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Educating poles: What philosophy do we need and does it have to be grounded in religion? A historic analytical perspective

Abstract. The article poses a thesis that the distinctive features of Polish philosophical and social thought are educational criticism, practicalism, activism, elitist egalitarianism, as well as religiousness. What is more, Polish philosophy focuses on man and his journey to perfection. The article stresses the importance, or even necessity, of developing Polish philosophy, which should be done in a European context. The author of the article believes that Polish philosophy may provide a humanistic basis for educating Poles. He supports his ideas with selected approaches to Polish philosophy from the early 20th century.

Keywords: education, Polish philosophy, nation, religion

The article aims at testing the following hypothesis: an incremental feature of the Polish social and philosophical thought is educational criticism, personal absolutism based on religious thinking, practical pragmatism, activism and elitist egalitarianism. This philosophy focuses on the human being, whose development is mainly spiritual. It is, therefore, a moral philosophy in the Aristotelian concept of ethics, assuming that knowledge and moral perfection are combined. Such philosophy can thus lay ground for the humanistic, spiritual and religious education of Poles.

The proposed assumption became the main criterion for selecting texts and authors for this article, which by no means claims to fully encompass the

discussed topic. It merely drafts an unbiased outline of the original and most prominent views on the human being, his or her spirituality and activity, including education, which all shaped what can be referred to as Polish moral philosophy. The choice of texts was also strongly influenced by the epistemological standpoint of a given author. This paper favours views emphasizing that in the process of cognition we rise from the abstract to the concrete, and then go backwards. An important inspiration in this respect was provided by *Jakiej filozofii Polacy potrzebują* (*What philosophy do Poles need*), a book edited and prefaced by Władysław Tatarkiewicz. Finally, as the article below needed to meet the publisher's requirement of length, the work of numerous academics could not be reviewed here, but remains a source of inspiration for a more extensive monograph.

Introduction – can philosophy be Polish?

Firstly, the national aspect of philosophical and social thought boils down to a number of questions. These include: does philosophy created in a given surrounding (e.g., national) have any intrinsic features that fundamentally distinguish it from the philosophies of other nations? Does this national character, the spiritual posture of a nation, manifest itself in any way, and, if so, how does it occur? Are we even entitled to use the term “national philosophy,” or should we rather agree with Jerzy Szacki, who wrote, “I do not believe in any national philosophy...,” which “mainly aimed at finding the means of expression for the Polish soul”, or however these problems were addressed in literature (Szacki, typescript, p. 13).

Researchers have made various attempts to define the phrases ‘Polish philosophy’ and ‘philosophy in Poland’, which will be treated as synonyms¹ for the purpose of the following argument. Marian Massonius devoted to the issue his work entitled *Rozdwojenie myśli polskiej* (*The duality of Polish thought*). He described the Polish mind, which on the one hand was supposed to be practical, unwilling to theorise, yet, on the other hand, had a tendency to succumb to the romantic influences of Lithuania, the charms of poetry and metaphysics. He considered philosophy to be national, such as “every product of the spirit of a given society” is also national. Philosophy, he continues, con-

¹ One should note that, as Maurycy Straszewski wrote, “There is a difference between the phrases ‘philosophy in Poland’ and ‘Polish philosophy.’ On the one hand, ‘philosophy in Poland’ refers to all philosophical trends present in our fatherland, regardless of the fact whether Polish thinkers exerted on them any particular national influence or not. On the other hand, the term ‘Polish philosophy’ only describes the systems which carry an exceptionally Polish characteristic (Straszewski, 1930, p. 1). For more on national philosophy, see Kojkoł, 2001.

tains characteristics of thinking and reasoning typical of a nation. Nationality results from the fact that philosophy was created by the representatives of a given nation; it is therefore not an intended, but an involuntary feature. It has become national completely independently of the authors' attempts to make it so, and is so because it carries the characteristics of a nation's way of thinking. In view of that, one can say that Poland had no "pure" and completely selfless philosophy, and perhaps there could be none at all (Massonius, 1902, p. 262).

Adam Zieleńczyk stressed that "as in the common history of philosophy..., Polish philosophy also includes those works of Polish thinkers which focus on metaphysical, theoretical, cognitive, ethical, aesthetic and any kind of other issues, provided that they are viewed from a general theoretical-cognitive or methodological standpoint. [...] Polish philosophy in this understanding would only refer to philosophy in Poland, it would be a genuine or imitative expression of the common thought. On the other hand, however, the notion of Polish philosophy cannot be understood as something directly opposite to universal philosophy" (Zieleńczyk, 1912, p. 180).

In view of the abovementioned, while Polish philosophy may offer a deviation from universal philosophy, it cannot be an entity completely different in its content and form. It must be an art capable of solving particular problems with the means available to the arts at a given time. In A. Zieleńczyk's opinion, Polish philosophy cannot contain only mystical, unsubstantiated views on the essence of nation, or a description of national traits. He does not deem Polish philosophy to be a general concept of philosophy in Poland, nor does he see it as philosophy exclusive to the Poles; he rather proposes that it encompasses elements of universal philosophy combined with distinct "features of the Polish mind".

In discourse on this matter philosophy in Poland was considered to have developed, like in other countries, more or less dynamically in different periods, being connected to the current socio-political situation, late in relation to European thought, and having a pluralistic nature. Equally often it was stressed that Polish philosophy was national, stemmed from a diverse romantic tradition, and that "exaggerated mystical concepts" (Struve, 1911b, p. 520) should be excluded from it. For Struve, Poles are predisposed to create original philosophical syntheses from the achievements of European, and intrinsically Polish thought. These included the relationship with the practical aspect (i.e., life), as well as the idiosyncrasy of the Polish language. Kazimierz Twardowski, on the other hand, made no mention of such an idiosyncrasy. He considered Poles to be a nation less philosophically developed. As a result, Poles should make reasonable use of the achievements of European philosophy. The term 'reasonable' means that one should reach for different philosophical trends.

Polish philosophy should, therefore, be pluralistic (Twardowski, 1911, pp. 114–115).

This article offers a broad treatment of philosophy in Poland, including all existing trends which might be considered elements of Polish culture. Simultaneously, it tries to dispose of the originality complex. As Zbigniew Drozdowicz points out, “I would like to say, however, that in my opinion none of the philosophers – even the ones considered forerunners in modern thinking – were original in every respect. The problem is to aptly reflect what was original and what was secondary or imitative in their thinking” (Drozdowicz, 2016, p. 253). It should be added that the author of the article finds in Polish philosophy elements emphasizing the existence of a universe creating and shaping both life and man, the latter being an intelligent subject discovering the universe. This leads to a question whether man is able to, and enables him, to perform the tasks lying in front of him. Can a person improve themselves while being in the world, and also being in the world in view of the Absolute? An answer can be found in the following words of John Paul II: “In order to recover our hope and our trust at the end of this century of sorrows, we must regain sight of that transcendent horizon of possibility to which the soul of man aspires” (Jan Paweł II, 1997, p. 192).

Polish philosophical tradition offers notions which may help to follow John Paul II’s instruction. First, we will refer to the works of Feliks Jaroński, the Polish priest and author of a lecture entitled *What Philosophy do Poles Need?* repeatedly referred to in discussions on ‘Polish philosophy’ or ‘philosophy in Poland’ (as delivered on October 15th, 1810 at the University of Krakow).

Philosophy as reality and ideality

Defining philosophy, the priest F. Jaroński wrote: “Philosophy, that is, a preliminary skill, is an extensive layout of information shared by all skills that the human mind is capable of acquiring, collected in order to make man better and happier. This definition allows everyone to see a twofold division of intentions behind philosophy, for it wants to: (a) make the human mind capable of acquiring information and truth on its own, and (b) lead our will and our own matters to moral perfection; that is, philosophy tries to increase the mental ability and moral goodness of man” (Jaroński, 1970, p. 16). In such an understanding of philosophy, as Z. Drozdowicz aptly noted, Jaroński “followed not only the trail of thought initiated by Konarski, but also, and even to a greater extent, the one indicated and practiced by Kołłątaj” (Drozdowicz, 2016, p. 249). The priest postulated to look for guidance provided by philosophers

and writers. His compulsory reading lists contained, among others, works by such modern philosophers as Descartes, Wolff, Leibniz, Locke and Condillac. It needs to be added that Jaroński spread the views of those who were able to “stir things up with criticism” and “use their ideas to enrich and present a healthy philosophy to the world of science.” In his opinion, philosophy ought to address the following questions: “What am I? What can I know? What should I expect? What am I expected to do?”

According to Jaroński, philosophy should answer these questions, referring to the abilities of human reason, which is “capable of acquiring information and truth on its own.” Bearing that in mind, Z. Drozdowicz observes, “Indeed, in the end this caused him [the priest] numerous personal problems (he ended his professional career in charge of a small parish); however, making bold statements not always in accordance with secular and religious authorities was, and, I hope, still is the right and obligation of a philosopher (not only in Western countries, but also in every other country)” (Drozdowicz, 2016, p. 249). I will add to it that it has been the right and obligation of Polish philosophy.

The first question posited by Jaroński in the process of defining philosophy concerns man. It is the man who, while getting to know himself, others and the surrounding world, in fact aims at discovering our civility, which is an expression of will. The goal of practising philosophy is, therefore, “to make human reason capable of acquiring information and truth on its own” and “to lead our will and our own matters to moral perfection” (Jaroński, 1970, p. 16). The author divided philosophy into theoretical and practical, or moral. The latter must contain, first of all, “the metaphysics of civility and the natural law of politics and nations.” This understanding of philosophy makes it religious, as it shows why and how we act in our human needs, and the empirical nature of man. Thus, moral philosophy reveals human civility. It teaches us that “the law of nature establishes unchangeable rules for our will. Political and national regulations then adapt these rules to human society” (Jaroński, 1970, pp. 22–23). Education, in turn, bolsters them.

It seems that the author postulates that moral philosophy should be known and acted in accordance with by legislators, judges, theologians, teachers and writers, that it, people forming the intellectual (spiritual) elite of a country. Poles should be aware that philosophy is the basis of all science. It addresses the questions: What can reason do? What is good? What is evil? How to live happily? What is happiness? Jaroński recommended that young Poles should learn moral philosophy before they set out to discover other arts and sciences.

Adam Ignacy Zabellewicz acknowledged this, recognising man to be the main object of cognition for philosophy. Strictly speaking, he meant man along with his abilities, inclinations, needs and intentions, but also, broadly speak-

ing, his spirituality. This notion implies that man does not philosophise for philosophising's sake, but in order to "move to discovering oneself, convince oneself of the constant conformity with one's actions, and philosophy's relationship to a person's destiny" (Zabellewicz, 1970, pp. 69–70). I believe that the author considered critical thinking to be the foundation of philosophy. He also postulated that philosophy should be embodied in man's practical pursuits, so that one's thoughts and will make all his intentions of reason consistent. A philosopher – a sage – is one, whose head and heart – reason and spirit – are in full harmony.

Practising such philosophy begins with an independent use of reason, its superiority over sensuality. It means that in the process of cognition we rise from the abstract to the concrete, and then go backwards. According to Zabellewicz, "we slowly rise from [sensual] perception to higher and higher imaginations, and we do this until we get to the highest of all imaginations, which must serve as a model in our thoughts and deeds" (Zabellewicz, 1970, p. 70). Reflecting on this manner of reasoning, Adam Karpiński claims that "philosophy must show the space between what is essential, that is, abstract, and what is individual, that is, concrete" (Karpiński, 2006, p. 146). Zabellewicz assigns this function to civility. In his view, man is a sensual, rational and 'civil' being, therefore "civility ought to be the highest objective of our actions".

Defining philosophy appears to include the abstract notion of civility. Its understanding suggests that it is a combination of the concrete and individual, as practised socially, with what is generally expressed as a value in various codes of morality. Both Jaroński and Zabellewicz agree that philosophy does not restrict itself to certain axiological concepts, but also includes well-defined possibilities of applying them, especially in the process of education.

Interestingly, this interpretation lends itself to some of Florian Znaniecki's ideas, as long as he is considered not a sociologist, but a philosopher, or even, dare we say, one of the founders of Polish axiology. He wrote, "Well, realising ourselves in the world, we must remember that we are less free in the social world than in the ideal world, and less free in the material reality than in society. If we wanted to throw off the yoke of logic, morality, and aesthetic taste, we would fall under the heavy yoke of social traditions, customs, and practical requirements; if we desire to be free from society, we become true slaves of nature. The lower we fall, the more we are burdened by the order of the world passed on to us. It is therefore better to realise ourselves in the highest degree, where this order is the order of freedom, rather than slavery; we owe that to ourselves to consider the body only as a support for consciousness, and consciousness – one for the spirit" (Znaniecki, 1987, pp. 212–213).

Florian Znaniecki continues to address the problem of civility as a manifestation of human “shackling.” He recognizes that, by creating culture, man becomes addicted to it. The scope of this addiction depends on the degree of human liberation from the empirical and spiritual conditions of existence. Thus, man depends on customs, civility, traditions, and religions; one is part of particular conventions. With one’s deeds and attitudes, one carries out a set of values defined by the community. Hence, one is in some way creative – with one’s spiritual whole.

This interpretation of Znaniecki’s work was noted by Tomasz Knapik: “In light of the findings above, it is justified to claim that man in Znaniecki’s philosophical reflection is considered very concrete – the creator of his own life and the representations providing order to it. The subject of philosophy is not, therefore, an abstract man, but a specific individual. What particularly distinguishes man from other creatures is his creative activity. Creativity is, according to humanism, a feature intrinsic to man and his thought. Used as an active tool, it is the thought that creates new relations between information, organises experiences, combines them into new functions, classifies them, and provides order” (Knapik, 2006, p. 82).

Philosophy is practised by concrete men, although its goal is to seek ultimate principles. This means that the outcomes of this search cannot be separated from the life of a philosopher. Only then can the unity of what is moral and rational allow to discover the highest good, understood not only as an intention, but also encompassing the process of arriving at it. As aptly phrased by Karpiński, “Good without the process of arriving at it is not good. »The intention« is not merely inside the mind. For an intention, once possessed by someone, contains the attitude of its owner towards anything that lies beyond him or her, hence revealing the content of whatever it is that the intention is towards. The rationality of an »intention« cannot disregard the possibility of its realisation” (Karpiński, 2006, p. 147).

The presented review allows to state that the authors treated moral philosophy as an important element of Polish philosophy, and Florian Znaniecki presented moral philosophy as the philosophy of values. Each theory pointed to man as the main object of philosophy.

It seems that such anthropocentrism, especially the one offered by Znaniecki, was expected to become a theoretical foundation for the humanities. It was combined with an aspiration to defend the humanities, and culture as a whole, against subjectivism and scepticism. Using the term ‘civility’, authors intended to describe reality at a new level of abstraction, a world being the domain of human creative activity. This is why customs are primary facts in the human experience, and cannot be boiled down to any natural category. They

are always determined by their relation to a given moment and have a meaning only as long as they are realised in the present, although they also last beyond the moment of realisation. One can add that they prevail in culture, but it is man who makes them real.

Based on the abovementioned, philosophy should be a quest for the good and the noble, and it should be such particularly for the sake of educating Poles. Zabellewicz addresses the issue, using the notion of “reason and heart.” He seems preoccupied with the unity of these two concepts. He focuses on a certain whole, whose elements include heart and reason, and stresses the necessity of treating philosophy as a part of moral practice, or even any practice in general, not to mention educational practice. Only then does philosophising make sense, and intention gains “complete rationality” (Zabellewicz, 1970, pp. 148–149).

At this point it might be worth to mention Edward Abramowski’s concept of “ethical agnosia.” It is a kind of elementary experience independent of intellectual cognitive patterns. It occurs prior to the sensation coming from the intuitive experience of interpersonal identity. Moreover, it is an active projection of the will creating a certain image of the future in the form of a discovery made by the subconscious in the legacy of a community. Finally, it is spirituality: faith and practicality together. Stanisław Borzym notes, “Abramowski defined agnosia simply as a movement of the heart at the sight of poverty and human injustice, an experience he believed to be more important than all of the meticulously calculated ethical codes” (Borzym, year unknown, p. 3).

The quoted authors depict two spheres of educating Poles: real and ideal. They offer theses on philosophy combining these spheres in the process of upbringing. Zabellewicz called it synthetism. “Such conviction,” he argues, “about the relationship between us and the things outside of us shows us that we influence things, and things influence us, and through these things we even realize that we can make ourselves act quite independently of the things outside of us. Hence the need to investigate the original way (form) how the mental process works, i.e., from sensuality (*sensualitas*) to the top, i.e., to reason, because this is the highest power of the mental process” (Zabellewicz, 1970, p. 85).

The author believes that this allows to discover the primary structure of the human mind, and to find the original conditions which enable change to affect experiences, thus creating features. These conditions are what can be described as the nature of man, or the essence of man. They include power and the laws and limits of our mind. They are the ones to determine the area and scope of our actions, both internal and external. The former is a theoretical mental process, while the latter is a practical process leading to ‘external ob-

jects.' Reason allows man to free himself from his animal nature, and to express and pass on thoughts through speech, thus creating society and the laws that govern it. This allows man to become the executor of his will and the master of his earthly nature. These tasks will continuously be performed by reason as a theoretical and/or practical authority. This stands for the pursuit of cognition and/or action. The principles of the theoretical reason may be considered the laws of nature. They are the 'power of necessity' that the mind applies to entire cognition. According to Zabellewicz, the principles of practical reason can be regarded as moral laws which a person should adhere to in his or her actions. For Zabellewicz, man is a rational and moral creature.

Moving from abstract to concrete, the author notes that man is also a free being. He notes, "I have learnt that man is a rational and moral being, active in cognition, and also free. This freedom is a necessary condition for man, because, regardless of the innate laws to which he must necessarily be subject as a sensual being, he can voluntarily choose to observe civil laws not laid out by reason, to which he shall abide, being a civil creature in his search for the absolute good. Obeying these laws would not be feasible, unless men were masters of their own inclinations, and unless they had the strength necessary to carry out the orders they received" (Zabellewicz, 1970, p. 90). An interpretation of this and the subsequent fragments written by Zabellewicz leads to the conclusion that the author deemed freedom necessary for 'civility'.

Zabellewicz most likely referred to internal freedom, which serves to achieve external freedom. It does not mean absolute freedom, for it must not infringe on another person's freedom. My and your freedom should be in perfect harmony. Such is the working condition of a good society. For this author, it is the freedom of will, the normative rule of reason and, resulting from these two, dignity which all characterise man as a person, as well as distinguish him from other entities in the world of nature. Generally speaking, the author might have concluded that man is a rational and moral being. He therefore creates an "order of things" which subdues all elements of the social world, including himself. This order and mental reality is created by reason and called, according to Zabellewicz, supersensory order. In the practical sphere, it is a continuous negotiation of physicality and morality. Zabellewicz claims, "This order, which is no delusion, but stems from the moral organisation of man, and all morally good people should watch over its maintenance, means nothing else than the constant conformity of physicality and morality, that is, the compliance of the former with the intentions of the latter" (Zabellewicz, 1970, p. 92). An obstacle in achieving this state of 'peace of mind' of a rational being is its empirical limitation, causing, inter alia, an urge to satisfy various needs, and such means of discovering reality where colloquial, religious, sci-

entific and philosophical cognition plays a vital part. This limitation causes a person to depend on random circumstances, or so-called luck.

The 'peace of mind' is a state when people desire to have something that they want to get "commanded by reason." It is a state of moral organisation in the pursuit of something people cannot stop pursuing, as they are destined to have it. This state was described by Zabellewicz as salvation, which he believes to be "the highest good and the ultimate goal of all our actions."

The author finds a supernatural factor securing moral order. He believes that man must accept an external condition warranting

[...] the essence of the moral world of order, that is, a supreme being with unlimited power on whom depend the entire nature and man himself as far as his being is concerned; or the eternal life which, in the moral sense, he already begins to lead here, as a continuation of his own present, limited existence. [...] This practical, that is, moral, faith in God and eternal life, or the immortality of the soul, emerges out of itself in all minds, whose reason and conscience have risen to experience their own higher destiny. Even a child's mind easily and willingly accepts this faith, as soon as it has learned to summon its reason and has distinguished the difference between evil and good (Zabellewicz, 1970, pp. 93–94).

Ultimately, the author concludes that religion is closely connected to morality. A man with a morally-shaped heart strives for his "higher destiny" in the Kingdom of God. Zabellewicz believes that this makes man the most prominent goal of all philosophical and educational research. Referring to man, philosophy should research the beginning of everything; investigate the principles and limits of cognition; direct sensual and mental authorities; moderate and tame our inclinations, desires and passions; constitute the rules of rational conduct; enable us to know what eventually brings us lasting happiness; induce all feelings, including moral and religious ones; recognise "imaginary" good and distinguish it from the true one; prioritise values; unite people into a single community; teach us to live well and die peacefully; enlighten us; shape our hearts; and make us useful. Consequently, the principle of man's education is, above all, to develop the skills of social life in a community, and this was also the goal of philosophy. Such philosophy and education as its practical manifestation seem to be, as the philosopher trusts, exactly what Poles need.

Zabellewicz's concept of the "Kingdom of God" was much later dubbed the "blessed being" by Sergei Hessen. The concept is associated with Hessen's notion of culture. In his approach, the subject of philosophical considerations was, similarly to that represented by the authors previously discussed, a man creating values. We are actually dealing here with moral philosophy pointing to the diversity of social existence of a human being on four hierarchical layers of culture, which, broadly speaking, boils down to a person's actions

aimed to achieve values requiring continuous development and movement. Thus, the structure of values becomes non-uniform and hierarchical. One can say that culture is graded. It becomes so in the dialectic process of tensions which, overcoming the states hampering the progress of humanity, cause the individual to rise to a higher, spiritual level of culture. As Hessen phrased it, "Nowadays, there is a higher layer within culture, which includes science, art, religion, and morality, i.e., all the more 'internal,' or 'spiritual' values embraced by Plato's philosophy" (Hessen, 1931, p. 15).

The compulsion intrinsic to the empirical limitations of man becomes spiritual along with the development of spiritual culture. It seems that Hessen's spirituality of man is an internalisation of the "civility" discussed by moral philosophy. As man crosses the third layer of being, he imperceptibly enters the highest level of the blessed being. This being is governed by objective good, similarly to Kant's Kingdom of Ends or Cieszkowski's Kingdom of God. Nowacki aptly noted that Hessen's Kingdom of God is "an entity that exists beyond earthly time and has continuous impact on human life throughout history. There are rays of beauty, goodness, truth, and love, which influence all levels of being, from biological, through social, to cultural-spiritual" (Nowacki, 1973, p. 37). All this brings about a metaphysical factor: a latent spiritual element in man that is awakened in response to the "cry" for the idea-value. The human search for values forces these to materialise, triggering the desire for values.

Philosophy as moral practice

The reviewed concepts suggest that practising philosophy is a part of practice; more specifically, moral practice. Only then does it become reasonable. Our intentions become completely rational. This moral practice may be described as the growth of man in humanity. The growth is a continuous journey of a functioning individual in the world of abstract and concrete values. It involves creating both the concrete and the abstract. This kind of synthetism is part of upbringing, and can be distinguished in the works of Jaroński, Zabellewicz, Znaniński, and Hessen. It seems typical of Polish philosophy. Furthermore, Polish philosophy often refrains from presenting superhistorical solutions to metaphysical issues, maintaining some scepticism towards them, and rather dealing with social practice reflected in moral philosophy.

The abovementioned viewpoint is reflected in Stanisław Brzozowski's work, in particular in his attempt to address the question concerning the essence of reality. The author pays special attention to socio-cultural reality, which hosts the ultimate purpose of and truth behind human activity. Brzozowski con-

sidered human life, seen as creative activism, to be a form of eradicating the division between the individual and society. Each creator was to realise their individuality in a community, and the work itself was a promise of emancipation meeting individual and cultural objectives².

Brzozowski analyses the problem of creativity as the manner of functioning of an individual in culture in a way that is quite commonly accepted in the Polish philosophical tradition. Inspirations by Darwin and Nietzsche can be seen throughout his work. One can think that these gave birth to the universalism and activism in Brzozowski's concept of the 'work of deeds,' which facilitates the self-determination of man. 'Work of deeds' may be viewed as a process of continuous socialisation, including upbringing.

Being the author of "Idea," Brzozowski shows his synthetic approach to philosophy through interpreting and determining the meaning of a "deed", which he believes to be conditioned by the way that culture functions. This approach is evident in his criticism of the existing reality, and in particular of what can be considered the exuberance of culture, as well as in his proposal of activism leading to the replacement of culture with its superior form.

In order to do that, Brzozowski's man must think in terms of action-based concepts. Owing to understanding nature, man constructs growingly sophisticated tools improving his cognition, and, as a result, creating a more objective impression of the world. Hence the idea of a deed, whose absence prevents any cognition, knowledge, freedom and purpose. Deeds allow man to find his place in the world. Even when referring to work only, Brzozowski believes that deeds have their sources in the mind, and are connected with the will, as well as the desire to achieve values (Brzozowski, 1910, p. 57). An approach like this resembles the concept of the "productive image" offered by Twardowski.

Analysing Brzozowski's work in terms of the relation between deeds and work, it is impossible to miss the ambivalence between the common and the individual, especially when it comes to self-creation. It is then that value becomes an expression of human individualism. Man can discover values only by acquiring and achieving them through deeds, and he will fail to find them outside of his own interior and the essence of his activity. Thus, the world is a product of man, or in fact a product of man's deeds. Such individualism breaches all conventions and establishes a new common standard, where universality no longer is the highest form of convention. Brzozowski does not view individuality as a contradiction to universality; for him, it is rather a revelation that creative individuality can become universal.

² "Life" is one of the basic categories of Brzozowski's philosophy. It is described as an active creative force: the basis of thought, but also a source of resistance. This means that a property of life is not only creation, but also continuity. It was mentioned by numerous thinkers, including Walicki (1977), Mencwel (1976), Kołakowski (1966).

It is interesting how the author approaches the process of creating values. They are being updated throughout work and upbringing. Values are not to be taken for granted by man; they are an inherent part of deeds and the creative process and play a role in the self-creation of mankind through work. The future is not a value in itself, but becomes one only by means of the described update process. Values do not exist on their own, in isolation from this process; at best, these would merely be the appearances of values.

This theoretical perspective displays a criticism of thought enclosed in the subject-object relation. It seeks a “third reality” going beyond the dichotomous division of human cognition. It discovers subsequent structures, discourses, and struggles taking place outside the subject’s consciousness. The belief in the absolute autonomy of the subject disappears, and the world of objects is created through updating values. In this sense, one can talk about religion. Furthermore, the belief suggests that finding an unconditional, objective judge of human affairs is no longer possible. What emerges is a realisation of the partial nature of our cognition, action, or deed. The world of human consciousness is not a universal concept, or Hegel’s progress of the spirit, but a world of ongoing struggle, a clash of different, partial, broken narratives presenting an objectivisation of the subjectivisation of human objectivity.

This forces man to become multidimensional, updating values through the process of work. It is also a certain theory of upbringing. An individual is positioned in the world by means of values which he or she is part of and, in fact, creates. The world and man can only be defined in relation to the discourse focused on values. This is due to the fact that the world is neither a spiritual, nor a physical reality. As Brzozowski phrased it, “The difference between psychology and physics, between mental and physical, is merely a difference in points of view: reality by itself is neither spiritual nor physical, it is the ‘third element’ ... and only our different standpoints with regards to this third element, our different relations to it – create in it the expressions that we later ourselves try to extend onto them. [...] To us, the world is always an answer dependent on the question we address to it” (Brzozowski, 1910, pp. 48–49).

The quoted passage, along with numerous others coming from his various works, reveals Brzozowski’s synthetic approach to philosophy. He claims that whenever we describe reality, the result always contains a proportion combining the theoretical and the practical. The theoretical part is presented as theory, that is, an abstract notion, whereas the practical part, that is, whatever is important in our lives, is revealed as something concrete. This approach may restore the practical meaning to philosophy. To philosophy, reality must therefore be more than a reality of ideas independent of human experience or the pure, material reality bereft of theoretical reflection. Hence, Polish philos-

ophy postulates a moral revolution based on the common good, freedom, and responsibility. Values can be shaped by education.

Finally, reflection must be united with experience in this ongoing process, which takes place inside every human being. Thus the essence of human deeds is partly determined by will, that is, a specific desire free by definition of its own existence, but empirically limited by the actions of an individual. This is why freedom must be followed by responsibility. Freedom thrives in the conscience, that is, a specific spiritual space causing tangible effects. In Polish philosophy, conscience is often considered to be the ethical behaviour of man. One might suppose that when the priest Mieczysław A. Krąpiec uses the term 'self-conscience,' he refers to an individual's search for his or her particular place in the sphere of spirituality and reality.

Philosophy – The nation and the individual

The topic of conscience might also be discussed from the perspective of a certain group of individuals, including national or universal community. In Polish socio-philosophical discourse of the time one could refer to the sacralisation of the 'nation' as a philosophical category manifested in the dominantly metaphysical approach to it.

Sanctifying the nation, Polish thinkers in fact reviewed the notions of 'man' and 'society.' In the case of man, they mainly aimed at showing the potential that lies within him and is associated with his nature. When it came to society, emphasis was put on its role in the formation of man. Broadly speaking, the idea was to highlight the natural or subnatural aptitudes of being, which, with the help of culture, or grace and culture, is able to achieve its optimum potential, thus sanctifying the community – the nation.

Sacralising the nation, Polish philosophers referred to the idea of an eternal (in the earthly sense), both God's and, at the same time, natural product of past, present and future generations. These were often organicistic concepts, for the nation was compared to an organism whose parts were inseparably connected with each other and interdependent.

In Catholic circles, the sacralisation and personification of the nation resulted from the superiority of God's law. Konstanty Grzybowski made a legitimate observation that some people found a metaphysical purpose in the nation, treating it as a concept (Grzybowski, 1977, p. 160). It was believed that the nation had a metaphysical goal, independent of the intellectual awareness of the individuals forming it, who understood the goal much better irrationally than through reason. A prerequisite for this understanding was faith, a religious feeling, since it was based on the Catholic religion.

The nation was frequently understood as a community of generations, more fundamental than an individual, and having its own goals. The individual was merely a tiny piece of it, quite unable to free itself off its dependence to the nation. The heart of the matter was to build a balanced relation between the individual and the nation.

When talking of nation, the prevalent approach is metaphysical. Discussing the subject of nation and national character required a recognition of either the ultimate, absolute value of life, be it spiritual or material, or the eternal, distinct, or subnatural reality. Nation was worshipped and distinguished from other beings. Discovering the conscience of the nation, the unity of the particular and universal was pointed out. Kazimierz Brodziński wrote: "In the past, every nation considered itself a goal and a means of everything, just as the earth was considered a means of the world around which everything circulates. Copernicus discovered the system of the physical world, and the Polish nation (I will say it boldly and with national pride) sensed an important movement of the moral world itself; it recognised that every nation should be a part of the whole and circulate around it, like a planet around its sun; and every nation constitutes a crucial dispute and balance, and only blind egoism fails to notice it. The Polish nation, let me repeat, is by inspiration a philosopher, a Copernicus in the moral world. Incomprehensible and persecuted, it will prevail; it will gain followers, and his crown of thorns will turn into a wreath of victories and citizenship" (Brodziński, 1964, p. 289). Such a vision of the philosophical concept of nation is an essential, as well as quite distinctive feature of Polish theoretical discourse of that time, distinguishing our thinkers from their European peers. It portrays a nation that is no abstraction, but a concrete entity, whose development occurs along with the growth of particular individuals and their spiritual and material enrichment, as well as the strengthening of the responsibility of both elites and masses. This understanding of wealth should contribute to bolstering the creative acts of man.

At this point, many Polish thinkers would refer to the notion of spirit. They would deem most vital to treat the spirit as something more than intellect, as its manifestations reveal themselves across various human acts. Polish philosophy associates the concept of the spirit with community as a whole consisting of many elements. Its centre is the spirit, just as a man's central point is the heart. If we liberated our spirit, we would find strength, wisdom and power, that is, we would become geniuses. In the words of the Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, "every man has his own genius trapped in an organisation, and the only difference between people lies in the degree of mastery of their genius." He then follows, recognising Stefan Garczyński's views, "the proof of the sublime heart is the reflection that the thought which stems from a sublime heart creates

powerful deeds; that prophets, combining wisdom with intuition, bear witness to thoughts. [...] All thought comes from the heart. [...] The heart is nothing more than a seat of the spirit, a cover for the inner man. Slavic poets constantly talk about the heart, avoiding talk about the head in a similar manner, because the head is commonly considered to harbour intellect, while for them intellect and spirit are not the same thing. The thought, therefore, comes from the spirit, and that spirit, through the mouths of prophets, speaks the truth which overcomes eternity” (Mickiewicz, 1900, pp. 188 and 190).

According to Mickiewicz, this was the essence of philosophy and it was precisely what Poles needed. Like many others, he saw a danger for Polish philosophy and the education process in the dominance of reason and intellect over the spirit as a whole, for it diminishes other forms of the spirit, making them seem almost non-existent. This is how reason triumphs over the spirit, simultaneously destroying, in a way, what constitutes the essence of humanity, that is, creativity.

In the 21st century, nations-societies organised in states still play a significant role in the development of individual creativity. The state is a community consisting of particular individuals, who should act according to a certain hierarchy of interests and values derived from these interests. The state must therefore be a means of self-realisation of a more perfect society; it must be based on moral philosophy; and it must ensure a balance between the individual and the social. Mickiewicz argued that the state should bear in mind that “all disagreements between people and nations stem from egoism. It is me and my love fighting against someone else and his or her love. One must find the truth. But how to find it without relinquishing our egoism, our own interests? In order to decide right or wrong in a dispute, we must put aside our particular arguments, personal cravings, our own selves. The common people refer to it through a proverb: no one can be a judge in their own case” (Mickiewicz, 1900, p. 319).

In view of the above, there is a noteworthy category in the Polish philosophy introduced by the concept of ‘presence’ seen as acts. It is the collective creative work and the understanding of tradition that define the essence of community and create the human spirit. According to Karpiński, “precisely the human spirit, the history of a given nation, focusing as though through a lens on the man of the nation, contains the entire past and transforms it into a philosophical hope, releasing the desired social practice” (Karpiński, 2006, p. 162).

Human presence is associated with actuality, activity, deeds, and education. That is Promethean creative activism, not Epimethean imitativism. Brzozowski’s comment seems worth adding to the argument: “Everything

is always given in relation to us; a relation which we construct ourselves by taking a particular standpoint. Nothing becomes real to us, but for the things which stand in relation to us and which we credit with a certain value." He continues, "when we begin looking for the ultimate reality, we will find it in something that offers us a certain perspective, gives us value, becomes the focal point sending all the rays of light which make real whatever they fall upon. In this sense, the only thing that is real is our aspiration, our active standpoint with regard to the world." He then summarised, "Every human aspiration is directed at a particular system of the world. That system already exists precisely because it functions as the goal of our aspirations. This potential existence is not merely a figure of speech, as it is possible; it exists, because it works, and what physically exists is only a combined result of these actions, a combination of all possibilities" (Brzozowski, 1910, pp. 56–57). Upbringing must be the same.

Trentowski claims that the process of 'doing deeds,' or 'reaping truth,' is firstly individual, but also egalitarian. It happens in both the spiritual, and the physical. Mickiewicz calls it 'selfhood,' and 'the people,' respectively. In this process, the spirit tries to win over matter. If the former fails, the latter wins, and the individual perishes along with the spirit. If the spirit wins, the individual transforms into 'a persona,' which Trentowski considers elitist. Traditionally, in Polish philosophy a distinction of this kind may be found in categories such as 'the people,' 'mental aristocrats,' and 'spiritual aristocrats.' These terms were used, for instance, by Florian Znaniecki. Furthermore, this understanding can be extended to the category of the spirit evoked by Cieszkowski, Lutosławski, or Hessen.

Conclusions

To conclude, the Polish philosophical tradition favoured, and ought to favour, wisdom coming from both current and historical social and moral practice. The wisdom is continuous, as it comes to life through the 'presence,' or the 'reaping of truth' by each individual. Philosophy must therefore be practiced, which may allow to transform the elitist into the egalitarian, the particular into the universal, the individual into the persona in Trentowski's understanding. Mickiewicz's spirit should play a key role in this moral philosophy. This philosophy will be as different as its creators, but at the formal and logical level of value its essentials should support the growth of man in his own humanity. This can be aided by education stemming from moral philosophy. In the sphere of formal and symbolic values, "we will witness the growth of the Polish nation as a society with a particular culture living in specific geopolitical conditions.

They, as well as the spiritual content united in a versatile persona,” Karpiński claims, “will determine the essence of social practice understood as moral practice” (Karpiński, 2006, p. 176).

What is more, Polish philosophy should include freedom united with responsibility, which would be the basis for community, where human life and individuality are united with an elitist spirituality. Such union of egalitarianism and elitism is a specialty of our philosophy. It brings along a recognition for the elite, or the spiritual aristocracy, and waits for it to take over responsibility for the nation, whose members are to retain their individuality. Hence the need for an amenable attitude towards other people both on social and spiritual grounds. This is how the religiousness of our philosophy manifests itself.

Furthermore, I can see a ‘utopian sense’ in the Polish philosophical tradition. This enables the creation of items that are unique in the understanding provided to them by moral philosophy. It emphasizes “human activity in the implementation of the chosen model of life” (Kojkoł, 2005, p. 172). It is suspended between the infinite and impossible, and the finite and possible here and now. This is where Poles have proven their spiritual uniqueness, because the impossible and utopian has actually happened numerous times throughout our history.

Polish philosophy also contains a concept of the Common Good – a type of pragmatic Epicureanism. It offers a proposal on how to manage interpersonal relations and create ideas when elites fail to carry the burden of responsibility for the Common Good. It is connected with optimistic romantic activism, which, in moral practice, implies a readiness to fight everything attempting to undermine Polish spirituality. Pragmatic Epicureanism encourages spiritual decisions of bold and unambiguous nature. It explains the readiness of Poles to make sacrifice, but also reject a foreign, albeit theoretically unspecified, nation. In this respect the Polish philosophical tradition appreciates what can be called the neighbourhood experience, that is, considering the experience of community acquired in direct vicinity as an important sign of personal success. What is missing here, however, is the “cunning reason;” we “feel a strong reluctance” for the supporters of this idea (Karpiński, 2006, p. 177).

I see the importance and even the necessity of expanding Polish philosophy, but within the European framework. Universalism and particularism will surely find a place here. These two tendencies should remain in a state of imbalance. The creative progress of domestic thought depends on the level of advancement and the power of our growth in humanity, as well as activism in its broad sense. Simultaneously, one should not eliminate the influences of foreign philosophy, but rather, as Knapik suggests, analysing Twardowski’s work, “subject to a thorough analysis and criticism those thoughts, ideas and

concepts, which may significantly threaten both Polish national philosophy, and Polish identity. As a result, the influences of foreign philosophies must be balanced. Only then can they have a beneficial influence on Polish philosophy” (Knapik, 2013, p. 177). This means that imitation, even if desirable, cannot completely dominate creativity. Coming back to the opening question about the kind of philosophy Poles need, I would propose one that could be exercised, among others, in education.

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