

KAZIMIERZ PRZYSZCZYPKOWSKI

ORCID: 0000-0002-4862-8716

The Adam Mickiewicz

University in Poznań



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THE HUMAN CONDITION AND THE CONDITION OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE MUTILATED WORLD¹

INTRODUCTION

Already very general observations allow us to conclude that we deal with the mutilation of the basic pillars of human existence, such as family, school, church, religion, science, culture, nature and, above all, human dignity.

A rather general observation expressed by Nałkowska that *People doomed people to this fate*, appears at this point.

Looking at the human condition from the perspective of human development, it is impossible not to notice such events as the slaughter of the Canaanites by the Israelites, the murder of Armenians and Indians, the Volhynian slaughter, the extermination of Jews in Kielce, and the more contemporary atrocities that took place in Cambodia, Rwanda, Srebrenica and Vukovar, and the most recent ones in Ukraine. It is impossible not to see this mutilation of the human condition in the criminal behaviour demonstrated by Breivik in Norway, murderers attacking in universities, schools, kindergartens or LGBT clubs in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Pakistan, not forgetting paedophilia in the Church. Could it be that this mutilated human condition was given to us (the problem is, by whom) and we are unable to resist it?

For an educator or a pedagogue, questions about the role of education in this mutilated world are getting more and more important. Isn't it education that should

¹ The basis for the considerations undertaken herein was the speech of its author delivered at the National Pedagogical Congress on September 21, 2022, in Poznań, entitled *Human nature and the human condition in the mutilated world*.

contribute to the construction of human dignity and to the prevention of the formation of this mutilated human condition? What role does the humanities play in learning about and naming the mutilated human condition, and can it generate narratives in which human dignity would be presented not only in a declarative perspective, but above all in the perspective of bearing witness to opposing the manifestations of the mutilation of the human condition, going beyond what is “familiar, known and understood”, often individually, to the perspective of what is universal?

To answer the questions posed hereinabove, it is necessary to define the concepts which are fundamental to the considerations, such as the human condition and the condition of the humanities.

1. THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ENTANGLEMENTS OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

The aspect of the human condition in scientific deliberations acquired a peculiar importance and dynamic after the publication of the book by Arendt entitled *Human Condition* in 1958.

The author identifies the human condition with three, as she defines it, functionally related types of human activity: work, production, and action. For the reflection undertaken in these considerations, action becomes a key problem. The meaning of action assigned in this reflection derives from its very essence. According to Arendt, action is the only activity that occurs directly between people and without the mediation of things or matter. The second important element in the definition of action is Arendt’s emphasis on the fact that the subject matter of this action includes men, not a man, and this is due to the fact that *men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world* (Arendt, 2010b, p. 266).

The essence of the human condition is multiplicity, which, unlike a pattern, does not include repetition, which can be duplicated again and again. The human condition, as defined by Arendt, is not something fixed, but it is a process, an action in which the *result is unpredictable* and both in the realm of nature and history (Arendt, 2010b, p. 29, 268).

In action, as an element of the human condition, the emphasis is placed on human activity, both in terms of the motive for action and its processual dimension.

The multiplicity and processuality inherent in action as an element of the human condition determine the dynamics of this action, in which the category of repetition is (becomes) absent. The acting person is in this perspective, as Arendt describes it, *guilty of* the consequences of his/her action, it is he/she who decides about somewhat limited “power” of its action (Arendt, 2010b, p. 265; 268). The acting person is thus the creator of his/her action from its beginning, through the whole sequence of events to its conclusion, including its consequences.

Repeating after Heidegger it can be stated that *man is the most difficult being to know* (after: Skarga, 2007, p. 28), it should be emphasized that this difficulty is due, i.a. to the fact that in the consideration about the human condition

it is impossible not to see the connections between genetics and culture, or more broadly genetics and the humanities, which are also part of this area. For failure to consider the relationship between these two perspectives leads to a distorted perception of the human condition.

There are many pitfalls in thinking that genes determine our lives. Not only do we eliminate our own control over our lives, but we also accept the assertion *that we are who we are*, and therefore genes are our destiny (Heine, 2020, p. 15). In this perspective, the human condition, our life – as impossible to create from our subjective perspective – is placed in the power of external factors.

It turns out that any generalizations that may appear with regard to attributing dominant importance to genes, culture or the humanities can lead to significant dangers. History seems to confirm these concerns. The problem complexity is illustrated with two questions: how is it possible that the country of Goethe, Heine, Bach and Beethoven created Hitler as its leader and not only accepted him, but participated in such tragic crimes? How was and is it still possible that the country of Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Tolstoy, and Pushkin produced such criminals as Stalin and Putin who were able to seduce an entire nation for their inhumane actions? Many more such questions could be asked in terms of the present times. It turns out, however, that it was not and is not the personal predisposition of these people, that it was not the circumstances that led and still continue to lead to such mutilation of humanity. For it turns out that it is the social and political system, its type and nature that mark the human image and define the human condition. It is the system that seduces and, above all, gives those who belong to it – and it does not matter whether of their own free will or by force – institutional support, resources, energy that trigger positive identification with that system, thus releasing and liberating them from the system's consciously induced actions, cognitive dissonance and ontological discomfort, as *the backward nation will buy it* (a statement by a Law and Justice politician).

The system's legitimacy is expressed in its ideology, which becomes a desirable value for those participating in the system. Thus, for those participating in this system, there are no longer any problems with defining their own identity (Polak, Polak, 2014, pp. 134-152). In this way, the system appropriates the energies of these people by imprisoning them in the only correct narrative. The narratives of authoritarian systems tend to claim about the moral, ideological or world-view right to determine the human condition not only of those who, by their own choice, participate in such systems, but also of those who are outside them.

Himmler in 1942 stated that we have *the moral right to destroy this nation* – meaning Jews. The Khmer Rouge, during the war in Cambodia, claimed the right to destroy (murder) the intelligentsia and clergy. The Church in Canada, within the framework of residential schools, usurped the right to cultural indoctrination, which was described by the natives themselves as cultural genocide.

The attribution of power not only by virtue of its possession obtained in democratic elections, but primarily from the conviction of a cultural, ideological

or worldview mission, leads to divisions between “us” and “them” where the latter are perceived as “disgusting, dirty and evil”. Negative genetic, ethical, and aesthetic categories are inserted into their perspective. This act of superiority has often been based on social Darwinism and biological racism, consequently leading to ethnic fundamentalism.

In the public space in the interwar period (although they are also encountered today) the following terms referring to Jews appeared: *spiritual and bodily handicap, racial alien elements, a race of mongrels, a race of horrible bastards, the sight of which makes you sick, a Jew is a capitalist, usurer, rogue*. A Jew has become (and still is) the exemplary, as “universal” alien, as it embodies all the negative qualities that are unfamiliar to “Christian dignity”. This is due to the fact that a Jew bears “all of the evil genes” and therefore, cannot change and must therefore be excluded, destroyed, eliminated. Also today in the Polish public space we have to deal with the presence of the narrative of “we”, the patriots, defending the Catholic Church and “they”, *the worse sort, treasonous mugs*, collaborating with Berlin and Brussels.

Wolff-Powęska states that in this way information is given to society to make it aware which party to support as our identity is built through the prism of the enemy. The qualities of the “stranger” are contrasted with *our good qualities and their elimination (the elimination of these strangers) becomes our responsibility* (Wolff-Powęska, 2022, p. 41–61). “Stranger” guaranteed the perception of a community identity of “the same”. Not only political parties, but also the Church and, in the interwar period the universities, were involved in this perspective of the division between “the same” and “strangers”. They formulated the scientific basis of anti-Semitism, pointing out that a Jew is an individual whose genes place him/her outside the cultural dimensions of modernity (Michalski, Podemski, 2022).

A classic picture of the division into “us” and “them” is to be found in the Nuremberg Laws adopted by the Reichstag on November 14, 1935, which included directives for the protection of *German blood and German worship*. The regulations that resulted from these laws applied not only to Jews, to whom they were primarily addressed, but also to Germans. They clearly separated the two nations, giving no permission to any relations between them, with an emphasis on the prohibition of sexual contact. Sexual contact between Jews and Germans could, according to the authors of these regulations, lead to *betrayal of the race*, so Aryanness of Germans.

In this case, we were dealing with a sharply closed relationship (fixation) between genes and culture. It was genes that determined the status attributed, culture, but it was also culture that attributed the meaning to genes, thus distinguishing people into the distinguished and the excluded.

Such cultural positioning of the individual in the political and social system was indifferent to the perceptions of those participating in that system about their own human condition. An example confirming the above statement can be seen in the Eichmann’s testimony and attitude during his trial

in Jerusalem. Eichmann did not view his actions in moral terms, in terms of good and evil, as the result of *low motives*. Arendt states that Eichmann *would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he was ordered to do: to ship millions of men, women and children, to their death with great zeal and the most meticulous care* (Arendt, 2010a, p. 36). It was the system that demanded Eichmann's energy, pedantry, and firmness, and it was precisely because of his position in the system's structure. Eichmann became, as it was defined in Nazi Germany, *the bearer of an order*, which entailed responsibility, giving it a meaning in line with the system standards. Eichmann thus saw himself as a normal person of the Nazi system, who was expected to be useful and effective in that system. The Nazi system, therefore, channelled all its energy into itself to make that system effective. One can therefore speak of a kind of creativity of the system directed at all of those who were included in the system (Polak, Polak, 2014, p. 143).

As we stated earlier, every social system generates all its energy also to its exterior, including those who do not currently belong to that system. A classic example thereof can be seen in the actions of the church system towards, i.a. two war criminals – Rudolf Höss, commandant of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, and Hans Frank, the general governor of occupied Polish lands, based in Kraków.

Looking at the biographies of these two war criminals, it is clear that people have a natural tendency to yield and be influenced by succumb to fanaticism, primarily out of psychological motives, which is when, as Dostoevsky states: when a person experiences freedom, he/she also experiences *a preoccupation that is uninterrupted and more tormented [...]* how to find *the one for yourself to worship* (Dostoevsky, after: Grimaldi, 2007, p. 30–31; Woleński, 2022, p. 125).

Frank and Höss became involved with Nazism not only out of *their enthusiasm for Hitler and their conviction that it was necessary to carry out this cruel and hard order* resulting from this enthusiasm for the Führer, but also because they were doing very well at the time (Leociak, 2022, p. 206–298). They were fanatically devoted to the ideology of National Socialism. In the language of the Third Reich, as Leociak points out, after Klemper, an author of articles on the language of the Third Reich, the word *fanatical [...]* *had a positive meaning and expressed the highest regard. It surpassed such terms as valiant, devoted, resilient, or, more precisely, it perfectly combined all of these virtues* (Leociak, 2022, p. 235–236). Not only did they translate the ideas of National Socialism into action in their criminal actions, but also, and this was particularly characteristic of Hans Frank, they constructed (developed) the narrative of this system, presenting its ideas and justifying the necessity of their implementation. Thus, they were not only executors of someone else's orders, but enriched the ideology of this system by themselves. Thus, they were assertive figures in the system of National Socialism. Thus, it can be concluded that Frank and Höss were figures who, as Leociak describes, *with exaltation, combined with pride*

and self-admiration, to the final judgments and ideological challenges wanted to serve the system (Leociak, 2022, p. 210).

What happened that both Frank and Höss, unlike Eichmann, who stated that he was merely following orders based on his position in the structure of the National and Socialist system, converted to Catholicism after its collapse?

This question is important not only in light of the existential situation of the two criminals after the fall of the Third Reich, but also from the perspective of the essence and identity of the church system. Frank and Höss, when going to confession and Holy Communion, fulfilled the conditions of spiritual conversion, reconciliation with God, inscribed in the realm of the church system, becoming – like their victims – “children of God” belonging to the Catholic Church. For they fulfilled the theological requirement of the church system, for they wanted to belong to that church system. The executioners and their victims thus meet in a common “divine space, in “the Kingdom of God”. Leociak draws attention to the complexity of this problem, writing that it is difficult to agree with the view of Rev. Deselaers, who claims that *the meeting of the executioner and his victim in the Kingdom of God is a good relationship*, as it takes place precisely in this kingdom (Leociak, 2022, p. 285). Overlooked in this case are questions of whether spiritual conversion (metanoia) in the case of Frank and Höss really took place. Spiritual conversion as a transition from “the kingdom of evil” to “the kingdom of God”, however, cannot be viewed from the perspective of the convert as a one-time ritual. It is a process and has a verb form. John Paul II, in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (On the Eucharist in the Life of the Church), draws attention to the need for continuous spiritual conversion on a kind of path of penance, its continuance (Leociak, 2022, p. 272–273).

This constant spiritual conversion is a basic condition for reconciliation with God, for being in the Kingdom of God, despite the fact that, as Pope Francis pointed out that *God, when He forgives, loses His memory* (Leociak, 2022, p. 274). The act of continuity in spiritual conversion is therefore directed to the convert. Did this spiritual conversion in the case of the two Nazi criminals take place or could have taken place if a few days after this reconciliation with God they were executed?

In systems analyses, however, important questions arise, namely: is the fulfillment of rituals of passage from one system to another a condition for confirming presence in the other system? Or does presence in the other system require its ongoing confirmation beyond the rituals of passage?

There are many problems with the systemic entrapment of the human condition. They gain a particular expression and dimension precisely in the situation of transition and passage from one system to another, and what is more – these systems are clearly different. Each system – regardless of whether a person belongs to it or not, and regardless of whether this belonging is a consequence of this person’s independent choice or is outside the system, this person is defined by this system. Certain expectations are directed towards such a person (such people).

It is the system that manages their energy, making those who are in the system more useful and effective, and trying to force those who are outside the system to reflect on their location. It can cause not only cognitive dissonance or ontological discomfort for these individuals. It also shows these people willingness to solve their problems, but only if there are absent in their system. Such an action expresses the intentionality of the system towards those who are in that system, as well as those who are outside it.

Getting back to Auschwitz, the problems of Frank and Höss with spiritual conversion, with their perceived complexity, it is impossible not to point out that religion, or putting it more broadly: claiming its rights, the church system closes Auschwitz issues, i.e. to enclose the problem of the extermination camp merely within a valid narrative.

The question posed by Agamben in the title of his book, *Remnants of Auschwitz* is still open (Agamben, 2008). The answer to the question he posed is important not only to explain the problem of the camp in Auschwitz itself, but to answer fundamental existential questions about the present day by means of this explanation which thus becomes crucial to understand the present times and the problems of the human condition.

Auschwitz brutally verified the theories associated with social Darwinism. These were theories about the purity of the race, the chosen nation, the uniqueness of certain political doctrines, and above all – worldviews. In justifying the presence of the only valid categories and narratives in relation to the existential problems of individual people, as well as various communities, they reduce the induced by the diversity of views cognitive dissonance and ontological discomfort of those caught up in these problems.

The unity of narratives inscribed in certain social and political systems reduces the diversity of action. It thus makes these systems more effective in achieving their postulated goals and this is where the power to seduce them comes from.

In the considerations undertaken, it was pointed out that these systems often refer to scientific research, selecting not what is objective, but what justifies their status. However, we also often have to deal with science reinforcing social and political systems with the research results, which, as it turned out, violate the ethical standards of scientific research. Anyone, as Wilson points out, can enter any corners of science wherever he/she wants. However, he/she must be aware of the consequences of their later use, as *unlimited fantasy can turn into madness* (Wilson, 2020, s. 13).

2. IMAGES OF MUTILATED HUMAN DIGNITY. SAVE FROM OBLIVION AS A WARNING

While presenting images of mutilated human dignity, we are not guided by the desire to impress with descriptions of sophisticated forms of its destruction, but concern to save these images from oblivion and as a warning.

While presenting these images, we are also guided by the need to understand the behaviour not only of the mutilators, but also of the mutilated, as well as the means of these mutilations. The message becomes a desire to preserve the testimony of these mutilations in the consciousness of humanity, and this is to be served by education that prevents forgetting what led to this mutilation of human dignity. This is not any political or ideological imperative of education. It is its moral imperative.

For in this moral imperative of education addressing the problems of mutilation of human dignity, we delve into the area of the human condition in all its complexity.

Skarga in the book mentioned hereinabove entitled: *Man is not a beautiful animal* points out that in an attempt to answer the question, *who is man, what does it mean to be a man?* draws attention to the fact that man is permanently bound between opposites: hate and love, good and evil, acceptance and exclusion. *Hate, this opposite of love, is usually listed together at one sitting* and further writes *Love can bring the most sublime joy or suffering, hate, pleasure, satisfaction* (Skarga, 2007, p. 26, 111–112).

We will trace this problem of “the unity” of love and hate, good and evil, acceptance and exclusion based on the example of books by Degrelle: *The Russian Campaign* and by Kossak-Szczucka: *From the Abyss. Memories from the gulag*.

For Degrelle, the expression of good and acceptance was a German female fascist, which was expressed in her ideological characteristics. She was a fascist, she was dedicated to her work as a nurse at the front, she worked with courage, always taking care of her appearance (she was wearing a white apron). Her opposite was a Russian woman – *a fat girl, red as a lobster ... rolling on the ground in hysterics, wild, flailing, mad with rage*. The Russian woman was denied human qualities in her appearance and behaviour, and above all, dignity.

This way Russians were perceived is still present today and is reinforced and perpetuated by their behaviour in Ukraine, where they murder children, adults and old people and rape women. The image of Russians in the eyes of Degrelle and contemporaries often leads to their identification in an alien culture, in the culture of alien Western civilization. This leads to a division between the civilization of good and evil, not only as differentiated civilizations, but as mutually combative. In a different perspective, the problem of love, good and acceptance and the problem of non-acceptance and rejection were presented by Kossak-Szczucka. In the Auschwitz camp situation, the author of *From the Abyss...* ascribes dignity only to Polish women, and for religious reasons, and denies it to Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish, or imprisoned German women. The decisive factor is that the Polish women entrusted their situation to the Mother of God, which the others failed to do (Kossak-Szczucka, 1946).

Thus, religion is a determining factor in attributing dignity to man. Man in this perspective is seen as „a child of God”, an expression of good and therefore acceptance, rather than as a man, or human beings in general. This

is confirmed by the different situation of refugees from Muslim countries and refugees from Ukraine staying nomadically near the eastern border of Poland. Refugees from Muslim countries are denied the right of asylum in Poland because they are not Christians (*let's accept only Christians from among them* – these are the voices that were present in the public space in Poland). On the other hand, residents of Ukraine, who are in a similar situation to Muslims, fleeing their countries because of the war, were welcomed hospitably because they were Christians, even though previously for a not insignificant part of Polish society, including because of the Volhynian massacre, they were perceived as enemies. In this case, it is not general moral values that are the basis for attributing dignity to man, but primarily those associated with religion.

An important role in the perception of the problem of mutilation of human dignity is attributed to an image where there is an accumulation of saturation of meanings of the problem they depict. This accumulation enables multiple reflections, which thus becomes a value in itself.

Didi-Huberman's reflections in his book entitled *Images in Spite of All* (2012) conclude that images, despite our inability to look at them as if they deserved it, despite our own world, saturated, even suffocated, are a commodity for the imagination (Huberman, 2012, p. 2).

As a warning, one should recall the image of a child hanged on the gallows in Auschwitz, dying for several hours.

As a warning, one should recall the images of Jews working in the sonderkommando, who, as Primo Levi wrote [...] *had to throw Jews into the furnace*, which meant *that the Jews subjected themselves to the greatest humiliation, felt even to destroy themselves* (Huberman, 2012, p. 3).

As a warning, one should recall the image of the boys depicted in the poem by Różewicz, who in 1942 in Belzec, on their way to the gas chamber, said *Mommy! I was good after all! Dark! Dark!* (Różewicz, 1950).

One should recall the images of the Volhynian slaughter and the extermination of Jews in Kielce, images of a barn burning with Jews in Jedwabne, images of paedophilia in the Church, the slaughter at some LGBT club in the United States, and images of slaughters in schools and universities in many countries around the world.

It is necessary to show those who have mutilated the dignity of young children in various environments (in the family, in the Church, in schools, and what is highlighted in the book by Marcin Gutowski entitled: *Endosperm* (Pol.: *Bielmo*) (2022, p. 18)).

One should recall the personality of Breivik, who murdered dozens of young people in Norway simply because they belonged to a social democratic youth group.

One should recall the images from the slaughters in Srebrenica and Vukovar or currently in Bucha, Irpin and other cities in Ukraine.

These images should be recalled not to echo the crimes, but to show and name the evil. Evil has different faces and therein lies the power of its threat.

For the mutilation of human dignity has no time perspective, it does not pass, but is omnipresent, and the fact that it has existed and continues to exist indicates that it will continue to exist. Permanent mutilation of human dignity does not absolve from responsibility for human dignity. Acts of mutilation cannot be seen as something that should not be opposed, that cannot be changed.

This problem was pointed out by Turski in his speech in Auschwitz on January 27, 2020. He used in this speech a very important term: *imagination*. The word includes image. The term *imagination* is thus addressed to each of us. This is where we personalize the problem, which thus becomes – or in any case should become (be) – our problem.

Let's imagine that this mutilation of dignity affects our mothers, wives, sisters, our children. Let's imagine that it is our mothers, wives, and sisters, as it happened in Rwanda, Srebrenica and Vukovar and has now in Ukraine, who are raped and murdered in front of our children. That it is our children who are being stabbed in the eyes and their skulls which are being smashed with machetes. That it is our children who, with guns to their heads, are being forced to having sex with their mothers.

Let's imagine that it is our mothers, wives and sisters who veil their naked bodies, having their arms and legs cut off, who are later raped and killed.

The essence of evil as an element of the human condition was vividly expressed by Levi (1996, p. 11) in his poem entitled: *You Who Live*. He wrote:

*You who live safe
In your warm houses,
You who find warm food
And friendly faces when you return home.*

[...]

*Never forget that this has happened.
Remember these words.
Engrave them in your hearts,*

[...]

Turski, in the speech mentioned hereinabove at the German concentration camp in Auschwitz, stated that *Auschwitz did not suddenly fall from the sky. Auschwitz was toddling around, taking short steps, until what happened – happened.*

At first there were inscriptions on benches: *Jews are not allowed to belong to German singing associations, Jewish children are not allowed to play with German children.* Consequently, inscriptions *Juden Verboten, Polen verboten,*

Nür für Deutsche appeared in public places, also during the war in Poland. In that way you experience, Turski went on saying, that you are different, you have no influence on anything, you are nothing, i.e. expendable, and by others you can be locked up in a ghetto, in isolated zones, and consequently, as recent history also confirms, liquidated, because others often attribute to themselves this moral right to eliminate you.

Therefore, Turski further in his speech appeals not to be indifferent to *historical lies [...] to the exclusion of minorities, to the violation of social norms, otherwise some kind of Auschwitz will fall on us.*

Let's not be indifferent when words about *the rainbow plague* are uttered by a high-ranking church hierarchy or statements about *LGBT youth* are expressed by politicians, as it is immediately followed by "LGBT-free zones" or terms such as *bad batch or second quality*. Let's not be indifferent when we hear that children born through IVF have *scars on their foreheads* and that they are *unloved children*, let's not be indifferent to refugees from Muslim countries, who, hungry, in conditions that insult human dignity, are nomadizing in forests on the Polish border with Belarus and are not allowed into our country because they are not Christians.

Let's not be indifferent to the division between Catholic children and Muslim children.

Let's not be indifferent, because as Levi wrote in his book entitled *The Drowned and the Saved*, you may be ashamed *because you live instead of someone else, instead of a nobler, more sensitive, wiser, more useful, more deserving of life than you do* (Levi, 2007, p. 97).

The question expressed in the title *Remnants of Auschwitz* (2008, the Polish edition) Agamben is becoming key to the present times full of examples of the mutilation of human dignity. The author of the book himself points out that everything should be done to ensure that Auschwitz does not remain *an incomprehensible event* (Agamben, 2008).

The problem of Auschwitz has its consequences expressed in a sense of misunderstanding of the overall problem of the extermination camp, i.a. by the fact that *the sense of the behavior of the perpetrators, victims and the motives that guided them remain underestimated* (Agamben, 2008, p. 7). This incomprehension also stems from the incompatibility between the event itself of *The Final solution to the Jewish Question* and anything else. We are thus immersed in the mystery of the misunderstanding of Auschwitz. However, the mutilated modern age also does not allow forgetting and makes this problem constantly relevant.

Still, as in Auschwitz, we have to deal with *the fabrication of corpses, with the debasement of dying and death*, still ubiquitous scenarios of taking away human dignity (stigmatization, exclusion, often physical elimination, i.a. euthanasia), we still have to deal with narratives operating in the public space uttered by leading politicians and Church representatives that the other is *disgusting, dirty, evil*, that it is a plague, someone who is denied dignity.

So let's look at the response of the humanities to the problems of mutilation of human dignity and humanity in the modern world. Does the humanities address and explain these problems? If so, in what perspective?

3. THE CONDITION OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE MUTILATED WORLD

When approaching the consideration of the humanities in the mutilated world, the question of the location of the intelligentsia in the modern world, in our case – in Poland, should be answered at the beginning.

Skarga points out the lack of respect for the intelligentsia nowadays, the fact that it is not listened to, its voice is not given attention to, that there are (political) environments where it is not even liked (Skarga, 2007, p. 155-162). She even states that because of this, the intelligentsia has fallen silent.

The intelligentsia is often attributed to low utility and effectiveness in the modern neoliberal world. Nalaskowski even states that the Polish intelligentsia has gone bankrupt as it has locked itself *into Marxist doctrine and ideology, and the patriotic current has been marginalized* (Nalaskowski, 2020).

Orłowski, when writing about internal emigration of the intelligentsia, draws attention to another aspect of the behaviour of the intelligentsia itself, relating this problem to Nazi Germany, but still recognizing its relevance. Orłowski writes that it is an illusion to see *internal emigration as a personal blessed island, as a passive resistance*, as a behaviour that fits into the category of citizenship, which causes such behaviour to be given the status of normality (Orłowski, 2021, p. 163–182).

Brutal externality shows that *internal emigration* is primarily an escape from responsibility for what happens outside, i.e. in the real world.

In his reflections, Brzeziński draws attention to a fundamental fact about the condition of the intelligentsia in Poland – the violation of standards applicable to scientific research, and even the violation of ethics applicable to science.

It is expressed not only in the establishment of new scientific disciplines that do not emerge from the development of science, with underlying ideological or even worldview considerations (Brzeziński, 2021, p. 73–92).

In such a situation we deal with the subordination of science to the interests of political parties and corporations, rather than focusing on the development of science, whose unadulterated research results should serve the development of humankind.

The question about the status of the intelligentsia is important because it is related to the type of social order that is perceived not only as postulated, but above all as realistically functioning. The status of the intelligentsia is its autonomy and preservation of ethical criteria in performing and fulfilling its duty (mission). This is not only a basic expression, but also a criterion for the democratic state. A democratic state under the rule of law creates the intelligentsia, giving

it an autonomous form, responsible for the condition of this state and its citizens, an important subject of this state.

In a democratic state under the rule of law, the intelligentsia faces its basic challenge, which is part of the humanistic perspective of answering the question: Who is man and what does it mean to be man, i.e. the question about the essence of humanity.

Skarga considers these questions particularly important, because, as she states, *from far and near I hear that man has died, that the end of man has come* (Skarga, 2007, p. 26).

Do the humanities take up the call to answer the questions raised hereinabove at all? And how?

Polak and Polak state that the humanities focus primarily on what is already *familiar, known and understood*, often referring to theoretical knowledge or even speculation of a declarative nature, while what is individual and accidental, but actually experienced, is described and explained exclusively by a wide spectrum of social sciences, cultural sciences, anthropological sciences and even biological sciences, i.e. it is inscribed in the area of narratives referring to disciplinary paradigms (Polak, Polak, 2014, p. 134–140).

Taking after Einstein that the humanities are not philosophy and history, it can be stated that the humanities in answering the question “who is man” and what does “humanity” mean, does not occupy an important place. This disciplinary positioning of man, the human condition and humanity is considered the norm, the standard of scientific cognition. In this cognitive perspective, one does not go beyond the historical boundary of perceiving these disciplinary-situated problems concerning man, humanity, and the human condition.

Then we deal with a failure to see what is individual and what happened in a broader universal perspective (see: Sienkiewicz, 2007, p. 285–297).

Janion, Polak and Polak state that the humanities have not developed the tools to perceive that what is historical (specific events), in the perspective of what is universal. Most often, they state, we deal with the privileging of the historical or the universal. The universal is presented in terms of the value- and dignity-driven humanities, viewed from the declarative perspective that it should be so, because this “should” is an expected category, freed from the actual conditions (Janion, 2011).

The humanities should make that everything which is singular, which happened and has its historical perspective, will not pass away, not fade away, but thanks to the humanities it will constantly be present. The humanities should not forget the past but also be inscribed in the present and future. In this way, the humanities give a universal dimension to what is individual and singular and functions in historically differentiated time. In this way, it also universalizes time and its accompanying events. Human existence in such a perspective of the humanities thus acquires a universal dimension (expression).

At this point, let's bring up some questions (problems) which refer to what happened, and try to look at them from the perspective of the condition of the humanities.

Who, from the perspective of humanities, behaved with dignity and was a hero: a person walking in silence to the gas chamber, Jews, aware of their upcoming death, fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto or Jews (and contemporaries and others) renouncing their own identity during World War II to save their own lives and the lives of their families?

How do the humanities explain the problems inherent in the perspective of religious life, such as ascribing dignity to people solely based on their religious denomination (the only acceptable religion), dividing children into Catholic and Muslim, Cyril's blessing of weapons he considers God's tool in murdering Ukrainians, or the "cultural genocide" of indigenous people in Canada, where religion was the tool?

How will the humanities evaluate the world's eminent scientists working at Los Alamos to develop the atomic bomb that took the lives of tens of thousands of innocent people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki??

How will the humanities interpret the statement of one of the crew members of the plane flying to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima that *the more we kill, the better*, which is reminiscent of the events of 1994 in Rwanda, where 1 million people were murdered within 10 months, and Himmler's statements in 1942 in Poznań, Poland, that the sight of several hundred corpses was the result of the Germans' moral obligation to murder the Jews.

How do the humanities interpret the statement of the Jewish woman (a member of the theater troupe) from Auschwitz, who said (the statement is about Mengele) that *I am alive thanks to the devil's mercy*?

Do the humanities have the tools to answer these questions about the human condition in the mutilated world?

Let's try to answer this question through the prism of the poem by Różewicz entitled: *The Survivor*. It turns out that the poem published in 1947 as the poet's publishing debut has not lost its relevance. The message arising from the work is a kind of *memento* for the present times. What happened during World War II is still happening, as demonstrated in the considerations undertaken herein-above. What was experienced by the poem's author, who writes: *led to slaughter, I survived*, becomes the experience of the modern world. The impossibility of explaining one's own existence, one's own fate, seeing the paradox included in the human condition (the unity of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, empathy, and exclusion) thus become a universal problem. This universality is expressed in the impossibility of explaining what has happened and continues to become ever more impossible.

Różewicz points to the impossibility of naming (describing) the situation he experienced, because the existing concepts have lost their meaning, their sense. They have become worthless. He writes:

*The following are empty synonyms:
 man and beast
 love and hate
 friend and foe
 darkness and light [...]
 Ideas are mere words:
 virtue and crime
 truth and lies
 beauty and ugliness
 courage and cowardice.
 Virtue and crime weigh the same
 I've seen it:
 in a man who was both
 criminal and virtuous. [...]*

(Różewicz, 1999).

Różewicz, however, does not accept the situation of reducing his existence to a physical dimension, but searches for meaning, significance for this existence. He realizes his own powerlessness, impotence and writes:

*I seek a teacher and a master
 may he restore my sight hearing and speech
 may he again name objects and ideas
 may he separate darkness from light.*

(Różewicz, 1999).

Could it be that Różewicz was seeking not only physical salvation *in the sacred*? The words *may he separate darkness from light* evoke associations with God's creation of the world. *I seek a teacher and a master* evokes the image of a teaching Christ. Could it be that *the sacred* is the only way of salvation from "drowning" (see: Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 2007)?

Could it be that this attitude of Różewicz is an expression of the perceived impotence of the humanities?

However, this question should be perceived, as Polak and Polak pointed out, as a challenge to the humanities freed from the *blandness* that characterizes it, [...] *and both in terms of the mechanisms from which it derives, and in terms of the way it relates to the dire consequences generated by them that make self-repair impossible* (Polak, Polak, 2011, p. 11).

The humanities are thus faced with the need to redefine their identity and the meaning of their existence. The expression of this duty to redefine their own condition will be the ability to inscribe and name what is singular, what really happens, in what is universal.

CONCLUSIONS

The human condition is not a closed category. It has a processual dimension. Thus, there is no single, repeatable pattern of it. The determinants of the human condition are sought in genes, but also in social systems. The history of humanity shows that these two groups of conditions are used by various political, religious, social, or economic forces to achieve their particular goals. Education is also often used to make it happen and realize it. The humanities are not written into these various narratives as a value-laden category. It also turns out that this is due to humanities' own impotence. Hence there are the calls for a reinterpretation of their basic concepts, so that what is singular, what has happened and is still happening, is put into the perspective of what is universal. Education with its humanistic message, transcending the particular interests of various political, religious, social, cultural or economic actors, can play an important role in this regard.

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The human condition and the condition of the humanities in the mutilated world

Summary

Aim: To put the human condition and the condition of the humanities in the perspective of critical human life situations and critical situations in the history of humanity.

Methods: An analysis of primary sources and media statements by politicians and clerics.

Results: The mutilation of human dignity is a constant element in the history of humanity. Man is a perpetrator, but also a victim of this mutilation. The constancy of mutilation of human dignity has its systemic sanction. Thus, it becomes a problem that transcends subjective conditions, for man is (becomes) a product of the system.

Conclusions: The humanities, however, are incapable of putting what is singular, that has happened, into a universal perspective beyond the area of declarative narrative. It is necessary, therefore, to reinterpret the basic concepts of the humanities seen in the perspective of critical human situations and the history of humanity.

Keywords: human condition, human dignity, social systems, stigmatization, exclusion.