber on the sociological differences between Catholic and Protestant culture did not have any significant impact on those who developed the Christian vision of culture in the *Gaudium et spes*. Moreover, the concept of culture elaborated in this document seems instead constructed without reference to any particular theological theory of culture but testifies to a deliberate political project – based on the assumptions of Maritain’s concept – of rapprochement with the liberal-humanist tradition. It is confirmed by the opinion of the chairman of the Pontifical Council for Culture, Cardinal Gabriel-Marie Garrone, who stated that the assumptions contained in the works of Jacques Maritain had a significant impact on the development of the constitution *Gaudium et spes*. In particular, the above concept provided a philosophical framework for the complex project of synthesizing the liberal and Thomist traditions revealed by the undoubtedly unique Maritainian concept of personalism²³.

²⁰ Romano Guardini. 1957. *The End of the Modern World*, London: Sheed & Ward, 68.

²¹ *Gaudium et spes*, no. 59.

²² Quotation after: Robert A. Krieg. 1997. *Romano Guardini: A Precursor of Vatican II*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 69.

²³ Charles M. Murphy. 1987. “The Church and Culture since Vatican II: on the Analogy of Faith and Art”. *Theological Studies* 48: 322.

2. Conciliar Interpretation of Christian Culture

However, apart from the earlier deviations, it should be stated that the personalistic concept of culture is situated in complete opposition to the “(post) modern tradition”. The personalistic perspective of Christian culture – placing the human person at the center of considerations as the principal subject and source – gives it a personal, social, and dynamic character. Therefore, culture is not a static and closed reality but is continuously transformed. The phenomenon of culture – as an expression of human activity – contains all the richness of the human personality. Presenting Christian culture from the perspective of the mystery of Creation and Redemption allows us to see man’s creative activity in a history-saving dimension. Thanks to this, Christian culture becomes included in the supernatural culture, the foundation of Jesus Christ. Through the Incarnation, He enters the history of man, connects him with God, and creates a culture in which God’s reality is associated with the human world²⁴.

Over the centuries, a very close relationship between culture and religion can be observed, expressed in the process of mutual interaction and penetration. Thus, one cannot understand the cultural achievements of societies until one understands the underlying religious beliefs. Religion is also a great, central unifying force for the personalistic vision of culture; it is the guardian of tradition, protects moral laws, educates, and teaches wisdom. In this sense, the confrontation of Christianity with culture becomes a process of penetrating the fabric of human behavior, models of life, thinking, and acting. However, it was given a different character, dividing this virtually globally uniform process into many sub-currents with a specific shade and particular orientation²⁵.

In this context, one should understand the statement of Primate Wyszyński, who states: “The level of uniting culture is higher than that of separating culture. All paths of this culture lead through human nature, the Nation, the state, and the church community”²⁶. “For everything came out of the unity of God, everything was created through one paternal love, and with the help of this love, everything is to return to this unity”²⁷. The humanizing function of culture, developing man in all his properties, can be real, however, as long as the culture is guaranteed an integral

²⁴ Dziuba. 2013. *Humanizująca funkcja kultury*, 26–28.

²⁵ Stanisław Nagy. 1988. „Ewangelia a kultura w ujęciu encykliki «Slavorum Apostoli»“. In *Ewangelia i kultura. Doświadczenie środkowoeuropejskie*. Red. Marian Radwan, Tadeusz Styczeń, 106. Rzym: Polski Instytut Kultury Chrześcijańskiej.

²⁶ Wyszyński, 1990. Nie oczekujemy życia łatwego, 10.

²⁷ Wyszyński, 1990. Nie oczekujemy życia łatwego, 9.

concept of man: a spiritual and material being, temporal and oriented towards eternity, living in the time and called beyond all time, rational and therefore free, whose freedom is rooted in reason²⁸.

Primate Wyszyński's teachings on culture are thus part of the official stream of the Council's teaching, the documents of which expressed opposition to the underlying assumptions of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, emphasizing that faith is only a matter of submitting to the experience of reason. In this way, rooted in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of Enlightenment naturalism, as well as in Marxist materialist philosophy, the ideas that the cause of all social injustice are institutions, not original sin and its vices, have become a significant determinant of the contemporary vision of postmodern culture²⁹. It is also connected with the liberal concept of the primacy of individual, unrestrained freedom and, therefore, with the necessity to "deconstruct Christianity".

In this context, the Holy See's official statements show the awareness of the situation in which contemporary theology and philosophy, especially political philosophy, function. Nevertheless, it did not lead to the development of a systematic critique of "contemporary culture", especially in the face of the challenges posed by various intellectual trends and traditions, such as extreme liberalism, Hegelism, Marxism, and neo-Marxism (especially representatives of the Frankfurt School), such as concepts drawing from the tradition of the already mentioned Enlightenment's rationalism or Nietzsche's philosophy.

Moreover, as an expert on conciliar issues, John O'Malley, in his work *Tradition and Transition: Historical Perspectives on Vatican II*, stated: "The Council did not consider the need to prepare any specific theoretical analysis underpinning *aggiornamento*, because most of us do not realize how important it is to have it"³⁰. Thus, the fundamental imperative of the Council to remain faithful to the authentic tradition of the Church, adapting only to current needs, was modified and revised from a practical norm seeking reform into a severe and conflicting problem³¹. In other words, it has not been discussed – at least on the theological and philosophical level – what is the essence of "(post) modern culture" and how does it affect the spiritual and intellectual formation of a specific person, as well as the possibilities of his evangelization or re-evangelization?

²⁸ Marian Radwan. 1988. Wstęp. In *Wiara i kultura*. Jan Paweł II, 11–12. Rzym – Lublin: RW KUL.

²⁹ Czesław Stanisław Bartnik. 1999. *Teologia kultury*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 54–68.

³⁰ John O'Malley. 1989. *Tradition and Transition: Historical Perspectives on Vatican II*. Wilmington DE: M. Glazier, 45.

³¹ O'Malley. 1989. *Tradition and Transition*, 67.

Consequently, the call to an appropriate approach to pastoral issues was a concept mostly devoid of essential content, which seems to have been influenced by Martin Heidegger's philosophical thought, emphasizing the call for an "authentic" response to the positioning of human existence, which finds itself as being "thrown" into the reality of postmodern culture³². The difficulties of not understanding Heidegger's existential concept were further exacerbated when it was given a kind of "Christian shine" and popularized in the Catholic Church all over the world. In other words, the clergy and the lay faithful have been obliged to "adopt the right attitude" by taking "genuine responsibility for the modern world". And all this in a situation where most of the above concepts – to use the language of John O'Malley – contained not only a hefty dose of confusing ambiguity and "ecclesiastical newspeak", which was a source of later serious misunderstandings and conflicts between the Church and the contemporary understanding of (post) modern culture³³.

Yet, the magisterium of the Church, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, devoted much attention to the so-called "Modernism". Nevertheless, the concept of "modernity" as "cultural formation" had not yet emerged in the context of the Council Fathers' theological discourse. Therefore, as Herve Carrie emphasized, in the pre-conciliar period, the question of cultural analysis was almost wholly ignored concerning the theological-pastoral formation of Christians of that era³⁴.

3. A Cultural Renewal or Crisis of Identity

In this context, the multifaceted nature of the concept of *aggiornamento* – along with the metaphor of "fresh air" illustrating it – did not provide specific indications for the philosophical and theological interpretation of culture, as well as for the "spirit of the modern world". In an international context, the "spirit of the modern world" – for example, the mid-1960s – can be interpreted equally well through the prism of the Beatles' music, the then flourishing youth "pop culture", the sexual revolution, or through the development of medical ethics and the introduction

³² Jack Arthur Bonsor. 1987. *Rahner, Heidegger and Truth: Karl Rahner's Notion of Christian Truth, The Influence of Heidegger*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

³³ Roger Waterhouse. 1981. *The Vacuity of Heidegger's Authenticity. A Heidegger Critique: A Critical Evaluation of the Existential Phenomenology of Martin Heidegger*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

³⁴ Hervé Carrier. 1988. The Contribution of the Council to Culture', *Vatican II*. In *Assessments and Perspectives (1962–1987)*. Ed. R. Latourelle, 442–466. Mahwah, XJ: Paulist Press.

of the contraceptive pill. Another form of interpretation can be applied to political events, including the election of the nominally Catholic president of the politically liberal United States at the height of the Cold War, the arms race, involvement in the conquest of outer space, and the near-defeat of fascism by the Allied coalition states. Many of them would be governed according to the country-specific version of the liberal concept in a later period.

Nevertheless, the above cultural “icons” do not speak for themselves but require an interpretation inscribed in the framework of appropriate philosophical and theological analyzes. For example, the understanding of World War II comprehended only in terms of the victory of liberalism over totalitarianism ignores the fact that the Soviet Union was the leading participant and one of the greatest beneficiaries of the Allied victory in World War II. Moreover, Nazi-German ideology indicated that the Third Reich was not so much an enemy of liberalism, but Judaism and Christianity³⁵. Undoubtedly, these are only a few examples of the philosophically and theologically grounded hermeneutics of culture, without which concepts such as “the modern world” – used primarily in the Church’s conciliar documents – seem to be ambiguous and very susceptible to many different (often distorted) interpretations.

While the Council Fathers admitted that the concept of “culture” was multidimensional, they did not define what this meant in practical reality. The definition that appears in the document states that the term

culture in its general sense, indicates everything whereby man develops and perfects his many bodily and spiritual qualities; he strives by his knowledge and his labor to bring the world itself under his control. He renders social life more human both in the family and the civic community by improving customs and institutions. Throughout the time,

³⁵ The culture of the “Third Reich” was essentially pagan. It included elements of pagan Rome, a pagan tribe of Goths, and referred to the tradition of German revival inspired by the ideas of German Romanticism (Ernest Benz. 1968. *Les Sources mystiques de la philosophie romantique allemande*. Paris: Vrin). Many of the leading representatives of the Nazi party were also members of elite secret esoteric organizations whose main goal was to restore to German culture “authentic masculinity”, which, in the opinion of their promoters, had lost as a result of the adoption of Christianity (Michael Baigant, Richard Leigh. 1994. *Secret Germany*. London: Jonathan Cape; Augustin K. Wiedmann. 1995. *The German Quest for Primal Origins in Art, Culture and Politics 1900–1993*. Ceredigion, UK: Mellen House, 236–269). Thus, the “spirit of the modern world” – especially in the mid-1960s – should be interpreted from a more philosophical and theological perspective: primarily as the military defeat of German neo-paganism by an alliance of liberal, Judeo-Christian and communist forces, which signaled not so much the end, what a further confrontational commitment between these forces; the emergence of medical science and sophisticated technology in terms of pseudo-divinity, which – for its part – seeks to control both the dimension of creation and the destruction of human life; the triumph of emotivism and commercialism in art over the classical concept of beauty, which is inextricably linked with good and truth, which requires self-discipline, skill, and study, etc.

he expresses in his works, great spiritual experiences, and desires that they might be of advantage to the progress of many, even of the whole human family³⁶.

Therefore, the above category covers the multifaceted genesis of the concept of domination over the reality created through work, the meaning of custom, institution, family, and politics; features of language and spirituality as well as historical, sociological, and ethnological aspects. In other words, the definition of “culture” presented here is extensive. Nevertheless, it is relatively shallow in its meaning. Moreover, it does not cover many essential aspects: among others, it is not clearly related to the nature of grace, as would be expected from a theological document of such high rank³⁷.

A more penetrating and critical method of analyzing the phenomenon of culture seems to be the application of Thomas Stearns Eliot’s concept. In this understanding, culture can and should be explored in three basic dimensions: (1) the culture of the individual (*Bildung*), (2) the culture of a group or institution (*Geist*), and (3) the culture of society (*Kultur*). Eliot’s German terminology can also be traced to such Greek concepts as *ethos*, *nomos*, and *logos*. “Spirit”, “Geist”, or “ethos” are generally synonymous. Nevertheless, “nomos” can be interpreted as an element that gives any cultural dimension to “Bildung” understood as the fundamental principles or laws on which a culture is based. While “logos” can be interpreted as what a given civilization or culture (*Kultur*) gives. In other words, it is its superior and specific form, in which the Christian virtues shape each shared “ethos”. In turn, the process of self-formation of culture (*Bildung*) is guided by the Decalogue’s indications and reveals the New Testament’s moral laws. In this sense, the “logos” – or “form” of culture – is conditioned by the logic of the “Christian identity” inscribed in the theophany of the Triune God.

Unfortunately, no concept of an Augustinian-Thomistic culture has been proposed as a project for the analysis of modern culture during the discussion on elaborating the constitution *Gaudium et spes*. The question of the *logos* of contemporary culture has never been touched upon either³⁸.

³⁶ *Gaudium et spes*, no. 53.

³⁷ Dziuba. 2013. *Humanizująca funkcja kultury*, 71–84.

³⁸ As mentioned above, the issues were developed in the milieu of German Catholic theologians, and their origins date back at least to the end of the 18th century. During this time, the German school of theology repeatedly raised the issue of “polarization” concerning Greek and Roman culture or Protestant and Catholic culture. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, Albert Ehrhard mentioned several essential factors in which modern culture becomes problematic for Catholic theology. These include, among others, the revival of pagan-classical cultural ideals, rejection of universalism in favor of the nation-state, and subjectivism and individualism. Each of these factors will become a severe

4. Conclusions

In the context of the above considerations, Cardinal Wyszyński's attitude towards the issues mentioned above was more pragmatic. According to him, involvement in cultural activity and – broadly understood – dialogue with the world requires special prudence from Christians. Man's absolute openness to the secular world threatens to absorb and get used to negative values – and even anti-values. Lie, error, evil, and sin are incompatible not only with the Christian vision of moral life but are also a fundamental threat to humanity's moral and spiritual culture.

As Wyszyński pointed out: "The Gospel establishes a real parity of humanity by measuring the value of man with the intentions of the Creator"³⁹. Thus, everything that makes up the reality of the human person, including culture, is a gift of God. Hence, through the will of the Creator and by this priority, the entire material order is subordinated to the human being, both temporarily and eternally. In other words, the personalistic vision of the human person revealing the greatness of man, at the same time, emphasizes his infinite dignity as a person.

Human desires and aspirations come together with the properties of the Creator. So there is in us the Heavenly Father's heritage that Christ makes us aware of. Therefore, we can say that we carry within us the qualities of the Creator, our Father, and His aspirations are implanted in us – in the great and powerful Womb of the Heavenly Father, from which we all stem from. From Him, we inherit all desires, aspirations, and hunger, which are also our life desires⁴⁰.

Personalistically understood culture thus becomes a special gift through which a man can realize himself also in the social dimension. It is a fundamental task, therefore, to create an authentic humanist culture space through its commitment, capable of shaping a human person according to his calling. It is possible, however, thanks to

problem for the Church nearly a century later. Rudolf Eucken, 1886. *Die Philosophie des Thomas von Aquino und die Kultur der Neuzeit*, Hasse: C.L.M. Pfeffer; Joseph Kleutgen. 1974. *Die Philosophie der Vorzeit*, München: Minerva; Thomas F. O'Meara. 1987. "Thomas Aquinas and German Intellectuals: Neoscholasticism and Modernity in the Late 19th Century". *Gregorianum* 68 (3–4): 719–736; Thomas F. O'Meara. 1991. *Church and Culture: German Catholic Theology (1860–1914)*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

³⁹ Stefan Wyszyński. 1990. O pokoju na ziemi: Po ogłoszeniu encykliki «Pacem in terris». Białystok 2. 06.1963. In *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*. Stefan Wyszyński, 213. Warszawa: ODISS.

⁴⁰ Stefan Wyszyński. Homo Dei. I kazanie świętokrzyskie 13 I 1974. In *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*. Stefan Wyszyński, 576. Warszawa: ODISS.

the sphere of personal values that condition the transformation of the whole reality of the world. From the theological point of view, it is expressed primarily through the cooperation with the God-Creator in the work of perfecting His design. Complementing the perspective of Creation with the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ is the crowning of the historic-salvific relationship of man with God. Therefore, culture inscribed in the perspective of Creation represents an essential dimension of the relationship of a human person to God. It also emphasizes the unique dignity of man and his vocation understood as the full realization of the person in the individual and social aspect – and thus the humanization of the entire earthly cultural reality in the spirit of Christ's Gospel.

In this sense, the Christian vision of social life and the sense of responsibility require a discipline of knowing the truth. In terms of values, they demand axiological restraint, taking into account the moral order that guards the values' hierarchy. "Man is a free person. This freedom – emphasizes Cardinal Wyszyński – allows him to evaluate himself as the highest value on earth after God. It also allows him to assess the value of things, that is, everything that surrounds us and that passes away, while the man continues"⁴¹. Many modern theologians see these changes not so much as reluctant concessions but as ontologically enriching and useful achievements in theological discourse, especially in the context of contemporary Christian culture. At the same time, many questions remain: can Catholic theology avoid referentialism traditionally associated with its understanding of the mysteries of faith without revealing its identity? Can one think of the metaphysics that underlies the logic of realism, presence, and continuity?

Nevertheless, Catholic theology has taken over a lot from postmodernity and will continue to do so. Contemporary theology of culture has rightly become post-rationalist, post-Enlightenment, and post-positivist. The March of Catholic thought in the 21st century adopted the principles of historical and ideological sensitivity. As a consequence, Catholic theology abandoned naive and rigid referentialism, rejected the specter of "pure" conceptualism, accepted the difficulties accompanying hermeneutical issues, as well as activated the apophatism inherent in understanding the divine realm, and recognizing not only the cataphatic discourse (i.e., having God's features as its object) as non-factual but also questioning the cognitive value of theology and philosophy built on the negation of His specific qualities⁴².

⁴¹ Stefan Wyszyński. 1972. *Konieczność filozofii dla kultury Narodu*. Lublin KUL 7. 03. 1976. In *Z rozważań nad kulturą ojczystą*. Stefan Wyszyński, 254. Warszawa – Poznań: Pallotinum.

⁴² Ryszard Ficek. 2020. "(Post-) Modernity and Christian Culture in the Context of the Personalism of Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński". *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze* 11 (2): 67–69.

However, the openness of Christian culture to transcendence exposes itself to sincerity while respecting every human person's freedom. The inalienable right to one's own culture, based on truth, freedom, justice, and love, is expressed "(...) at all levels of the human structure, starting from the nature of the human personality, through his family life, social, professional, national, state and international coexistence, universal"⁴³. The universalism of Christian culture understood in this way becomes a platform for dialogue and a source of inspiration for other cultures. Therefore, as the Primate emphasizes,

(...) freedom of thought, will, heart, freedom of action is the most precious gift of a rational being, a condition for the development of personality and social progress. People, ruled by the freedom of loving children of God, enter the future. The world belongs to them because they follow Christ, the Father of the age to come⁴⁴.

In other words, a personalistic understanding of commitment to culture, promoting a human person, at the same time, emphasizes the need for its comprehensive development. Culture itself and activities aimed at its development are perceived not only in purely natural terms as a reality that enables the shaping of human involvement in the transformation of the world, involved in the saving events of Jesus Christ, receives a new quality – he participates in the supernatural life of God himself. The Christian vision of culture, opposing all tendencies presenting a simplified or distorted idea of man and the world, shows man as the goal and meaning of all creative activity. The only culture understood in this way can herald the everlasting and universal kingdom, the kingdom of truth and life – the realm of holiness and grace, the kingdom of justice, love, and peace, already here on earth.

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⁴³ Stefan Wyszyński. 1972. In principio erat Verbum... W 600-lecie powstania Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Kraków – kościół św. Anny 5.09.1964. In *Z rozważań nad kulturą ojczystą*. Stefan Wyszyński, 58. Warszawa – Poznań: Pallotinum.

⁴⁴ Stefan Wyszyński. 1998. Miasto nieujarzmione śpiewa. Warszawa – archikatedra św. Jana 24. 06. 1966. In *Z rozważań nad kulturą ojczystą*. Stefan Wyszyński, 98. Warszawa – Poznań: Pallotinum.

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Abstract: In the context of Cardinal Wyszyński's personalistic concept, a man understood as a spiritual, as well as corporal being, created by God in His image and likeness, endowed with human dignity from the moment of conception, the subject of rights and duties appears as the focus of the Christian perception of culture. The analysis of contemporary cultural reality, then, carried out in the above article in the light of the Christian tradition allows us to express the discussed issues in terms of a vocation addressed to every human being. Its position to the realities of earthly life emphasizes that in the creative activity of culture, one should see the most appropriate way of realizing the fullness of the human personality not only in the temporal dimension but also in the supernatural one. Moreover, emphasizing such elements as the human person, family, Nation, state, the international community, culture, economy, and politics understood in an integral way, as well as the Church proclaiming the universal message of salvation, the Primate's vision of culture exposes a praxeological character, rooted in particular human existence. It allows not only the direct inclusion of the human person in the current of civilization and cultural changes but also consents the human being to discover the right place in the dynamically changing contexts of the contemporary world.

Keywords: Second Vatican Council, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, culture, modernism, deconstruction.

Streszczenie: Chrześcijańska tradycja wiary i (post)nowoczesność w kontekście personalistycznej koncepcji kultury kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego (1). Celem powyższego artykułu jest ukazanie chrześcijańskiej tradycji wiary wpisanej we współczesną (post)modernistyczną rzeczywistość kulturową z perspektywy personalistycznej koncepcji kard. Wyszyńskiego. Przeprowadzona w powyższym artykule analiza współczesnej rzeczywistości kulturowej z perspektywy prymasowskiej wizji zaangażowania chrześcijan w kulturę pozwala wyrazić omawianą problematykę w kategoriach powołania skierowanego do każdego człowieka. Usytuowanie jej w odniesieniu do realiów życia doczesnego podkreśla, że w twórczej aktywności na rzecz kultury należy widzieć właściwy sposób realizacji pełni osobowości człowieka nie tylko w wymiarze doczesnym, ale także nadprzyrodzonym. Dzięki uwypukleniu takich elementów, jak: osoba ludzka, rodzina, naród, państwo, społeczność międzynarodowa, integralnie rozumiana kultura, ekonomia i polityka, a także Kościół głoszący powszechne orędzie zbawienia, personalistyczna wizja kultury wykazuje charakter prakseologiczny, zakorzeniony w konkretnej ludzkiej egzystencji i ukierunkowany na wymiar stwórczo-zbawczy. Umożliwia to nie tylko bezpośrednie włączenie się osoby ludzkiej w nurt zachodzących przemian cywilizacyjno-kulturowych, ale równocześnie pozwala człowiekowi odkryć właściwe miejsce w dynamicznie zmieniających się realiach współczesnego świata.

Słowa kluczowe: Sobór Watykański II, kardynał Stefan Wyszyński, kultura, modernizm, dekonstrukcja.

