

Polish Christian Philosophy of the Twentieth Century

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In the twentieth century, Christian philosophy became an important part of the intellectual culture of Poland. This development was determined by historical conditions. Apart from regaining its independence in 1918, Poland experienced two world wars, the Bolshevik revolution, the rise of totalitarian systems, as well as organized forms of homicide linked to enslavement and contempt for human dignity. All these phenomena strongly influenced culture: not just in Poland, of course, but also across Europe and the world as a whole. They also affected philosophy. After 1945, when the Soviet Union imposed its totalitarian system upon Poland, political domination was accompanied by a uniformly imposed worldview based on the official claims of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. For several decades, university circles were hemmed in by various forms of Marxist ideology.

In these adverse circumstances, even already at the end of the 1940s, Christian philosophy (broadly construed) began to undergo an intensive revival. The fact that the country's authorities had isolated the academic centres in which such philosophy was developing made it possible for the latter to be relatively free from ideological pressure, and to maintain a significant degree of autonomy when it came to carrying out research. Christian philosophy was pursued not only by members of the clergy, but also by lay persons seeking, in the area of Christian thought, modes of cognition and thought free from the political dogmas of the time. In the twentieth century, Christian philosophy came to provide, at the level of ideas, the intellectual cement needed in order to maintain the continuity

of Polish culture itself, and the link connecting Polish identity to the civilizational heritage of Western Europe.

Christian philosophy of the twentieth century was a living discourse, open to contemporary intellectual challenges, in which philosophers expressed their readiness for dialogue and, sometimes, for confrontation with what showed up in culture at the levels of social existence, scholarly research and science, the norms of society, and the institutions of political life. Such philosophy completely permeated the personal lives of individuals, as well as shaping human culture, broadening and ordering the field of scientific knowledge, affecting moral and social life, inspiring art, and deepening people's religious life. Moreover, it was created by persons of exceptional distinction, whose educational achievements and involvement in scholarly intellectual work attracted followers within academia and gave rise to the creation of philosophical schools connected with their thinking. The influence of such individuals and their environments has extended far beyond the boundaries of Polish culture and has become a part of our global heritage, as is amply demonstrated by examples such as that of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła.

The *Polish Christian Philosophy of the Twentieth Century* project was carried out between 2017 and 2020 at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, by more than 60 philosophers from various university centres. The main objective of the project was to preserve and deepen knowledge of Polish Christian philosophy in Poland and abroad, and to present its role in culture (broadly construed), science, economy, politics, art, social life and religion in the twentieth century. In order to achieve this objective, monographic studies were first undertaken of the thinking of 13 outstanding representatives of such philosophy working mainly in the second half of the twentieth century. These were the following: Mieczysław Gogacz, Piotr Lenartowicz, Stanisław Kamiński, Kazimierz Kloskowski, Kazimierz Klósak, Feliks Koneczny, Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, Tadeusz Styczeń, Tadeusz Ślipko, Józef Tischner, Karol Wojtyła, Jacek Woroniecki and Zofia Józefa Zdybicka.

The project is then complemented by a *Companion to Polish Christian Philosophy of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*. This describes the accomplishments of the majority of Polish Christian philosophers of the twentieth century in the most important areas of philosophy, these being metaphysics, the theory of cognition, the methodology of logic and science, anthropology, ethics, aesthetics, axiology, the philosophy of religion, social and political philosophy, the philosophy of culture and the history of philosophy. The *Companion* presents discussions of both the work of Polish Christian philosophers and their innovative solutions – ones that

have influenced the shape of philosophical discourse both in Poland and abroad. It also presents the research and achievements of contemporary representatives of Christian philosophy in Poland.

All volumes published as part of the *Polish Christian Philosophy of the Twentieth Century* project are available on the website: <https://pchph.ignatianum.edu.pl/en/>

In order to share the results of the project we have co-organised (together with the Jesuit University Ignatianum) the international conference Christian Philosophy: Its Past, Present and Future. Due to COVID-19, it was held in a hybrid, online-onsite mode in September 2020, and it gathered over 40 philosophers from all over the world. Almost all the talks and discussions, which were presented during the conference are available on YouTube (see the website for more information: <http://christianphilosophy.ignatianum.edu.pl>). Some papers from this conference, edited, and blind-reviewed are published in this special issue of *Forum Philosophicum* dedicated to Christian Philosophy: Its Past, Present and Future.