

**Roman DAROWSKI\***

## **VINCENT BUCZYŃSKI SJ (1789-1853) ON THE WAY TO A REVIVAL OF THOMISM**

Vincent Buczyński was one of the most outstanding 19th-century Jesuit philosophers (alongside Marian Morawski and Joseph Aloisius Dmowski) from Poland (more precisely, the territories of the former Polish State, then non-existent politically). He worked in several countries as a philosopher and theologian. The chronology of his work is as follows: Połock, Tarnopol (now in Ukraine), Nowy Sącz (Poland), Graz, Linz (Austria), Namur and Louvain (Belgium). He published a three-part work entitled *Institutiones Philosophicae* (I-III, Vienna, 1843-1844), and a book *Institutiones Doctrinae Religionis* (Vienna, 1842).

### **Biography**

Vincent Buczyński was born on 17th March 1789 at Hirówce in the Diocese of Mohylew (now in Belarus). He entered the Jesuit Order on 20th January 1805 and spent his novitiate years (1805-1806) in Dyneburg (now Daugavpils, Latvia). In 1806-1809 he studied philosophy in the Połock Jesuit College.

He received Holy Orders already in 1814 at Witebsk (Vitebsk) from Bishop Ignacy Bykowski. We do not know why he was ordained early. After his ordination he studied Theology in the Połock Academy (1815-1818), obtaining the degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Theology.

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On completing his education in theology Buczyński and other Jesuits founded a scholarly journal entitled *Miesięcznik Połocki* in the Połock Academy, and worked in its editorial staff (1818-1820). He published several articles in this monthly. His colleagues on its editorial board included Jan Roothaan, who later became General of the Jesuit Order. The monthly ceased to be published in 1820 in outcome of the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Russian Empire.

In 1819 Buczyński started to lecture in the Połock Academy in natural law and the law of nations, economics, political history, and statistics. After the Jesuits were expelled from Russia in 1820, he was Professor of Philosophy at Tarnopol (then part of the Austrian Empire), where on 15th August 1822 he made his solemn profession of the 4 vows. In 1834, in outcome of harassment by the Austrian authorities, he was forced to leave Tarnopol. He was sent to Nowy Sącz, where for a year he taught moral and pastoral theology at the local Jesuit College. Thereafter he was sent to Austria, where again he was Professor of Theology, first in Graz (1835-1837), and then Linz (1837-1848).

In 1848, when the Austrian government abolished the Austrian Jesuit Province, Buczyński went to Belgium, and was Professor of Philosophy at Namur, and later, from 1850, Professor of Theology at Louvain.

In 1843 Buczyński was Visitor of the Galician Province of the Society of Jesus, and made a major contribution to the resolution of the conflict between the Jesuits and the system of higher education imposed in Austria in the reign of Joseph II. He took pains to raise the standards of the education offered by Jesuit schools.

Father Buczyński died at Louvain, Belgium, on 29th March 1853.

### Buczyński's Works

Philosophical works: 1) *Institutiones philosophicae conscriptae a Vincentio Buczyński Societatis Jesu sacerdote*, I-III (A Textbook of Philosophy):

*Pars prima continens logicam cum praevia in universam philosophiam introductione*, Viennae [Wiedeń] 1843. Typis Congregationis Mechitaristicae, format: 21 x 13 cm, pp. VIII + 159;

*Pars secunda continens metaphysicam*, Viennae 1644, pp. 302;

*Pars tertia continens ethicam*, Viennae 1844, pp. 206.

2) The manuscript of *Institutiones philosophicae*, marked shelf-number 636, is preserved in the Jesuit Archives in Cracow (Mały Rynek 8; MS 636).

3) *Institutiones doctrinae religionis, in quibus principia philosophica ad veritates religionis applicantur conscriptae*, Viennae 1842, Typis

Congregationis Mechitaristicae, 8°, pp. 6 + 294 + 5 – The book addresses aspects of philosophy and theology.

On the grounds of generally accepted principles which may be learned by reasoning, Buczyński gives the proofs for the existence of God and Man's relation to Him, including Man's duties to God, especially his duty to worship God. He then shows that Man's natural powers of reasoning are insufficient to enable him to learn enough about God to be able to adopt the right attitude to Him, and that therefore Divine Revelation was necessary, and indeed happened. He then goes on into theology, which I shall not discuss here.

4) A collection of Buczyński's lectures which he delivered in Tarnopol in 1828 has survived in a 173-folio manuscript entitled *Doctrina religionis theologico-philosophica conscripta per Fratrem Josephum a Cupertino Tarnopoli anno 1828* and is preserved as MS 41 in the Capuchin Library, Cracow.

Buczyński also compiled an ascetic work entitled *Ćwiczenie się w nabożeństwie do Najśw. Jezusowego Serca* [Exercises in the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus], Lwów, 1838, pp. 71; 2nd edition, Poznań, 1854.

He also translated the following works into Polish and published them as:

P. Beckx, *Miesiąc maj poświęcony czci Najświętszej Panny Marii* [The Month of May, Dedicated to the Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary], Lwów, 1839, pp. 180; 5 editions; 5th edition Kraków, 1889, pp. 174).

Bishop [Claude] de Toul, *Nauki tyczące się prawd wiary i powinności chrześcijańskich* [Instructions Concerning the Doctrines of the Faith and the Christian Duties], Lwów, 1842, pp. 332). The French original had been published as *Instructions sur les principales vérités de la religion et sur les principaux devoirs du christianisme*, Rouen, 1794.

### **Buczyński's Concept of Philosophy its division and subject-matter**

According to Buczyński, philosophy is the science of reasoning which presents the relationship between causes and effects, and between principles and conclusions.<sup>1</sup> The subject of philosophy is universal Nature, insofar as reason is able to perceive it; and the aim of philosophy is to learn the truth and the way of life concordant with the truth.

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<sup>1</sup> „Scientia rationalis exhibens nexum effectuum cum suis causis, conclusionum cum principiis”, *Institutiones philosophicae*, pars I, p. 2.

Philosophy is divided into theoretical philosophy (learning the truth), and practical philosophy (the sphere of the will and actions). Theoretical philosophy consists of 1) formal philosophy, which deals with mental activities, and the laws and methods of reasoning, and is usually referred to as logic; 2) material philosophy, which deals with the „matter” or objects of mental activities, and is divided into physics (in a broad sense of the term) or, in other words, natural philosophy, especially cosmology, the subject of which are the phenomena of the visible world (after the Introduction, p. 3), and metaphysics, which deals with objects transcending the human senses. Practical philosophy comprises ethics, which in turn is sub-divided into elementary ethics and applied ethics. Elementary ethics presents the principles of the virtues and obligations; and applied ethics the particular duties of Man resulting from the principles of ethics (*ibid.*, p. 3-4).

Metaphysics is sub-divided into general and particular, or pure and applied metaphysics. General metaphysics is also known as ontology, the science of existence and existences. Particular metaphysics may assume different names depending on its subject of study, e.g. cosmology, psychology, and natural theology (*ibid.*, II, p. 18-19).

Buczyński writes that over the centuries physics has expanded very considerably and continues to do so, with more and more discoveries, thus being treated now as a separate science different from philosophy.

After a general introduction to philosophy of a few pages (p. 1-4), but before his chapter on logic, Buczyński has a chapter on initial notions (p. 4-24), in which he discusses the nature of the human soul and gives an outline of the history of philosophy.

### **Selected Philosophical Views**

Buczyński considers logic a formal science which examines the laws of reasoning; the art of drawing conclusions from premises; the science of discovering the reality that is external to the subject carrying out the examination; a science concerned with the discovery of that reality and its truths, which logic organises and disseminates.<sup>2</sup> Thus the subject of logic is the way empirical science works, its effects (outcome), and the laws governing learning and understanding. The aim of logic is to attain to truth.

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<sup>2</sup> „Logica definitur scientia legum cogitandi. Dicitur etiam ars ex datis principiis recte concludendi, vel ars dirigens mentem ad verum cognoscendum, cognitionesque recte ordinandas et communicandas”. *Ibidem*, pars I, p. 24.

According to Buczyński there are 4 universal principles of reasoning: the principle of identity, the principle of contradiction, the principle of the excluded medium, and the principle of sufficient reason (p. 25-26).

Logic may be divided into pure and applied logic. Pure logic deals with the various ways of learning and discovery, and the determination of the relationship between them. It is further sub-divided into elementary logic (the idea, the statement, reasoning), and methodology (definitions, divisions, proofs). Applied logic studies the causes of errors which may occur in learning and discovery, and suggests remedies for them, recommends a variety of aids to the discovery of truth, indicates the sources of truth, and determines the particular criteria for a variety of kinds of learning and discovery (experiment, reason, authority).

By being Buczyński means all that may be envisaged in the mind.<sup>3</sup> Hence not only that which exists is a being; that which may exist is also a being. The fundamental feature of a being is its potential existence.

Apart from substance, the permanent and unchanging component of reality, of which we ourselves are a particular specimen, Buczyński also admits transient and changeable forms of existing, such as qualities, features, and attributes (affectiones), and particularly – in the spirit of Suárez – the modi. There is no substance without a *modus*, he claims. Whatever exists or may exist is either a substance or a *modus*.<sup>4</sup>

What is surprising is that Buczyński does not present the diverse views on the real and mental difference between essence and existence, which used to be the rule in those times.

Buczyński defines the person after Boethius as an individual substance with a rational nature, and by individual substance he means the human attribute which cannot be transferred or given to any other being.<sup>5</sup>

In his discussion of the relation between the body and soul, Buczyński first dismisses a variety of views on the subject, and finally opts in favour of there being a mutual causal relation between them, which he describes as follows: Objects which impact on the senses move the external organs, and the nerve motions they evoke reach the brain, where the nerves of all the senses meet. This motion is then trans-

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<sup>3</sup> „Supremae universalitatis conceptum vocabulo entis denotamus, cujus generalis character in eo consistit, ut cogitari, seu mente percipi possit”. *Ibidem*, pars II, p. 21 § 23.

<sup>4</sup> „Non datur substantia sine modis. [...] Quidquid existit vel potest existere, aut substantia aut *modus* est”. *Institutiones philosophicae*, pars secunda: *Metaphysica, De substantia et modis*, p. 29-31, esp. § 32.

<sup>5</sup> „Persona vero definitur naturae rationalis individua substantia: ubi vocabulum individua significat, personalitatem esse absolute cum altero incommunicabilem”. *Ibidem*, p. 30.

mitted to the external parts of the body, which in turn makes them move in the required manner.<sup>6</sup>

In natural theology, Buczyński discusses the following proofs for the existence of God: the ontological proof (on grounds of the concept of a real being); the cosmological argument (on grounds of the contingency of beings); the physical and theological proof (on grounds of the order in the universe); and the moral proofs (on the grounds of the nature of Man, and the historical proof).

The ontological proof requires an additional explication. Buczyński of course knows that the argument was originally put forward by St. Anselm, and the reservations about it. But he believes that it has often been misconstrued, and proposes what he considers a correct formulation, based on the premise that the most real being is possible. He showed the truth of this statement in his *Ontology* (§ 35). He claims that even atheists do not deny it, and that Kant himself admitted it. According to Buczyński, once this statement is admitted, the following conclusion derives from it: The most real being is possible, therefore it cannot be impossible at the same time. If it did not exist now, then it would be absolutely impossible, therefore it exists now.<sup>7</sup> He then gives extensive proofs for these premises and gives answers to the questions.

I have already written that Buczyński divides philosophy into theoretical and practical philosophy. The aim of practical philosophy is Man's moral perfection. For him moral philosophy comprises ethics, which he sub-divides into general or elementary ethics, and particular or applied ethics. The former describes the principles of the virtues and obligations; and the latter describes the particulars relating to Man's obligations and rights resulting from the principles of ethics. General ethics addresses the nature of human deeds and their relation to morality, the foundation and principles of obligations, the law, and especially natural law and the concept of virtue and vice (*ibidem*, part I, p. 3-4, part III, p. 13).

In the obligations Buczyński describes the obligations with respect to God, with respect to oneself, and with respect to others. In the final part of his account of the obligations he discusses the marital community, the community of parents and children, the community of master and servants, and the civil society.

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<sup>6</sup> „Objecta dum in sensus agunt, commovent organa externa, motus nervorum in illis excitatus, ad cerebrum, ubi omnium sensuum nervo concurrunt, propagatur; inde ex stabilita ab auctore naturae lege oxoritur in anima sensatio, qua admonita illa, respondententes format ideas”. *Ibidem*, pars II, p. 224.

<sup>7</sup> „Est possibile ens realissimum, ergo simul impossibile esse non potest. At nisi actu existeret, esset omnino impossibile: igitur actu existit”. *Ibidem*, II, p. 237.

Elaborating on this last point, Buczyński observes that individuals unite by virtue of natural law, and that ultimately the supreme authority vested in the state comes from God, the Creator of Nature.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, it is also true that the immediate cause for the emergence of a society is the free consent of the individuals who come together and the double agreement they conclude: to unite for the common good, and to submit to the requirements resulting from this.<sup>9</sup>

Buczyński considers the love of one's country and consistent efforts to increase its common good, which he names patriotism, the principal duty of citizens.<sup>10</sup>

### Conclusion

Buczyński travelled across a considerable part of Europe with his lectures: from Połock and Tarnopol (now in Ukraine), Nowy Sącz (Southern Poland), Graz and Linz (Austria), to Namur and Louvain (Belgium). The academics of those times could easily move about in this way, because lectures were delivered in Latin. Wherever he lectured, Buczyński was regarded as one of the most distinguished professors, on account of his erudition alongside the clarity of his presentation.

This outline shows that Buczyński was a representative of the generally accepted stream of philosophy in those times, and views which were pretty widespread in ecclesiastical circles. His philosophy derived from the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition, but had acquired a supplement of numerous ideas which went away from the original tradition and had been adopted from modern trends, especially in philosophy and also natural philosophy (cosmology), prompted by the advances made in the natural sciences. Another noteworthy point in Buczyński's philosophy is his adherence to some of the ideas of Suárez. This was no doubt associated with his membership of the Jesuit Order, where Suárez' teachings had received a great deal of attention and appreciation ever since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Thus Buczyński should be counted among

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<sup>8</sup> „Posita hominum in statu civili consociatione, supremum in eo imperium seu majestas generatim et absolute spectata provenit immediate a Deo tamquam naturae auctore”. *Ibidem*, pars III, *Ethica*, p. 192.

<sup>9</sup> „[...] manet etiam verum, proximam causam efficientem civitatis originarie repetendam esse a libero civium consensu et duplici pacto, scilicet pacto *unionis* ad tendendum communi studio in eundem boni communis finem, et pacto *subjectionis*, quo capita familiarum sua independente potestate et libertate ex eodem boni communis fine se privando, semet sibi subjectos communi seu universali formae imperii subjecerunt”. *Ibidem*, p. 193.

<sup>10</sup> „Generalia officia civium sunt: Amor patriae studiumque efficax promovendi ejus commune bonum, quod studium patriotismi nomine venit”. *Ibidem*, p. 196.

the forerunners of the Thomist revival, and like another Pole, Joseph Aloisius Dmowski, who flourished at about the same time in Rome, a proponent of similar views long before the publication of the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879).

Buczyński's books are full of a concern for philosophical reflection to discover reality, to learn the truth about reality. The historical and philosophical aspect of his reflections is expressed in his numerous discussions and polemics with representatives of various trends: Locke, Leibniz, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Jakobi, and Wolff.

Kant occurs very frequently as one of Buczyński's adversaries. Towards the end of Part 1 of his metaphysics Buczyński has a 12-page annex in which he defends his teachings against the wiles of modern philosophy, especially the ideas of Kant.

The less widely known philosophers cited by Buczyński include Karpe, *Just. Philos.*, Vol. 3 pars. II p. 46.; Likawetz, *Metaph.*, p. II p. 27-28; Mioti II p. 66; Tittel, *Kantische Denkformen oder Categorien*, II p. 63, 66; Jakob Zallinger, *Disquisitiones philosophiae kantianae*, II p. 63, 66, 237, and especially p. 150, and pars. III p. 9.

Buczyński evidently used the original language versions of these and other works on philosophy. He quotes the original titles and occasionally cites passages from the texts, in Latin and also in French and German (see, for example, part I, p. 20-23, II 68, and elsewhere).

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J. Giżycki, *Materiały do dziejów Akademii Połockiej i szkół od niej zależnych*, Kraków 1905, *passim*; S. Załęski, *Jezuici w Polsce*, V, part II, Kraków 1906, p. 1150; K. Drzymała, *Wspomnienia naszych zmarłych, 1820-1982*, t. I, Kraków 1982, p. 228-229; W. Kaczorowski, R. Sękowski, *Drukarnia połocka w latach 1787-1820*, in: *Jezuicka ars historica. Prace ofiarowane Księdzu Profesorowi Ludwikowi Grzebieniowi SJ*, Kraków 2001, p. 238-239; F. Klimke, *Institutiones historiae philosophiae*, Roma-Freiburg im Br. 1923, t. II, p. 270, 272; polish edition: *Historia filozofii*, t. II, Kraków 1930, p. 295, 298; R. Darowski, *Zarys filozofii jezuitów w Polsce od XVI do XIX wieku*, in: *Wkład jezuitów do nauki i kultury w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów i pod zaborami*. Ed. Irena Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, Kraków 2004, PAN-Ignatianum-WAM, p. 146, 147, 148; cf. also *ibidem*, pp. 565, 567, 637, 647, 655.

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