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The Commercialisation of Contemporary Culture

Komercjalizacja współczesnej kultury

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, consumption is becoming the actual state of culture, in which human activity is subordinated to the market. This process is sometimes referred to as the supermarketisation and commercialisation of culture. It is the transfer of behaviour patterns that are typical of economic relationships onto the cultural behaviours of people. The commercialisation of culture means guiding oneself in life by the criteria of trade, in which artistic goods and services are treated like commodities. From such a perspective, culture becomes a matter of taste, personal choice determined by nationality, wealth, social class, and education and is more and more strongly shaped by the market with all the resulting consequences.

KEYWORDS:

cultural supermarket, consumerism, globalisation, cultural identity, dialogue, evangelisation of cultures

ABSTRAKT

Konsumpcja staje się współcześnie rzeczywistym stanem kultury, w której aktywność człowieka podporządkowana jest rynkowi. Proces ten nazywany bywa supermarketyzacją i komercjalizacją kultury. Jest to przeniesienie wzorów zachowań charakterystycznych dla relacji ekonomicznych na kulturowe zachowania ludzi. Komercjalizacja kultury jest kierowaniem się w życiu kryteriami handlowymi, w których dobra i usługi artystyczne traktowane są jak towary. W takim ujęciu kultura staje się kwestią gustu, osobistego wyboru warunkowanego przez przynależność narodową, stopień zamożności, otoczenie społeczne, wykształcenie i jest coraz bardziej kształtowana przez rynek z wszystkimi negatywnymi konsekwencjami tego stanu rzeczy.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:

supermarket kultury, konsumpcjonizm, globalizacja, tożsamość kulturowa, dialog, ewangelizacja kultur

Contemporary researchers analysing culture more and more frequently come to the conclusion that societies are currently developing *horizontal* communication, neglecting its *vertical* dimension. One example of such a social group is young people, who are able to quite easily communicate with their peers, but who have more difficulty communicating with the generation of their parents and

grandparents. As described by the sociologist of culture and social communication Kazimierz Krzysztofek, youths are ceasing to understand the code of their own culture, which is the basic condition for establishing contact through communication and generating community bonds.¹ The cultural code is destroyed by the fact that everything labelled “cultural industry and services” (audio-visual production, the tourist industry, the heritage industry, history, science, sex, cuisine, travel, style, fashion, the art of presentation, beauty, sport, etc.) is being included in the commercial circulation. This takes place through the media, which fall into their own trap, creating a categorical imperative and the dictate of promotion – which sometimes transforms into the cult of marketing – selling any cultural production without selecting a more ambitious repertoire, promoting advertisements. All this is a symptom of the destruction of the cultural code, without which these actions themselves stop being understandable.

The rapid development of the *push*² culture – as it seems – refers to the intergenerational transmission of culture and changes the cultural policy from the traditional one to a multimedia culture. On a mass scale one can notice the encroachment of the consumption worldview, which presents values that are practically tangible³ as values that are ultimate (not of a transcendent nature). The consequence of this state is the marketisation and commercialisation of culture. Contemporary society is frequently referred to as a consumption society because consumerism is its dominating characteristic; it is the remedy to fear (consumption allows one to forget about problems which should be faced); it is a lifestyle focussed around fashion, which is defined and imposed through the media (the desire for commodities is a product of society); it is a form of spending one’s free time (shopping is becoming not only a form of entertainment, so-called shopper-tainment, but it is also becoming a mini-holiday);⁴ it is the pursuit of pleasure

¹ Krzysztofek, Kazimierz. “Ekspansja kultury mediów a międzypokoleniowy przekaz kultury.” *Kultura polska w nowej sytuacji historycznej*, edited by Jerzy Damrosz, Warsaw, 1998, p. 39.

² T. Goban-Klas (1995) uses the name *push culture* in place of the *culture of choice (pull)* to denote what is contemporarily happening in culture, i.e. moving from creativity to pure production, from creating value to producing value. Cf. Krzysztofek 45.

³ Zeidler-Janiszewska, A. “Formy praktyki artystycznej wobec przemian współczesnej kultury.” *Kultura polska w nowej sytuacji historycznej*, edited by Jerzy Damrosz, Warsaw, 1998, p. 118.

⁴ Visiting shopping centres which sprawl out over hectares is like arriving in a city or country with all possible attractions available in miniature. Consumption is being surrounded

(hedonism); it is a way of fulfilling one's civic duties (a person who does not consume is not a good citizen); it is a kind of a new religion; and finally, it is an ideology which is strongly linked with lifestyle (people purchase new things not because they really need them, but in order to be compliant with the social standard in terms of possessions).

One can say that consumption is becoming the actual state of culture, in which whole areas of human activity are subjected to the market. Thus, we are dealing here with the supermarketisation and commercialisation of culture, i.e. with the transfer of behaviour patterns which are typical of economic relationships (purchase/sales, supply/demand, customer/service) onto the non-economic behaviours of people, including those related to culture.

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with the atmosphere of magic, which is why sales must be accompanied by various kinds of attractions, in order to charm the customer.

⁵ Szlendak, T. *Supermarketyzacja. Religia i obyczaje seksualne młodzieży w kulturze konsumpcyjnej*, Wrocław, 2004, pp. 58–100.

goods and services undertake work when it is profitable for them. In other words, commercialisation means treating cultural goods and services as commodities which, through various institutions, are supposed to reach end-consumers.⁶

In such a context, culture is becoming a problem to an increasing degree. On the one hand, each of us identifies with a specific national culture (even if we change our place of residence); on the other hand, however, we reach for various elements from the global *cultural supermarket*. Culture is more and more becoming a matter of taste, a personal choice, though after all, still a choice that is conditioned by one's nationality, wealth, social class, education, etc. Moreover, today, culture is more and more strongly shaped by the market. We are not talking here only about the market of material objects, but also about the cultural supermarket, which can provide us with information and cultural products of any provenance. This supermarket has got a clear influence on people and their cultural identity; Theodore H. Von Laue even calls it "the human condition at the end of the 20th century". The author writes in reference to this topic that

in the world which combines all cultures, religions, and historical experiences which have been gathered for thousands of years, the whole cultural heritage of humanity is visible. (...) In great metropolises, religions and lifestyles from various parts of the world are competing with each other. The world has become a department store stuffed with valuables created by people. (...) The contemporary generation are people who were born to buy – or at least watch the shop windows in the huge world supermarket, in which the selection of commodities constitutes a challenge and overwhelms the buyer.⁷

In the cultural supermarket seemingly everyone can do what they are willing and believe in anything they want – though on the condition that they do not directly harm other people. In the cultural supermarket we theoretically experience the freedom of choice, although, objectively, this choice is not free at all.⁸ At the

⁶ In reference to commercialisation in culture, see B. Tatarewicz, "Komercjalizacja w kulturze w krajach gospodarki rynkowej. Czy bez uszczerbku dla sztuki?" *Komercjalizacja w kulturze. Szanse i zagrożenia*, edited by S. Golinowska, Warsaw 1992, pp. 150–158.

⁷ von Laue, Theodore H. *The World Revolution of Westernization: The Twentieth Century in Global Perspective*, New York, 1987, p. 339.

⁸ Mathews, Gordon. *Supermarket kultury. Kultura globalna a tożsamość jednostki*, Warsaw, 2005, p. 249.

moment of making the choice we have already been shaped by the existing world (i.e. by culture). This world, to a large extent, influences the way we try to shape our life. The community in which we live – i.e. politics, economy, morality, and religion – greatly determines our choices.

The principles of this specific supermarket's functioning are frequently similar to the principles for the market of material goods. One can say that there is strict correlation between a material commodity and a product of culture. The assortment of the products on offer changes and the "cultural products" also change. The societies whose material products are easily accessible on global markets have got a greater influence on culture, although this is not necessarily very high culture. One example may be the strong American market, which significantly influences the type of music which is popular and promotes film stars, art celebrities, and sport stars in other parts of the world. The source of this phenomenon – according to many researchers analysing culture – is capitalism and the economic transformations associated with it. It is capitalism, through the logic of money, supply, demand, and the constant circulation of commodities and services, that creates the contemporary – postmodern – cultural condition.⁹ In the cultural supermarket, just like in the market, there is no longer any other criterion than money, choice, and taste. A person does not feel like a creator. He or she is only a consumer.

The conclusion for a recipient of culture which comes to mind based on our analysis is the ability to properly choose and select from the overproduction of the cultural offer. Choice is necessary here in order to have the feeling of satisfaction and not become lost in the world of contradictory sensations, feelings, and experiences, to be able to create (and this is becoming increasingly problematic) one logical and satisfying coherence of life, cutting off from its fragmentariness, episodic nature, and ambiguity.¹⁰ Let us add, at the same time, that good choices are possible with an appropriate value hierarchy. The recipient of culture has to possess a sense of being rooted, a foundation, a "key", according to which he or she wants – and knows why he or she wants – to choose. In the cultural

⁹ Ibidem p. 259.

¹⁰ Chrostowska, K. "Problem z określeniem własnej tożsamości w społeczeństwie postindustrialnym." *Gospodarka i społeczeństwo w dobie globalizacji*, edited by A. Bączkiewicz, Warsaw, 2000, pp. 219–225.

supermarket people do not stop looking for their identity, including that associated with nationality and the homeland. The homeland is the place towards which we feel the greatest sense of belonging. The supermarket greatly weakens that rooting in the homeland. As Gordon Mathews writes in his renowned book,

national cultural identity undergoes erosion under the influence of the cultural supermarket. The symptoms of the activity of the market which may be considered as violating the sense of national cultural identity are visible and audible in the whole world: American music on the radio, Japanese comic books flooding East Asia, Walkmans, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, and Michael Jordan as symbols of a global reach.¹¹

The supermarketisation of culture, i.e. downgrading it to the level of the market, deprives its recipients of experiencing authentic "astonishment" and "mystery", a reflection on life and the world. It can also form the belief that a person does not actually belong to any culture and has the right to choose who he or she wants to be. As a result of supermarketisation, culture becomes culture without effort, ludic culture, i.e. fun, infantile entertainment, the pursuit of sensation.

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¹¹ Mathews 37.

already mentioned, the cultural industry, which guides itself according to the principles of supply and demand, produces cultural goods in accordance with the tastes of the recipients – though not necessarily ones which are valuable in the artistic sense – and creates a specific type of human in culture. According to the typology of Zygmunt Bauman,¹² it creates a *tourist*, for whom culture is collecting sensations; a *stroller*, for whom culture is a gigantic container filled with trinkets; a *vagabond*, who spends his or her life wandering and does not even know what he or she is looking for; and a *player*, who cannot divide necessity from coincidence, value from anti-value. However, let us ask, is this authentic creation of culture? Is the market supposed to be the only place where a person can discover his or her identity and integrity? The answer is clear. Only by creating authentic culture does a person develop themselves and their nature.¹³ People are capable of humanising the world, that is, creating a new synthesis of spirit and matter which does not exist in nature.

One of the characteristic features of the turn of the millennium is the search for one's own cultural identity. Perhaps this is taking place in the face of the omnipresent globalisation trends and the pressure from the giant pop culture. The contemporary individual feels uprooted and lonely, anonymous and alienated, not only in the scope of his or her internal life, but also in the geographical sense, in which the known cultural and territorial borders are becoming blurred. Irrespective of the unavoidable universality and pan-culturalism, globalisation and the homogenisation of contemporary processes, a person has the need to belong to a concrete culture of a local nature. It needs to be noted that identity and the sense of possessing one's "own home"¹⁴ are important in every cultural space.

¹² Bauman, Zygmunt. *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej*, Warsaw, 1994, p. 7 ff.

¹³ The questions of how to create such a culture, how to bring up to transforming cultures, and how to learn cultural animation, are interestingly answered by Mario Pollo, a specialist in cultural animation, in the book *Animazione culturale. Teoria e metodo*, Rome 2002.

¹⁴ P. Sztompka mentions two meanings of the cultural notion of *home*. In the first sense, it is an organisational and institutional structure which may be the object of "institutional engineering", intentional construction, in accordance with the adopted design, as, for example, the functioning of institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, European Courts, the European Central Bank, etc. In the second meaning, it is a community of values, patterns, rules, ideals, beliefs, aspirations, and dreams shared by a given community – for example, by Europeans – and these values constitute the domain of culture (Sztompka, P. "Integracja europejska jako szansa kulturowa. O moralności, tożsamości i zaufaniu." *Kondycja moralna społeczeństwa polskiego*, edited by J. Mariański, Krakow, 2002, p. 505.

A human deprived of their roots will not be fully human. The desire and the need of their soul is to be of the same identity with the heritage of their “own home”.¹⁵ In this context the process of globalisation – which is present in all aspects of the life of the contemporary person, demonstrating strong tendencies towards unification – constitutes a threat to the sense of that identity.

Therefore, we stand today in the face of another threat in the cultural space, a threat that is strictly associated with the one discussed above, namely, with the hybridisation of a global culture. This idea, as in case of the biological notion of a hybrid as being a rather undefined form, is understood as a culture which is not the continuation of any previous culture, but only a melting pot, a blend of various cultures of an undefined quality. Without doubt, the hybridisation of global culture is a process which raises justified concerns about cultural identity in the face of the invasion of pop culture, Americanisation, and the McDonaldisation of the world. Heading towards a global culture for everyone may turn out to be heading towards a culture for nobody. The domination of global culture may lead individuals and whole nations to abandon their own culture, the unique spirit which is present in every language, and from “atmospheres” and products which are specific to various nations.¹⁶ It is worth adding that another element which may be a threat is the separation of the cultures of the globalisation period. This threat is caused by the encounter between different cultures – natural for globalisation – which, instead of leading to an exchange and permeation of content from one culture to another, much more strongly leads to a “clash of civilisations”, perpetual conflict and confrontation between cultures, and to cultural separatism. Such separatism is detrimental for cultural dynamism – as indicated by L. Dyczewski – because no culture is self-generated. The development of culture requires contact with many cultures, a dialogue with them; otherwise the result is stagnation.¹⁷

¹⁵ For John Paul II, culture is a “human’s home” which defines behaviour and lifestyle, a whole set of factors achieved by generations, the awareness of particular people, and the values cultivated by them – customs, language, art, literature, institutions, and structures of social life. It is an organised system of social coexistence with its rights and principles of development.

¹⁶ Stolarczyk, I. *Dylematy globalizacji. Kryteria wartościowania zmian społecznych w kontekście nauczania społecznego Kościoła*, Tarnów, 2003, pp. 148–151. See also *Religia i kultura w globalizującym się świecie*, edited by M. Kempny and G. Woroniecka, Krakow, 1999.

¹⁷ Dyczewski, L. “Tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa w globalizującym się świecie.” *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 2000 issue 1, p. 32.

Thanks to the process of globalisation – perhaps slightly paradoxically due to the elements which we have noted earlier – cultures also get closer to one another according to the principle of intercultural dialogue. This dialogue¹⁸ leads to mutual enrichment, therefore, also to the dynamisation of culture-creating actions, highlighting the fundamental values which are common to everyone; on the other hand, it allows one to experience one's distinctiveness, uniqueness, and identity. Becoming familiar with other cultures does not have to mean separation and a sense of threat to one's own culture. To the contrary, it may be an inspiring meeting which broadens one's knowledge and cognition. Therefore, for culture, globalisation may represent not only a challenge, but – in Bauman's understanding – a "matrix of possibilities" leading to creating unique identities according to the principle of different choices and combinations. This matrix is abundant cultural material from which local cultures may draw. However, this will not homogenise cultures, but will reinforce cultural diversity.¹⁹ In such a case sociologists apply the notion of "cultural diffusion", which consists in the controlled flow of content and values, absorbing or rejecting the influences from other cultures in order to adopt the proper aspects of globalisation.²⁰ This matrix of possibilities and cultural diffusion is the basis for intercultural dialogue, which is the ability of the cultures of the world to coexist. Thanks to this dialogue, cultures reinforce their importance and their influence on society and, at the same time, strengthen their own identity through contact with other values, ideas, and experiences.²¹ The creative dialogue between cultures leads to cultural pluralism, which is not a vision of global culture, but the coexistence of various cultures and the opportunity for constant enrichment of one's own culture. It has to be said that in this aspect globalisation may play a positive role of a tool that unifies cultures around common values.

¹⁸ "Społeczna nauka Kościoła pojmowana jako dialog." *Chrześcijanin w świecie*, 1971 issue 3, pp. 10–11.

¹⁹ Bauman, Zygmunt. "Globalizacja, czyli komu globalizacja a komu lokalizacja." *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1997, issue 3, p. 61.

²⁰ Sztompka, P. "Teorie zmian społecznych a doświadczenia polskiej transformacji." *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1994, issue 1, p. 12.

²¹ Stolarczyk, I. *Dylematy globalizacji. Kryteria wartościowania zmian społecznych w kontekście nauczania społecznego Kościoła*, Tarnów, p. 216.

Culture cannot be imposed top-down. It appears as the result of grassroots initiatives and spontaneous experiences, traditions, and behaviours – the ritualisation of everyday life. However, it is possible to influence culture by working on its identity through literature, art, philosophy, journalism, etc. The pluralism of national cultures has developed on the foundation of the heritage of values rooted in the Gospel, giving rise to the civilisation of nations and creating their identity.

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²² For more on the historical influence of monasteries in shaping political culture and Christian civilisation, see Kawecki, W. "Zakony a świat polityki." *Europa consecranda*, edited by K. Wójtowicz, Krakow, 2004, pp. 129–137.

individual and social initiative, the bloom of all moral energies of the European nations.²³

As we know, contemporary Europeans are critical and they question all axioms,²⁴ including the meaning of Christianity in history. However, this is not a questioning which is a condition for seeking the truth, but a proposal of theses which one tries to prove. In this context, Krzysztof Zanussi emphasised that the thesis that Christianity lost its inspiring power in culture is impossible to prove as long as there are Christians in the world and – following the great Russian artist Andrei Tarkovsky – he repeated that “humanity is not so much threatened by nuclear extinction, but by the death of the last people who are believers, and together with their death, the whole European culture will end”.²⁵ One can say that a Europe which is afraid of its Christian roots is in an informed way resigning from its identity, and at least – as defined by P. Sztompka – the “positive identity”, in which *we* is more emphasised than *they* and solidarity more than an oppositional conflict. In positive identity, *foreigners* are not marginalised, but through the prism of pride of one’s own achievements and values, one is open to other values, eliminating xenophobia, intolerance, and stereotypes.²⁶

In the book *Senza radici*,²⁷ the problem of the European identity crisis was discussed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger – today’s Pope Benedict XVI – and the president of the Italian Senate, Marcello Pera. While searching for the causes of this phenomenon, they stated that this crisis is the effect of the negative influence of relativism in post-conciliar theology, the West’s boredom with its own values, and the self-censorship which it imposed on itself, because it was afraid

²³ Schuman, R. “Est- il trop tard pour faire l’Europe?” *Quelle Europe? Recherches et débats*, Paris, 1958, issue 22, pp. 227–230.

²⁴ The evidence for a thesis formulated this way may be, for example, the discussion related to the constitutional treaty and to the possibility to refer in it to Christian roots in the *Invocatio Dei*. In the end, such a statement was not included there; the reference to God and religion was omitted.

²⁵ Zanussi, Krzysztof. “Europa ducha w kulturze inspirowanej Ewangelią.” *Europa wspólnych wartości. Chrześcijańskie inspiracje w budowaniu zjednoczonej Europy*, edited by S. Zięba, Lublin, 2004, p. 28.

²⁶ Sztompka, P. “Integracja europejska jako szansa kulturowa. O moralności, tożsamości i zaufaniu.” *Kondycja moralna społeczeństwa polskiego*, edited by J. Mariański, Krakow, 2002, p. 512.

²⁷ Pera, Marcello and Ratzinger, Joseph. *Senza radici. Europa, relativismo, cristianesimo, islam*, Milan, 2004.

to say that its culture is better than others (for example, Islam). In consequence, the European countries did not want to agree to refer to Christian values in the European Constitution. They also allowed religious freedom to be equated with the freedom of sexual orientation. The West is afraid of assessing other cultures because it remains under the influence of relativism, which entails the conviction that there are no fundamental values and that it is impossible to sufficiently prove that something is better than something else.

As emphasised by Ratzinger and Pera, relativism assumes that, above all, there is pluralism, i.e. the multitude of ideas, values, assessments, lifestyles, directions, philosophies, ideas, religions etc.; therefore, it is impossible to evaluate one culture in comparison with another, for example Christianity and Islam.²⁸ Relativism in the scope of theology wants to convince us that all religions are equally good and that there is no difference between them. This also means that the founders of these religions are equally important. One would, therefore, have to revise the sentence uttered by Jesus, "I am the way and the truth and the life", because it could be considered as bearing some features of religious fundamentalism. In such a way of thinking, there is an evident confusion of neutrality with secularism. One can therefore ask why the lay worldview should dominate over the religious one, and, moreover, in the disguise of neutrality? In this context, Ratzinger underlined that along with the victory of the technical and secular world, European values – including culture and faith – are replaced by value systems from other worlds: the pre-Columbian America, Islam, and Asian mystics. Furthermore, in Europe there is a strange reluctance towards its own culture and its own future. Children, which could be the hope of the future, are perceived as a threat to the present.²⁹ There is specific "reluctance towards God", while, after all, the world without God has no future.

One cannot responsibly negate the fact that all the achievements in the field of architecture, literature, and philosophy which Europe prides itself on today have their roots in Christianity. Believers, atheists, and agnostics all benefit from them. Unarguably, Christianity has been shaping Europe for centuries, and if it was not for Christianity, Europe would not be what it is today.³⁰ Precisely,

²⁸ Ibidem 13–16.

²⁹ Ibidem 59–60.

³⁰ Legutko, R. *Ostatni przesąd Europy*, ROL, 20 Dec. 2003, no. 296.

multiculturalism, if we support it, calls us, Europeans, to enter ourselves anew. Pera noted that “there is an ugly wind blowing over Europe. This refers to the conviction that it is enough to wait, and problems will disappear on their own. Or that it is enough to accede to the demands of those who persecute us to defend ourselves from oppression. It is the same wind which was blowing in Munich in 1938.” In response, Ratzinger writes that “the West does not love itself anymore: In its own history it only sees the things which deserve condemnation and which are destructive, and it is no longer able to understand the things that are great and pure.”³¹ The crisis of European culture is the crisis of Christian culture. Scepticism or relativism going as far as nihilism, existential sadness – claimed P. Poupard – is a challenge for Christianity and its spirituality, which should return to the truth about Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of humanity and the centre of the universe and of history. Atheism should therefore be contrasted with Christian faith; secularisation should be compared with the cosmic vision of creation and the renewing liturgy based on God’s Word and His grace; industrialisation and urbanisation should be contrasted with living and brotherly Christian communities.³²

While summing up the condition of current culture, it has to be stated that the evangelisation of cultures should temporarily aim to transform its negative characteristics towards a deeper acknowledgement of the culture of human rights, the culture of brotherhood, and working out the category of love (*caritas*) as a cultural value. The message of the Gospel and Christianity have always presented and disseminated human rights as being universally applicable. The idea of human rights had its foundation in the Christian dignity of every human, and in its theological justification it referred to the Revelation, i.e. to the concept of humankind created by God in His image, and referred to Christ incarnated in human form as the Saviour of the world. In Him, every human is destined for the glory of God and for immortality. This is the source of the inviolable human dignity which is the origin of all human rights. They have a cultural, social, and political dimension, but also a religious and even Christian dimension. The culture of brotherhood and solidarity is based on spiritual, religious, and ethical values which originate from the Gospel, adding significant stimulus for cultural

³¹ Pera and Ratzinger, op. cit.; Ratzinger, Joseph. *L'Europa di Benedetto nella crisi delle culture*, Siena 2005.

³² Poupard, P. *L'eredità cristiana della cultura europea*, Rimini, 2007, p. 33.

and social dynamism.³³ Also, the Gospel love which according to John Paul II is a “mighty power hidden in the heart of cultures” should become cultural pedagogy and effective social activity in the spirit of servanthood, respect, honesty, and professional competence.³⁴ The new culture which is needed by the world should be based on peace, solidarity, justice, and the respect for the rights and dignity of humankind, as well as the liberation and integral development of every individual and every nation. It has to take the individual into consideration for the very fact that they are human and – as the Church defines human – they are the “way” for the Church. The vision of a human being is supposed to be integral and supernatural, located in God’s plan of salvation, not deprived of the religious and spiritual values which humanise culture.

About the autor

Father Witold Kawecki, CSsR, PhD, UKSW Professor – professor in theological sciences in the field of the theology of culture; organiser and director of the UKSW Institute of Knowledge about Culture; director of the Chair of Dialogue of Faith with Culture; editor-in-chief of “Homo Dei” and the director of the Homo Dei publishing house in Krakow, 1997–2002; co-founder of the scientific journal “Kultura-Media-Teologia”; and retreat preacher in Poland and abroad. Fields of work include the theology of culture, the ethics of the media, political culture, the sociology of religion. He has authored 16 books (e.g. “Dlaczego Kościół broni życia”, “W stronę trzeciego tysiąclecia”, “Dylematy moralne współczesnego człowieka”, “Ocalić człowieka – ocalić kulturę”, “Jan Paweł II – człowiek kultury”, “Kościół i kultura w dialogu”, “Portrety Jana Pawła II”, “Słowo w kulturze współczesnej”, and “Dokąd zmierzamy”) and numerous articles. He is a French, Italian, Spanish, and Polish translator, a member of the Catholic Association of Journalists, of the Association of Polish Moral Theologians, of the Polish Association of Cultural Studies, of the Scientific Committee of the „Kultura-Media-Teologia” journal, and of the International Council of the Europe of the 21st Century Series, and an Associate of Radio Poland and of Polish Television.

³³ John Paul II, The Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, Krakow 2005, no. 33.

³⁴ *Ibidem* 47.