



THE POLISH  
CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY  
IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

# Mieczysław Gogacz

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I.

MIECZYŚLAW GOGACZ:  
PERSON AND WORK

## TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Brdc** – *Okruszyiny* [Breadcrumbs]. Niepokalanów: Wydawnictwo Ojców Franciszkanów, 1993.
- BU** – *Podstawy wychowania* [Basics of Upbringing]. Niepokalanów: Wydawnictwo Ojców Franciszkanów, 1993.
- CT** – *W kierunku tomizmu konsekwentnego* [Towards a Consequent Thomism]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW, 2013.
- DI** – *Obrona intelektu* [The Defense of Intellect]. Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1969.
- DNL** – *Ciemna noc miłości* [Dark Night of Love]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 1985.
- DTA** – *Niepełnosprawność. Aspekty teologiczne* [Disability: Theological Aspects]. Warszawa: Pallottinum, 1991 [co-author A. Andrzejuk].
- EC** – *Istnieć i poznawać* [To Exist and to Cognize]. Warszawa: Pax, 1969, 1976<sup>2</sup>.
- EPP** – *Ku etyce chronienia osób. Wokół podstaw etyki* [Towards the Ethics of Protecting People: On the Basics of Ethics]. Warszawa: Pallottinum, 1991.
- GL** – *Największa jest miłość* [The Greatest is Love]. Warszawa/Struga–Kraków: Michalineum, 1988.
- HMI** – *On ma wzrastać* [He Must Increase]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek-Benedyktynek, 1965, 1973<sup>2</sup>, 1975<sup>3</sup>, 1990<sup>4</sup>.
- HP** – *Historia filozofii w poszukiwaniu realizmu* [The History of Philosophy in the Search for Realism]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW, 2011.
- IE** – *Wprowadzenie do etyki chronienia osób* [Introduction to the Ethics of Defending a Person]. Warszawa: B.R.J. Navo, 1995, 1997<sup>2</sup>.
- IM** – *Elementarz metafizyki* [Introduction to Metaphysics], second edition. Suwałki: Wyższa Szkoła Służby Społecznej im. ks. Franciszka Blachnickiego, 1996.
- MHR** – *Człowiek i jego relacje. Materiały do filozofii człowieka* [A Man and His Relations: Notes to the Philosophy of Man]. Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1985.
- OPP** – *Wokół problemu osoby* [On the Problem of the Person]. Warszawa: Pax, 1974.
- PA** – *Platonizm i arystotelizm. Dwie drogi do metafizyki* [Platonism and Aristotelism: Two Paths to Metaphysics]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa ATK, 1996.
- PAM** – *Filozoficzne aspekty mistyki* [Philosophical Aspects of Mystics]. Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1985.
- PM** – *Modlitwa i mistyka* [Prayer and Mystics]. Kraków–Warszawa/Struga: Michalineum, 1987.
- PSP** – *Osoba zadaniem pedagogiki. Wykłady bydgoskie* [Pedagogy in Service of the Person: Bydgoszcz Lectures]. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Navo, 1997.

- SC** – *Szkice o kulturze* [Sketches on Culture]. Kraków–Warszawa/Struga: Michalineum, 1985.
- SG** – *Poszukiwanie Boga. Wykłady z metafizyki Absolutnego Istnienia* [Searching for God: The Lectures on Metaphysics of Absolute Existence]. Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1976.
- SL** – *Życie społeczne w duchu Ewangelii* [Social Life in the Spirit of Gospel] (Episteme, vol. 59). Olecko: Wydawnictwo Wszechnicy Mazurskiej, 2006.
- WBS** – *Mądrość buduje państwo. Człowiek i polityka – Rozważania filozoficzne i religijne* [Wisdom Builds the State: A Man and Politics – Philosophical and Religious Reflection]. Niepokalanów: Wydawnictwo Ojców Franciszkanów, 1993.



1.

# BIOGRAPHICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Mieczysław Gogacz was born on 17 November 1926<sup>1</sup> in Nadroże near Rypin in Dobrzyń Land, where his parents Szczepan and Marianna Gogacz, née Gołębiewska, ran a shop with colonial goods. He started his elementary education in Nadroże and completed it in Obory, where his parents had moved in 1934. During the occupation, Mieczysław worked at the post office in Rypin. He continued his interrupted education after the war ended.

He finished middle school with the so-called 'small matura' (exam after 9<sup>th</sup> grade) in Rypin where the Gogacz family had moved after the war. He received his matriculation examination (the so-called 'big matura') in an episcopal secondary school in Płock in 1949. He then chose to study philosophy at the philosophy faculty of the Catholic University of Lublin, the only Catholic university in Poland at that time. He attended the lectures of Stanisław Adamczyk on metaphysics, theodicy and cosmology, Antoni Korcik's on logic and the general methodology of sciences, and Wojciech Feliks Bednarski's on ethics. At the end of his studies he attended the newly introduced classes of Stanisław Kamiński on logic and Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec's on metaphysics. He received his MA degree in 1952 on the basis

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<sup>1</sup> The Professor's mother, Marianna Gogacz née Gołębiewska (1905–2005), recalled that her son's date of birth was recorded incorrectly. She says that he was born on 11 November, i.e. 6 days earlier than stated on the birth certificate.

of his dissertation entitled *Definition of movement by Aristotle*, written under Adamczyk's supervision. He received his doctoral degree in 1954 on the basis of the public defense of his dissertation entitled *Philosophy of existence in 'Beniamin maior' of Richard of Saint Victor*, written under Swieżawski's supervision. The dissertation was reviewed by M.A. Krąpiec and Aleksander Usowicz. After the doctorate, he taught classes delegated to him by the Catholic University of Lublin (Polish: KUL). After the October '56 thaw he received a one-year scholarship from the French government which allowed him to study at the Sorbonne and do research in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris from March to September 1957. From France he went to the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto to undertake specialized studies with the most prominent historian of philosophy of those times, and a man who revealed the real face of Saint Thomas Aquinas' philosophy (existential Thomism)—Étienne Gilson (from September 1957 to May 1958). Upon his return he was first appointed to the position of teaching assistant and then assistant professor at the philosophy faculty of KUL. He submitted his habilitation colloquium at the philosophy faculty of KUL on 18 October 1960 on the basis of his dissertation entitled *The problem of God at Anselm of Canterbury and the problem of truth at Henry of Ghent*. The dissertation was reviewed by Stefan Swieżawski, Izydora Dąmbska and Lech Kalinowski. In 1962 the board of the faculty granted a docent's degree to Mieczysław Gogacz. From October 1966 he took a full-time position as a senior lecturer at the philosophy department of the Christian Academy of Catholic Theology (Polish: ATK) in Warsaw, to which he was invited by the former dean of KUL and, from 1956, the ATK's rector Józef Iwanicki. He was appointed a full-time docent<sup>2</sup> on 10 December that year. On 6 July 1973 he was appointed to the position of associate professor by the Polish Council of State and on 17 September 1982 to the position of ordinary professor. Gogacz worked at ATK, where he led the specialization of the History of Philosophy, until his retirement in 1997. After 1990, due to the changes in Poland, he began teaching philosophy classes, mainly realist philosophy and ethics at Warsaw University, Warsaw Medical Academy and the Military University of Technology.

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<sup>2</sup> In pre-war Poland and during the communist era, 'docent' was an intermediary post between assistant professor and associate professor.

Mieczysław Gogacz is a member of many national and foreign scientific societies, including: the Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale, the International Society of Neoplatonic Studies, the International Society for Metaphysics, Società Tommaso d'Aquino, and the scientific society of KUL, and was also the co-founder (1981) of the Thomistic Scientific Society in Warsaw.

In 1996, Pope John Paul II awarded Gogacz with the rank of Commander with Star of the Order of St. Pope Sylvester. Cardinal Józef Glemp, Primate of Poland, was appointed as the decorator. An official presentation of the award took place in the Archcathedral Basilica in Warsaw during a pontificate mass on Easter Sunday in 1997. In November 2006, on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, he received congratulatory letters from the President of the Republic of Poland, professor Lech Kaczyński, and prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski. Since 2007, the Professor Mieczysław Gogacz award has been given to the best MA dissertation in philosophy referring to the widely understood Thomism. The award has a nation-wide scope and professor Gogacz is the honorary chairman of the Chapter. On 17 November 2012, on his 86<sup>th</sup> birthday, Gogacz was awarded a Gratae Memoriae Signum Universitatis of his *alma mater*—the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin—and in 2016, for his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, he received special letters from the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, and the Minister of National Defence, Antoni Macierewicz.

## THE INTELLECTUAL FORMATION OF MIECZYŚLAW GOGACZ

The intellectual formation of Mieczysław Gogacz is multifaceted and complex. He was born in a traditional Polish Catholic family in an area with a strong German minority. He read the Catholic press and learnt German as a small child. He lived next door to the Carmelite monastery in Obory—a place which influenced the whole area with its spirituality—and the young Gogacz became additionally involved with it by serving as an altar boy. He also found his first confessor and spiritual guide there. Carmelite spirituality, which he valued greatly all his life, constitutes chronologically the first layer of his spiritual formation. The second was philosophy, the so-called Roman Thomism, which he learnt about when he was in secondary school.

This was a common philosophical orientation in the Church and Gogacz distanced himself from it during his Lublin studies in favour of existential Thomism. Nevertheless, he devoted all his diploma theses to different topics: Aristotle's philosophy (MA degree), the School of St. Victor from the twelfth century (doctorate) and the philosophy of Anselm of Canterbury from the eleventh century as well as of Henry of Ghent from the thirteenth century (habilitation). Existential Thomism 'was born' first at KUL (Catholic University of Lublin) during private, academic meetings which were initiated by the dean of philosophy at that time—Lech Malinowski. The participants were, at first, Stefan Swieżawski, Mieczysław A. Krąpiec and (occasionally) Wojciech F. Bednarski. Over time, they were joined by Karol Wojtyła and Stanisław Kamiński. This version of Thomism soon became a subject of Swieżawski's and Krąpiec's lectures, and it gave rise to a disagreement with a representative of traditional Thomism and Gogacz's MA supervisor, Stanisław Adamczyk. However, existential Thomism won and Gogacz presented this version in his lectures on the philosophy of existence (they have been published in the book *Ważniejsze zagadnienia metafizyki*<sup>3</sup>). The history of philosophy and of existential Thomism are therefore two further layers of the intellectual formation of Gogacz. They were expanded during his studies under Étienne Gilson in Toronto. In addition, Gilson focused his Polish student's attention on medieval Arab philosophy, especially on the philosophy of Avicenna, which had a profound and until then unexamined influence on Thomas Aquinas himself and his followers—Thomists. During his studies abroad, Gogacz deepened his religious formation, in particular through his pilgrimage to the Holy Land (without the necessary documents) with a group of French students, supervised by their chaplain Jean-Marie Lustiger. After his return to Poland he cooperated closely with professor Swieżawski at KUL, co-creating what later came to be known as the Lublin Philosophical School. An important event in Catholic Church life was the Second Vatican Council. Swieżawski was its secular auditor and Wojtyła one of the fathers, just like other Polish bishops associated with KUL. Gogacz was keenly interested in the Council's work, reacted to its various decisions and popularized them in the Catholic press. His enthusiasm towards the

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<sup>3</sup> Lublin, 1973. The book had been written many years earlier but it took a long time to publish it.

*aggiornamento* of the Church faded a bit over time when it turned out that, within the so-called ‘spirit of the Council’, the philosophy and theology of Thomism was strongly negated in favour of various trends of contemporary thought. At that time he intensified his research on various philosophical topics in Thomas Aquinas’ texts, which he started after his doctorate thesis. This was connected with the rise of various propositions specifying the description of existential Thomism which led to the emergence of consistent Thomism. This source research on Aquinas’ texts constitutes another layer of the intellectual formation of Gogacz. In each of these layers one can identify several contexts. For example, in the history of philosophy it is Aristotelianism and Thomism, as well as various forms of Neoplatonism: from Proclus to Marsilio Ficino and a reflection on the methodology of the history of philosophy. It is worth mentioning that the young Gogacz was interested in literature (especially poetry) and music and he was fascinated by art and architecture. He even studied architecture for some time at the Art History faculty of KUL. In time, he focused more on his philosophical studies, but during his retirement he collected and published poems which he had written in his youth. He also made literary attempts to write prose in his religious books,<sup>4</sup> and one of them was shaped into an autothematic novel.<sup>5</sup>

The teachers who had the biggest impact on Mieczysław Gogacz were the following:

1. Stanisław Adamczyk (1900–1971): A graduate of the Roman Gregorianum who, until the end of his life, remained under the influence of traditional Thomism in which epistemological problems prevailed; in metaphysics the main issue was the nature of existence. After the Second World War, Adamczyk became a metaphysics lecturer at KUL. In his didactic work he preferred the reading of original

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. *Ciemna strona miłości* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> *Jak traci się miłość (Esej ascetyczny)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, 1982). The cover for this book was designed by Janusz Kapusta, a Polish graphic artist, painter and set decorator, and an inventor of the geometric figure called a *k-dron*. Kapusta studied philosophy with Gogacz. In 1981 he went to the US, and he currently lives in New York. He cooperates with magazines such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *Graphis* and *Rzeczpospolita*.

texts which were thoroughly analyzed. It focused his attention on existential threads not only in Thomas Aquinas' philosophy but also in Aristotle's. He did not consider them, however, in accordance with his school's assumptions, as important for philosophy. Under his supervision Gogacz prepared an MA dissertation on the philosophy of Aristotle in 1952; however, Adamczyk did not allow Gogacz to prepare a doctorate on the philosophy of existence for his seminar, arguing that laymen should not deal with metaphysics. However, it is Adamczyk who can be given credit for Gogacz's impressive historical and philosophical erudition and the first thorough readings of Thomas Aquinas—he learnt from him to read into those texts and disregard other researchers' opinions on studied texts.

2. Stefan Swieżawski (1907–2004): Swieżawski was deeply attached to Catholicism, which was a formative religion for him in his family home (and which he never abandoned despite studying at the university in Lvov in a laicising community, which created the Lvov-Warsaw School). He attended the lectures of Kazimierz Twardowski, Roman Ingarden, Kazimierz Wais and prepared a doctorate under the supervision of Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz (1932). During and after his work on his doctorate topic on the philosophy of Duns Scotus, he spent time in Paris where he studied under Gilson and Maritain. It was due to their influence that he became interested in existential Thomism. During the Second World War he hid at an estate belonging to his father-in-law and Count Adam Stadnicki, where he prepared a habilitation and translation of the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas. He did his habilitation in Thomism right after the war at the university in Poznań. Next he was hired by KUL. He worked there until he retired. He was a brilliant educationalist and a master of philosophical technique—he educated many Polish philosophers and historians of philosophy. Gogacz considered Swieżawski his most important teacher and felt very attached to him. They went their separate ways in a natural manner: while Gogacz concentrated more on Thomism, Swieżawski focused on his research on Renaissance philosophy.

3. Mieczysław A. Krąpiec (1921–2008): Krąpiec came from Podole, from a village where Ukrainian nationalists had killed all the Polish people; Krąpiec escaped death because, in 1939, he joined the Dominican

Order, and during the war he took part in a secret philosophy and theology course in Kraków. Under Jacek Woroniecki's supervision he prepared a doctorate in philosophy (1946) and at the same time started theological studies at KUL, where he also completed a doctorate (1948). He did his habilitation in Thomism at KUL in 1957 where he had been teaching metaphysics for some years. Krąpiec quickly became the main representative of Polish Thomism, putting aside its other versions (traditional, Louvain, transcendental). He wrote a whole series of monumental, academic course books concerning almost all the main philosophical disciplines. He was also a dean of philosophy at KUL twice and five times a rector of the same university (1970–1983). During his retirement he initiated the establishment of the Thomas Aquinas International Society (SITA), where he started an intensive publishing, journalistic and popularising activity. Krąpiec's last initiative was publishing a thirteen-volume encyclopedia of philosophy entitled *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii* (nine volumes + supplements), two volumes of an encyclopedia of Polish philosophy entitled *Encyklopedia Filozofii Polskiej*, and a one-volume dictionary and philosophy guidebook entitled *Słownik-przewodnik filozoficzny*. Six years after Krąpiec's death, the accusations that he had cooperated with the communist, political militia while he was a dean emerged. It triggered a heated discussion in which the specificities of the functioning of KUL during the communist years were brought back to light, together with the necessity of cooperating with the power which was totalitarian and controlled all areas of people's lives. Mieczysław Gogacz got to know Krąpiec's version of existential Thomism, and this is the version which he later distanced himself from while developing his lecture on Thomist philosophy. Krąpiec's thought was always the main reference point in his own philosophical search.

4. Étienne Gilson (1884–1978): A great philosopher and historian of philosophy, one of the co-founders of existential Thomism. He studied at the Jesuit College and Henry IV Lyceum (Lycée Henri-IV) where he learnt Greek and Latin thoroughly as well as became acquainted with both classical and modern literature. He studied at the Sorbonne College in France, listening to Durkheim, Bergson and Lévy-Bruhl, under whose supervision he prepared a doctorate thesis concerning the connections between Descartes' philosophy and theology in 1913 (*La doctrine cartésienne de la liberté et la théologie*).

While looking for solutions to certain problems which Descartes was considering, he became interested in scholastic thought, especially the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. In 1919 he published the book *Thomism. An Introduction to St Thomas Aquinas' Philosophy* in which he proved an existential character of St. Thomas' philosophy, which was a radical opposition to its existing, essentialist interpretations. This book gave him fame and drew a wave of criticism from left-wing circles as well as conservative ones. He lectured at the Sorbonne, at the Collège de France, at Harvard University, and co-founded the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto, where he worked from the end of the war until his retirement. He participated in the UN Charter conference in San Francisco and the founding conference of UNESCO in London. In Toronto he founded scholarships for students from Poland who were directed to him by professor Swieżawski. Gogacz benefited from such a scholarship in the 1957–58 academic year. He owed the deepening of his knowledge of St. Thomas Aquinas' texts and his interest in medieval Arab philosophy to Gilson. Being under the influence of the Lublin school of methodology (especially that of Stanisław Kamiński), he did not accept Gilson's concept of Christian philosophy, but at the same time respected him and expressed gratitude to him.

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF MIECZYŚLAW GOGACZ

Most of Mieczysław Gogacz's life was spent in unfavourable social and political conditions—his childhood and education were brutally interrupted by the German occupation, which was extremely cruel towards Poles in that region because Germans annexed those areas into the Reich as so-called Ostpreußen (East Prussia) and treated Poles as undesirable immigrants. Many of Gogacz's teachers were murdered in the first days of September, just like many Polish priests and secular intellectuals (as part of *Intelligenzaktion*). During most of the occupation, parents were protecting their children against deportation to forced labour in Germany. Mieczysław was saved by working at the post office in Rypin, but his father was regularly taken to do some odd jobs for the occupiers. At the end of the war his sister Tekla, two years younger than him, was also taken to dig ditches. This is how he



described his interrupted education to young people who were interviewing him:

Before the Second World War I completed five grades of elementary school, and I was able to read *Rycerz Niepokalanej* [Knight of the Immaculate].<sup>6</sup> Then there was a war. There were very few Polish books. One could end up in prison for owning Polish books in Bydgoszcz Voivodeship. We were not allowed to speak Polish. In my hometown Rypin we had to speak German. However, there were ... Psalms. Therefore, at the age of twelve I started to read Psalms. I learnt Catholic asceticism from them, the theory of religious life because it can be found mainly in Psalms. I learnt the theory of referring God to a man and a man to God. Until this day I read the Bible in this ascetical aspect, in the aspect of raising a man by God.<sup>7</sup>

After the entry of the Soviets and the advent of the so-called Polish People's Republic (Polish: PRL), on the one hand there ceased to be a direct threat to life, and children could continue their education, but on the other hand, the Gogacz family, as store owners, became "natural" enemies of the new communist authorities, as a result of which their store was quickly nationalized. It was one of the reasons for which Mieczysław Gogacz chose a Catholic (episcopal) secondary school in Płock as a place for his further studies. It is also possible that Gogacz thought about joining the priesthood later. He managed to complete the secondary school of his choice before its liquidation, but the right to conduct matriculation examinations there had been withdrawn from the school even earlier. Therefore, Gogacz and his schoolmates took their matriculation examinations as external students in a state-owned secondary school in Płock. During the examinations the interviewers focused on science, whereas the Catholic secondary school had a classical profile (with a great number of hours dedicated to Latin, Greek and philosophy). The purpose of it was to prove the low level of teaching in the Catholic secondary school. Nonetheless, Gogacz passed his matriculation examination (having also experienced "forced training" on the occasion aimed at changing the students' outlook on the world) and he did not have any problems

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<sup>6</sup> A religious monthly, published before the war by Maksymilian Maria Kolbe in Niepokalanow; it resumed after the war but was soon closed by communists (1952), before being resumed in exile (1971) and in Poland in 1981.

<sup>7</sup> DTA, p. 37.

with choosing the path for his further studies—he opted to study at the sole Catholic university in Poland tolerated by the communists, that is, at the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL). The period of his studies fell in the era of the most severe Stalinist terror against the Catholic University of Lublin—a number of university professors were arrested and arrests were also carried out among the students. Paradoxically, however, the situation which the authorities created favoured the intellectual development of the students of the Catholic University of Lublin, because the most outstanding Polish philosophers who had been removed from state universities would go to teach exactly there, more or less regularly. Thus, the young Mieczysław Gogacz met Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Roman Ingarden, Izydora Dąmbska and others. At that time, he soon made friends with M.A. Krapiec (a metaphysician and a long-term rector of the Catholic University of Lublin) and K. Wojtyła (a lecturer on ethics in that period), as well as with Antoni B. Stępień, who later became his brother-in-law, that is, the husband of his sister Tekla. This is how he recalls the conversations of that time:

So, in those private conversations several topics prevailed. Primarily, Christian asceticism, but such that should meet the requirements of today's medicine, the concept of a human being and of human health... The second topic was an important problem for asceticism: namely, whether any entry to the seminary is a vocation to the priesthood... Next—the ways to show people, in the ascetic perspective, the magnificence of human contacts with God. ... In addition to the ones I mentioned, we also reflected upon the reasons for people abandoning Christianity. I remember long conversations on those subjects which continued for weeks and weeks.<sup>8</sup>

Mieczysław Gogacz did not neglect his religious education, either: “during the time of my studies”—he recalls—“I read the *Epistles of St. Paul*. ... I had studied all his letters. It seems to me that I can feel and understand the theology contained in those letters. And I know the *Psalms*. ... These are my interests. Not typical, but simply Catholic.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> M. Filipiak and A. Szostek, ed., *Obecność. Karol Wojtyła w Katolickim Uniwersytecie Lubelskim* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1989), pp. 152–153.

<sup>9</sup> DTA, pp. 37–38.

As a result of the October thaw, he was able to go away to study abroad in France and Canada and he made the most of it, but for prolonging his stay in Canada beyond the allowed time he was punished with a ten-year ban on leaving Poland.

The independent scientific and didactic activity of Gogacz was connected with the Warsaw Academy of Catholic Theology (Polish: ATK). It was the second Catholic university in Poland, after KUL, organized in 1954 by the communists themselves, representing theological faculties that had been removed from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and from the University of Warsaw. This was accomplished during the internment of the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, when the position of the chairman of the episcopate was held by the bishop of Łódź, Michał Klepacz, who approved the new university canonically. After being released from the internment in 1956, Primate Wyszyński did not withdraw that approval, and, after the next few years, he renegotiated the conditions for the functioning of the university with the communists (he demanded it be opened to secular students, because the communists wanted it to be a university only for church personnel, like the tsarist Roman Catholic Theological Academy in St. Petersburg). Gogacz joined that university in 1966 as an independent research worker. That happened not without difficulties on the part of the communist officials—Gogacz was denied the recognition of his habilitation.<sup>10</sup> It was explained to him that the habilitation had been recognized, but exclusively for KUL. For this reason, for many years Gogacz was treated at ATK as if he had no habilitation, which gave rise to certain difficulties in his functioning at the university. At that university he was active throughout the grim period of the Polish People's Republic—the rules of Gomułka (1966–1970), Gierek (1970–1980) and

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<sup>10</sup> Habilitation in the Polish system of academic degrees follows the doctoral degree and is the beginning of scientific independence—a “habilitated doctor” is a full member of the scientific council. He or she may chair a university department, conduct diploma theses, write reviews for academic degrees, and issue opinions on publications. Until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the habilitation awarded at the university required approval by a special central state office; it was used to block the careers of individual scientists, as well as the development of entire scientific institutions, such as the Catholic University of Lublin, where employees waited for years for the approval of their habilitations, which often became a bargaining chip in the negotiations of the Catholic Church with the communists.

Jaruzelski (1980–1990). In his scientific work, he focused on the study of Thomism and on the texts and philosophical orientations which seemed important to an understanding of Thomas Aquinas, e.g. *Liber de causis*, or medieval Arabic philosophy. In addition, he popularized philosophy through his attractive lectures and articles on religion, in which he dealt with the issue of a person's religious life. Thanks to these publications and speeches he became relatively well-known in Catholic environments. Then, his interest in mysticism attracted the attention of hippie circles for whom he conducted retreats and lectures in Warsaw churches.<sup>11</sup> Later, many students of ATK came from these milieus.

Mieczysław Gogacz decided not to engage in politics. He consistently refused to join the organization of “secular Catholics” which constituted an “extension” of the ruling Communist Party. He suffered specific consequences for this—the refusal to print his books or to grant him scholarships, or his omission when various goods were divided. He did not engage in active anti-communist activities (apart from criticizing Marxism in lectures and in publications in which he was able to include such criticism, despite censorship). He also discouraged his students from taking part in active opposition activities, arguing that people studying normal classical philosophy are so few that they should not risk being imprisoned. However, when it was necessary, he defended the persecuted students. While still at KUL, he participated in secret studies with the seminarians who had been taken to the army from the seminary (this was a form of persecuting the Church in those days, because the communists hoped that many of the seminarians would not return to the seminary after two years

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<sup>11</sup> As the Catholic Church was the only institution relatively independent from the communist authorities, all initiatives which were not undertaken or regulated by the authorities were carried out in church buildings. That is why so many initiatives, not necessarily of a religious nature, in the period of the Polish People's Republic took place in the Church. Gogacz's unofficial lectures were also usually held in churches or church halls. Only in 1981 (as part of the so-called “Carnival of Solidarity,” covering the time from the August strikes in 1980 to the imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981) was he invited to the famous Riviera-Remont student club for the first time (it was also a kind of discussion club). It is worth noting that the communist political militia (Security Service) used to monitor that kind of activity by Gogacz and made sure he was aware of that (the militia often approached him and checked his ID when he was leaving lectures or retreats), however, it did not actively disturb this activity.

of military service). In Warsaw, he courageously stood up for the students expelled from the university for participating in the events of June 1976 (anti-communist uprisings by the inhabitants of Radom and by the employees of the Ursus tractor factory near Warsaw). He fell victim to moral harassment by ATK authorities of the time. In 1980, he was one of the founding members of the Solidarity movement at ATK. During the martial law, he was not particularly persecuted,<sup>12</sup> however, as a result, he lost a whole group of talented students and graduates who—taking advantage of the “Carnival of Solidarity” in 1980 and 1981—had gone to Western countries on scholarships, and it was during their sojourn abroad that martial law was declared. The overwhelming majority of them never returned to Poland. After 1990, i.e. after the collapse of communism and Poland’s regaining of its sovereignty, Gogacz obtained a better opportunity to influence people: he was regularly invited to give lectures at various universities. For a year he conducted an open series of lectures on realistic philosophy at the University of Warsaw, and for a few years he taught the version of Thomistic ethics elaborated by himself, which he called the “ethics of protecting people,” at the Medical Academy in Warsaw (with Kazimierz Szalata) and at the Military Technical Academy (with Artur Andrzejuk). He regularly visited the Pedagogical College in Bydgoszcz as a lecturer.<sup>13</sup> However, along with the

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<sup>12</sup> Clergymen and people associated with church institutions, such as Gogacz, were, in the Polish People’s Republic, considered citizens of a lower category, subject to the guardianship of the specially appointed Office for Religious Affairs (representing the level of the Ministry). All their private and professional matters were controlled and dealt with (often negatively) by that Office, which was a part of the state’s control and repression apparatus towards religion and which closely cooperated with the Security Service. Sometimes, people connected with the apparatus of repression undertook various “private” activities aimed at making life more difficult for people stigmatized by the authorities (these were the so-called “*Schweinchen*,” according to the well-known expression of Joachim Gauck). For example, in Gogacz’s block of flats, there lived an officer of the Polish army (with the rank of colonel!) who regarded tormenting Gogacz as his “class” duty. That led to the housing cooperative taking various negative decisions against Gogacz, and the said colonel even intimidated Gogacz’s neighbours for extending minor courtesies to him.

<sup>13</sup> That activity is documented by the following books: *Wprowadzenie do etyki chronienia osób* (Warszawa: B.R.J. Navo, 1995), which at first was a course book for the students of the Military University of Technology, and the collection of texts on pedagogy entitled *Osoba zadaniem pedagogiki. Wykłady bydgoskie* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Navo, 1997).

systemic changes, there were a number of turbulences in other areas, such as the liquidation of magazines and publishing houses, and the university publishing houses experienced a crisis related to the radical market transformation. In this new situation, it was harder to reach readers, especially since the crisis also engulfed the book market: many bookstores disappeared (in the majority of smaller towns—totally).<sup>14</sup> Libraries also experienced a crisis. Small private publishing houses were set up by a group of Gogacz's students; one of them, the NAVO Publishing House, in its 10 years or so of activity, published several of Gogacz's recent books. In this new situation, he agreed to share all his work online ([www.katedra.uksw.edu.pl](http://www.katedra.uksw.edu.pl)) with completely free access. What is more, in other matters, thanks to a fairly good knowledge of the West and America, he became aware early on of the tendencies and directions of the changes in Poland. On the rising tide of the modernization of the country, which aimed at making Poland similar, as quickly as possible, to Western democracies, the accelerated process of secularization was introduced in Poland, along with a program, strongly supported by the media, for violating Christian moral values and for deforming the role of the family, mainly through the dissemination of an isolationist model of a man and a woman. Added to this was the promotion of abortion and euthanasia as the rights to “decent life” and “decent death.”

Mieczysław Gogacz made a special effort to respect the criterion of truth in political and social life, and opposed the promotion of relativism under the slogan of tolerance and democracy. He reminded his readers and listeners of the classic definition of tolerance as respect for other people's views or beliefs, expressed in allowing them to speak, which is a certain form of patience and understanding.

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<sup>14</sup> The representative bookshop in Warsaw—“Uniwersus”—was liquidated at the beginning of the 1990s. A bank was then established in the avant-garde building. It is worth mentioning that the history of this place can be a symbol of the Polish history of the last half-century: in the 1970s, one of the few surviving 19<sup>th</sup>-century tenement houses was demolished in order to build a modern exhibition pavilion of “Soviet technical know-how” there. After the construction of the building, following the “Solidarity Carnival” in 1980, the aforementioned bookstore was opened there. It survived the entire period of military rule (1981–1989) only to definitively cease to function after that time. Over the next quarter-century there were banks and offices there. Currently, the owner wants to demolish that modernist property (which has become disfigured by numerous advertisements and aerials) and to build an office block of a dozen or so storeys.

He believed that not all views and actions were included in it. He used to joke that there could be no tolerance for spelling mistakes. He actively defended the right to live by supporting anti-abortion initiatives—he appeared in the media, in parliamentary commissions, and assisted the team of the Supreme Medical Council in the development of the Code of Medical Ethics (first version of 1991).<sup>15</sup> With regard to the latter, and also in the broader context of the transformation of the Polish state, he addressed the subject of natural law and of its relation to the established law. He gave speeches on this subject in the media and in the bodies deciding on the new shape of the law.

To complete this picture, a few words should be dedicated to describing the financial situation of Gogacz. Like almost everyone in Poland, he did not have any property that would allow him to support himself (all such goods had been taken by the communists—even the modest shop belonging to the Gogacz family that sold imported foodstuffs and spices suffered the same fate). The basis for his maintenance was his salary as a lecturer and later a retirement pension, which gave Gogacz a tolerable existence; however, this was on the condition of many sacrifices: he did not start a family, he lived in a ten-storey tower block belonging to a housing cooperative, i.e. in the so-called “concrete-slab block of flats,” in a small apartment furnished modestly with mass-produced furniture, he had no car, he never went on holiday, he did not accumulate any property, and he did not have savings or even a private family library.

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<sup>15</sup> The Code was referred to the Constitutional Tribunal by Ewa Łętowska, the then Ombudsman, invoking, inter alia, the right to an abortion on demand, financed from public funds, the right for which had already been approved in the Polish People’s Republic (PRL). In response, the Tribunal invoked the fundamental distinction between the established law and moral principles and stated that it was not entitled to evaluate ethical proposals and that it could only evaluate legal provisions. The Constitutional Tribunal added also that the “establishing deontological standards did not belong to the nature of the state.” Therefore, the state was not entitled to recommend the establishment of such norms to anyone, including the authorities of the Medical Self-Government. The state can only recommend the creation of legal norms. The deontological standards as such do not have a legal nature. This is because they belong to the set of ethical norms “independent of the law” (Symbol art. U1/92, 7 October 1992).

## STUDY AREAS OF MIECZYŚLAW GOGACZ

### History of philosophy

Mieczysław Gogacz's works on the history of philosophy have already been mentioned. It is worth adding that he also dealt with the methodology of the history of philosophy, continuing and refining the approaches of Gilson and Swieżawski, who were supporters of the philosophical concept of the history of philosophy. Gogacz, as a historian of philosophy, began to purge Thomism of the elements of Arabic philosophy and created (as he himself called it) a consistent version of existential Thomism. Within this version of the philosophy of being, he relentlessly defends the theory of the act of existence and the principle of non-contradiction, the thesis about the distinctiveness and the internal unity of individual entities, as well as the realism and pluralism resulting from these assertions.

### Philosophy of being (metaphysics)

The object of the metaphysics of consistent Thomism is the principles (*archai*) of being, that is, the elements constituting an existing being. We experience them when, at the same time, the reality of this composition affects us. Now, when the question is asked about the source of reality and about the unity construed in the knowledge of the essence, it should first be noted that their source is certainly not the essence itself, since, as the cause of the identity of being, the essence cannot be at the same time the cause of its reality. That source must be the act of existence, constituting, together with the essence which it makes real and actualizes, an individual being. That—unlike existential judgement—discovering of the act of existence in a being is a characteristic element in the metaphysics of Gogacz.

The inner causes of the individual being are, therefore, the following: (1) the act of existence, which determines that the being is; (2) an essence which constitutes in a being what the being is; (3) in essence, the form is the principle of its permanent identity; and (4) the potency is the basis for the subjectification of accidents—the material potency subjects the physical properties, while the spiritual potency subjects the immaterial properties (e.g. intellect). Therefore, it is the existence that is the act of being, and the essence acts on it in a being-like



potency, whereas what constitutes the act within the essence is the form actualizing the shape of the potency inherent in the being.

Gogacz also draws attention to the need to reformulate the theory of final causes (in existential Thomism they are defined as causes functioning in the intentional order) and to identify them as contingent beings affecting the shaping of the potency sphere of being, the sphere of which, together with its existence, constitutes one real being. He also postulates the need to clarify the problem of the relation of creation, the concept of maintaining contingent beings in existence (*conservatio esse*), and the theory of the personal relationships of faith, hope, and love.

### **Philosophy of God and religion**

We detect the efficient cause by searching for the cause of the act of existence in a being. This act cannot be subsistent, because its relationship with the essence is permanent; however, it cannot come from the essence, because it would not differ from it, nor can it come from non-being, because non-being does not evoke anything. So, it must come from another being which is able to evoke (create) an act of existence. That being we call God. By analyzing the created existence, we can determine that God is one and also that God is a one-element being, because He Himself is the existence, thanks to which He is “capable” of existential relations. The issue of the essence of the Absolute is associated with the so-called God’s attributes. Gogacz, starting from the thesis that God is a Subsistent Act of Existence, assumes that the only real attributes of God are the manifestations of the act of existence (transcendentia): reality, distinctiveness, unity, truth, good and beauty. The other properties attributed to God result from comparing Him with other beings (axiological attributes), e.g. infinity, omnipotence or eternity, and treating God as an object of human love (eminent attributes), e.g. the statement that for someone God is everything, his or her entire world, etc.

### **Theory of a person and personal relations**

The starting point for formulating the definition of a person was for Gogacz the clarifications by Thomas Aquinas regarding the definition formulated by Boethius. Gogacz pointed out that Aquinas, by formulating several terms for the person and describing it from different

points of view, wanted to indicate the elements that determined being a person (*constitutiva personae*). They are the following: existence and intellectuality. In time, he added the subjectivity of personal relations to these constitutive elements, hence, he wrote, “a person is such an intelligent being who, at the same time, loves.”<sup>16</sup> This was connected with the development of the issue of personal relations, the most primordial mutual references of people directly subjected to the manifestations of existence. Love subjected by the property of reality is the basic kindness and acceptance. Faith, built on the property of truth, is, first of all, trust and openness. Hope is an expectation that kindness and trust will last between people. On the basis of the theory of personal relations, understood in this manner, it is possible to better determine the most important communities for people: family and nation. Ethics also clearly seems to be the science of the principles of protecting people and their interrelationships. These relations, built on the manifestations in a being of its existence, are the original, initial and most natural references between persons, just as the most original and initial reference in beings is existence. Humanism, according to Gogacz, means the relations of love, faith and hope which connect a human being with other people; religion means relations with the Divine Persons. Ethics and the philosophy of the human being are connected with the theory of a person and personal relations.

### Ethics

Gogacz describes ethics as a theory of the principles of protecting people and personal relations. He believes that these principles should be sought within a person and that, therefore, they are constituted by conscience together with contemplation and wisdom. In addition, ethics is the theory of values, which represent for him the duration of personal relations, and also the theory of culture and metanoia (a humanistic transformation of thinking and acting). The problem of obligation is shifted from ethics to law.

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<sup>16</sup> M. Gogacz, *Osoba zadaniem pedagogiki. Wykłady bydgoskie* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Navo, 1997), p. 69 (Internet edition).

### **Philosophy of the human being (philosophical anthropology)**

The Thomistic analysis of the structure of the human being indicates the act of existence as the first principle of every being, including a human being. The essence of a human being, that is, what a human being is, is composed of a form inherent in a human being, as a principle with a nature of an act which determines the permanent human identity. In addition to the form, in the essence of a human being, there is potency which individualizes the human being. It is the basis for acquiring accident, e.g. cognition, decisions. A “part” of this potency becomes matter by acquiring extent and by subjecting (inheriting) physical accidents. From the point of view of the aforesaid accidents, Gogacz distinguishes the spiritual potency and the material potency in a human being. They are the basis of what is traditionally referred to as the soul and the body.

### **Pedagogy**

Mieczysław Gogacz proposes to take as a basis for ethics and pedagogy the understanding of a human being as a person, that is, as a rational and free being. This points to the anthropological and ethical foundations of pedagogy. Human philosophy determines the subject of educational activities. Ethics defines the purposes of education. Pedagogy itself, in this situation, is a theory of the principles of education. Hence:

- (1) The object of pedagogy is the methods of obtaining human improvements for protective actions, i.e. for ethical behaviour;
- (2) The methods which pedagogy develops independently, while remaining in continuous contact with anthropology and ethics, make up the theories of education and upbringing;
- (3) The purpose of pedagogy is to obtain metanoia in a human being—a change in thinking and acting. The main moments of this change are the turn from things to people, and, consequently, the transition from the connections with things to the connections with people. Gogacz divides pedagogy into general and specific areas, and formulates the principles of education in each of these areas of pedagogy.

### **Theory of politics**

Gogacz differentiates here between the *raison d'état* and the political program. He considers the said *raison d'état* as a set of unchanging goals and tasks of the state, determined by the common good, which consists of the good of every human being and the good of all the people who constitute a nation. The individual good of a human being depends on its access to education and learning, which result in wisdom. The social good comes down to protecting relationships, above all, the personal relationships which bind communities of people. The *raison d'état* understood in this manner determines a political program as a specific way of implementing it.

### **Theology and mysticism**

Gogacz is mainly interested in the theory of religious life, understood as a bond of love, faith and hope connecting a human being with God. A prayer explained in this perspective appears to be an ascetic means which reveals and simplifies our relationship with God. The religious life of a human being, which is a relationship with God, has a dynamic course, described by St. John of the Cross as active purifications (our initiatives) and passive purifications (God's actions in our religious lives). The period in which these purifications overlap is a dark night, as it is full of human feelings of anxiety in reconciling the proposals of the human being with God's plans, and God's plans are not always legible in the signs of time. Gogacz associates the topic of mystical experience with the theology of internal life. He based the explanation of the mystical experience on the Thomistic understanding of the potency intellect as spiritual potency, which is the end of the intellectual cognitive understanding of the principles. That experience consists of the fact that God allows Himself to be understood by the potency intellect of a human being as the Subsistent Act of Existence. Thus, a human being does not receive any additional knowledge about God, only the certainty that God exists. Such an explanation is consistent with the descriptions of the mystical experience provided by the great Catholic mystics: St. Teresa of Ávila and St. John of the Cross.

### **Theory of culture**

For each period, Gogacz tries to find a set of initial and basic assertions in the structure of culture which define what reality is.

He believes that how we understand reality is dependent, in culture, on all the further layers of perspectives constituting that culture, such as the natural, sociological, artistic, pedagogical, ideological, or even theological, because theology is always the presentation and explanation of the Revelation in some understanding of reality. At the same time, Gogacz questions the placing of politics in the first position of importance among the areas constituting contemporary culture.