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ECCLESIAL SPIRITUALITY AGAINST THE THREATS OF UTILITARIANISM AND CONSUMERISM

Abstract. The paper presents ecclesial spirituality in opposition to anthropological threats brought about by utilitarianism and consumerism. It shows ecclesial spirituality from the angle of its (paradoxically) vertical fundament, derived from the “faith in the event” (Jean Daniélou) of the eternity plunging into the earthly sphere. It provokes the contemporary culture, contesting some of its canons. It also protects man against the expansion of those social trends which, reducing the status of a human person, answer its “desire for happiness” with offers such as: purchase, use and “letting off steam.” Utilitarianism and consumerism are animated by a spirit directed horizontally, leading man towards goods that are material, financial, ludic or prestige-oriented, characterized by short-term, “seasonal” usefulness. They do not bring the purchasers long-lasting satisfaction (of possessing and consuming), instead they raise “self-digesting passion,” which enforces a style of constant purchasing “something new” (fashionable today) and getting rid of “the old” (the previous season). Spirituality open to transcendence, based on evangelical vision of man and humanity faces the necessity of preserving its own identity from being contaminated by the “spirit of the times,” and of promoting anthropology in which man, multiplying goods (work, creativity, economics) uses them decently and honestly (ethical norms), preserving the ability to delay (“not now”) the experience of happiness and persistent (with faith) reaching for eternal perspectives.

Key words: ecclesial spirituality; utilitarianism; consumerism.

The specificity of ecclesial spirituality lies in its foundation which is unique as it is vertical. “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). This principle applies both to the nature of the Church and to its spirituality. The adjective “ecclesiastical” means that its content is part of the orthodox Tradition of the Church, including the current Magisterium, as well as the individual varieties of spirituality and theological schools which clarify the mysteries of faith according to their methods. The foundation of the Church, constituting its spirituality, is God’s Son who has de-

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scended from the Father and returns to Him in the Holy Spirit together with the redeemed creation.

This foundation, descending into temporality, to reconcile it with eternity, is unprecedented and has no equivalent in the great religions of the world. Jean Daniélou says that “Christianity is essentially faith in the event, whereas the great non-Christian religions maintain the existence of an eternal world that stands in opposition to the world of time. The fact of the eternal breaking into time, which gives it duration and turns it into history, is unknown to them.”¹ Furthermore, the status of worldliness is not known—integrating it with the eternal dimension—to those spaces of culture the “spirituality,” of which, devoid of a religious element, is oriented horizontally.

In this situation, “ecclesial spirituality” appears as a controversial social factor, provoking culture and contesting some of its canons. After all, the Church’s mission is to imbibe cultures with this (perpetual) spirituality, which may appear as “foreign,” inadequate to “the spirit of the time” creating reality using the tools of science and technology. Usability and consumption in the spaces of this culture are easy to find theoretical and practical justifications. However, the Christian vision of man “[...] particularly appreciates his spirituality. This leads to the belief that social life is spiritual, otherwise it would not be full and sound.”² Dignity, inscribed by the Creator in human nature, is “a criterion for the judgment of social order, which must also take into account the human weakness and limitations” that are the resultant of the individual sinfulness of the members of this community.³

Ethics, based on “secular” anthropologies, does not take into account the element of sin (which is a strictly theological category). It refers to different assumptions: “a man within it should be perceived as a creature endowed with a nature that is not evil, but rather good or neutral.”⁴ This results in a different logic of reasoning in the scope of the possibilities and goals of the activity of the human person and the community.

¹ Jean DANIELOU, *Von Geheimnis der Geschichte* (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1955), 128; quoted after: Joseph RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 40.

² Sławomir NOWOSAD, “Antropologia i życie społeczne [Anthropology and social life],” in IDEM, *Moralne konsekwencje wiary. Szkice anglikańskie* [Moral consequences of faith: Anglican sketches] (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2016), 118.

³ Ibid. The author refers to the Anglican concept: Vigo Auguste DEMANT, *A Two Way Religion: Talks on the Inner and Outer Life* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1957), 63.

⁴ Lesław HOSTYŃSKI, *Wartości utylitarne* [Utilitarian values] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1998), 223.

1. ECCLESIAL SPIRITUALITY IN ITS ESSENCE AND TARGETING

Ecclesial spirituality has a complex vertical-horizontal structure. Targeting *ad intra* meaning the striving to participate in the inner life of God, is inscribed in its essence. This means internalizing deeper than one's own "self," reaching "even the deep things of God" (see 1 Corinthians 2:10). On the threshold of the Third Millennium, Pope John Paul II emphasized this truth in his apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, presenting Christianity as a religion initiated by the mystery of the redeeming Incarnation and being "the religion of 'dwelling in the heart of God', of sharing in God's very life" (No. 8). The Holy Spirit, sent to the Church, "leads us, all mankind, into these depths by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ" (ibid.). The vertical orientation also exposes the *sursum* vector, complementing the perspective of communing with the *mystery* (the *ad intra*—*sursum* amplitude).

The inner and outer spirituality of a "new person" occurs in historical reality—covered by space and time—but ultimately aims at transcending these dimensions. The self-revelation of the Divine Persons—from the incarnation of the Son, through the intervention of the Father in the resurrection, to the sending of the Spirit—caused that "the time had fully come" (see Galatians 4:4). John Paul II asked rhetorically: "Eternity entered into time: what 'fulfillment' could be greater than this? (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, No. 9).

Such a "settlement" of God and the eternal dimension in the space of human life re-evaluates many human projects related to the development of land, temporality, and life. And if Revelation foreshadows the unification of a new earth with a new heaven (see Revelation 21:1-2), in a perfected form, man is faced with a unique offer of participation in the work that creates a new future for humanity by bringing a new order. The attitude of openness towards this God's project brings the person a certain splendor (faith, truth, good will), while rejection of God's plan places him in the space of the shadow, where the earthly perspective is preferred because of personal entanglement in "evil deeds" (John 3:19).

People choose different styles of going through reality, including those that José Luis Sicre⁵ called "tourist" and "prophetic." Tourists are satisfied with capturing the well-being of the inhabitants of a given region, beautiful public and private buildings, site offerings, salon services, etc. Prophets, reaching deeper and

⁵ Cf. José Luis SICRE, *Profetismo* (Roma, 1995), 418; quoted after: Cezary KORZEC, "Prorok wobec zła i władzy (2 Sm 12,9) [Prophet against evil and power (2 Sam 12,9)]," *Verbum Vitae* 14 (2008): 37.

having different criteria for judgment, also perceive the exploitation, lying, wickedness etc. that are present in the lives of the inhabitants. For example, the prophet Nathan, seeing that the power allows David to hide the great sin he had committed, courageously exposed the evil and persuaded the king to repent of his sins. It can be said that the prophetic vision binds the “eternal principles” with “current facts,” which allows us to unmistakably discern the “importance” of facts.

Nowadays, many people seem to be losing hope that their personal fate, the fate of the country or the terrestrial globe will change for the better. Symptoms of losing hope are part of the so-called death culture. However, since “man cannot live without hope” (*Ecclesia in Europa*, No. 10), he places it in visions of “paradise” drawn by ideologies or associates it “with a hedonistic natural felicity brought about by consumerism, or with the imaginary and artificial euphoria produced by drugs, with certain forms of millenarianism, with the attraction of oriental philosophies, with the quest for forms of esoteric spirituality and with the different currents of the *New Age* movement. All these, however, show themselves profoundly illusory and incapable of satisfying that yearning for happiness which the human heart continues to harbour.” (ibid.)

The core of the ecclesiastical spirituality is “life,” and more precisely “eternal life”—regarding the source and the ultimate goal. The fundamental Christian question can be reduced to the Gospel line: “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (see Luke 10:25, 18:18, Mark 10:17, Matthew 19:16). Thus, at the top of the pyramid of the values that the believer in Christ strives for is the category of “life.” It means that it cannot be “used” (sacrificed) for a lower value, but in the service of: God, love, truth, people, homeland, etc., as an act the essence of which is expressed as follows: “I lay it down of My own accord” (see John 10:18). The believer learns the value of his life⁶ by referring to the measure that God revealed, who “did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all” (see Romans 8:32). The believer comes to Christ with questions regarding life, because He is “an arrow indicating the direction in which man can fully realize himself”⁷ reaching eternal happiness.

In relation to Him—and also to the Father and the Spirit—we know that the world (the cosmos) “was created, not that there might be manifold things in heaven and earth, but that there might be a space for the covenant, for the loving ‘yes’ between God and his human respondent;”⁸ it is therefore “the setting in which the

⁶ St. Augustine, referring to John 7:16, says: “Mea doctrina non est mea”—see *In Ioannis Evangelium tractatus*, 29, 3; cf. Joseph RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 136. My “P” is not “mine.” So it is the least of everyone’s property.

⁷ Cf. Joseph RATZINGER, *Dogma und Verkündigung* (München:ewel, 1973), 218.

⁸ Joseph RATZINGER / BENEDICT XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week – From the Entrance Into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, part 2 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 47.

entire history of the love between God and his creation develops” (*Verbum Domini*, No. 9). Significant points in this story are the following facts (rooted in the eternal *mystery*): the incarnation and redemption of man. They cannot be included in “devised stories” (see 2 Peter 1:16), or in the category of “philosophical ideas.”⁹ “Creation is not a fall, but a positive act of God’s will. It is thus a movement of love, which in the process of descending demonstrates its true nature—motivated by love for the creature, love for the lost sheep—and in so descending it reveals what God is really like. On returning, Jesus does not strip away his humanity again as if it were a source of impurity.”¹⁰

Believers—in this spirit—look forward to the final solstice of history, having a feeling of wandering (*peregrinationis aerumna*—St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*) through a foreign space where God’s victory is not yet fully experienced. The contemplative dimension of Christian life is expressed in “looking towards eternity”—not yet seeing, but looking for trustfully and tasting “through desire.”¹¹ The weight and discomfort of mortality culminates in ecclesial spirituality at the meeting point of what is “horizontal” (*here and now*), that is, social, private, and temporal; with what is “vertical” (*not yet and not already*), that is, personal, full, eternal.

In the horizontal perspective, Christians are tempted to seek “their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 2:21). According to Pope Francis, this temptation takes on “many forms, depending on the kinds of persons and groups into which it seeps [...] it is based on carefully cultivated appearances” (see *Evangelii Gaudium*, No. 93) of piety, love of the Church, but it is a dangerous deformation of the spirit. Francis calls it “spiritual worldliness” aimed at human glory and personal (temporal) benefits, not the authentic “glory of the Lord.” It can be assumed that—as cardinal Henri de Lubac wrote—if it were to seep into the Church, “it would be infinitely more disastrous than any other worldliness which is simply moral.”¹² It closes man, both for God and for people, taking on the form of anthropocentric immanentism, deprived of evangelistic and evangelizing dyna-

⁹ Cf. Joseph RATZINGER, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005), 183: “The Incarnation is not a philosophical idea but a historical event, which in its very uniqueness and truth is the point at which God breaks into history and the place at which we come into contact with him. [...] God has associated himself with a quite specific point in history, with all its limitations, and wishes us to share in his humility. Allowing oneself to be associated with the Incarnation means accepting this self-limitation of God.”

¹⁰ J. RATZINGER/BENEDICT XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 246.

¹¹ Adalbert DE VOGUE, *To Desire Eternal Life: Hope Yesterday and Today* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 99

¹² Henri DE LUBAC, *Méditation sur l’Église* (Paris: Aubier, 1968), 321. Quoted after: Pope FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 93.

misms (see *Evangelii Gaudium*, No. 94). The fictitious actions then refer to selected areas of the Church's life (for example, an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church's prestige). However, they do not lead to the Gospel being fulfilled by the People of God or the current historical needs of the world. They focus on selected forms of "management, statistics, plans and evaluations whose principal beneficiary is not God's people but the Church as an institution" (*ibid.*, No. 95). In this situation, ecclesiastical spirituality loses its identity, becoming completely useless to the Church and the world. Activism, based on human scenarios only, signifies spiritual confusion—the simplification and flattening of the vision of man, especially regarding his calling to eternity.

Cardinal Ravasi noted that in the Book of Wisdom—written with a good knowledge of Greek beliefs¹³—there is a canticle chanted by the wicked, including an animist, materialistic and epicurean doctrine (Wisdom 2:2–3, 6–9):

We came into being by chance and afterwards shall be as though we had never been.
The breath in our nostrils is a puff of smoke, reason a spark from the beating of our hearts; extinguish this and the body turns to ashes, and the spirit melts away like the yielding air. [...]
'Come then, let us enjoy the good things of today, let us use created things with the zest of youth:
take our fill of the dearest wines and perfumes, on no account forgo the flowers of spring
but crown ourselves with rosebuds before they wither,
no meadow excluded from our orgy; let us leave the signs of our revelry everywhere,
since this is our portion, this our lot!'

When the figure of Solomon is mentioned in the book (see chapter 8-9), the perspective changes completely. Before God, he considers his own fate (I had received a good soul as my lot" - Wisdom 8:19), and he turns to Him for the gift of wisdom. According to Jean Chrysostome Larcher—an outstanding French commentator of the Book of Wisdom—in this context, the soul, designated by the Greek term "*psyche* takes on meaning that the term *nefesh* does not have: it became insistent, it took practically the place of these other psychological and organic factors (*ruah*, heart, other organs of the body) performing an important function in Hebrew anthropology. It seems much more separated from the body, much less immersed in the body than *nefesh*. It becomes rather—or in another way—a subject responsible for the moral life."¹⁴

¹³ See Gianfranco RAVASI, "Story of a Soul," in *The Encounter: Discovering God Through Prayer* (Charlotte, NC: Saint Benedict Press, 2014).

¹⁴ See Jean Chrysostome LARCHER, *Etudes sur le Livre de la Sagesse* (Paris: Gabalda, 1969); IDEM, *Le Livre de la Sagesse de Salomon*, vol. III, Paris: Gabalda, 1983-1985, quoted after: Gian-

It seems that at this stage of history the world in which we live has become such a space where “everything fights against the ‘festive’ soul, able to feel the trembling of the good, the light of transcendence, the fullness of love,”¹⁵ able to regularly stand before God (“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy,” “go into your inner room [...] and pray...”), taking into account this relationship, to make judgment of the past (in conscience) and make decisions about the future. We cannot allow our contemporaries to unknowingly accept the state of their own spirit, which Charles Péguy calls “the everyday soul,” for it is “colorless, empty, unremarkable, banal, ordinary,” slow to repent (“What have I done wrong?”)¹⁶ In the soul, there is the uniqueness of a person, “in each person it is different,” although God “uses the same form (human nature)”¹⁷ for each person.

The innate dignity of the human person generates its unique status among creatures. Vigo August Demant¹⁸ saw in man a peculiar duality comprising: his creativity—that is, coming from God the Creator, where his spiritual heritage comes from; his creation—means being a creature. It would be a tragedy for a man if he considered himself a creator. It would be a comedy, however, if he made his life similar to the rest of the creatures, so if he “lost his spirituality and lived like a thing.”¹⁹

Proper vision of a man determines the correctness of the view of social life and the hierarchy of values promoted in it. It is not about the behavior itself (more Christian), but about the actual founding of civilization itself on “metaphysical or dogmatic certainty.”²⁰ Post-Council popes reminded this truth both to believers and to the creators of post-war social order. The Church draws its own understanding of a man directly from Revelation, proclaiming confidently that if wanting “to know man [...] in his fullness, one must know God” (see *Centesimus Annus*, No. 55). Consequently, Christian anthropology “is really a chapter of the-

franco RAVASI, *Krótką historią duszy*, trans. Andrzej Wojnowski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo SALWATOR, 2008), 105. The question is whether this does not mean that the *psyche* seeks to separate itself from the integrity of the person (body and soul) to constitute new “detailed” laws (temporary, horizontal) based on superficial emotions rather than reliable acts of reason and deep feelings flowing from the soul in which the Spirit works. The integral acts of the human person require reference to the Spirit, because they are easily alienated and involved in the “moment” [T.P.].

¹⁵ G. RAVASI, *Krótką historią duszy*, 364.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 363

¹⁷ Quoted after: *ibid.*, p. 351.

¹⁸ Vigo August Demant († 1983) was a well-known Anglican priest, theologian and sociologist, head of the Department of Moral and Pastoral Theology at the Oxford Christ Church – cf. S. NOWOSAD, *Antropologia i życie społeczne*, 117.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

²⁰ Vigo August DEMANT, “The Idea of a Natural Order,” in: *Prospect for Christendom: Essays in catholic Social Reconstruction*, ed. Maurice B. Reckitt (London: Faber & Faber, 1945), 28–29.

ology” while all atheistic views of this matter deprive “man of one of his basic dimensions, namely the spiritual one” (ibid., No. 55), leaning towards permissive and consumerist decisions.

Here the issue of the so-called anthropological error is revealed,²¹ which is the foundation of many social theories that promote the “use” of both life and things created for the “experience of pleasure” identified with happiness. However, the spirit—which the Creator “breathed” into the human person (see Genesis 2,7)—“pervades the whole person and makes all his actions human. [...] [...] Not recognizing man as the spirit [...] threatens the authentic freedom and autonomy of any legitimate human activity.”²² In order to restore order in the contemporary social situation, it is necessary to restore and revive the spiritual abilities of a human being, and even more to carry out his spiritual transformation (conversion).²³ This task is taken up by the Church in its interior, and through its members who build social reality, also outside on a global scale.

2. THE HORIZONTAL ORIENTATION OF UTILITARIANISM AND CONSUMERISM

The logic of every culture includes the values on which social behavior is based. Utilitarian and consumerist orientations assume that the use of goods generally generates a way of thinking and acting by a human being. They absolutize consumer goods and promote a lifestyle based on them.

²¹ The term “anthropological error” was used by John Paul II in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (1991), pointing to the entanglements of the ideology of socialism and the socio-political system that developed on it. Man is “an element, a molecule within the social organism, so that the good of the individual is completely subordinated to the functioning of the socio-economic mechanism. Socialism likewise maintains that the good of the individual can be realized without reference to his free choice, to the unique and exclusive responsibility which he exercises in the face of good or evil. Man is thus reduced to a series of social relationships, and the concept of the person as the autonomous subject of moral decision disappears, the very subject whose decisions build the social order. From this mistaken conception of the person there arise both a distortion of law, which defines the sphere of the exercise of freedom, and an opposition to private property. A person who is deprived of something he can call “his own”, and of the possibility of earning a living through his own initiative, comes to depend on the social machine and on those who control it. This makes it much more difficult for him to recognize his dignity as a person, and hinders progress towards the building up of an authentic human community” (No. 13). Real socialism annihilates the subjectivity of the person, and thus the subjectivity of society, and blocks the realization of the sense of personal dignity (see ibid.) by giving priority to social mechanisms and the collective subject.

²² S. NOWOSAD, *Antropologia i życie społeczne*, 121.

²³ Ibid., 127.

Utilitarianism (the Latin word *utilitas* means advantage, convenience) is a variation of eudaemonism (an ethical trend that recognizes happiness as the goal of desires and aspirations). According to eudaimonism, benefit, utility (not always reduced to pleasure) is a reason of human conduct. Ancient utilitarians (for example, Epicureans) also valued the spiritual and sublime pleasures (for example, dialoguing with friends, admiring blossoms). In the 18th century, utilitarianism became part of the doctrine of French materialists (La Mettrie, Diderot, d'Alembert, Helvetius, Holbach) and British ethicists (J.S. Mill, J. Bentham).

Programmatically constructed as a secular ethic, it gave a central position to the principle of utility,²⁴ maintaining independence from metaphysical assumptions.²⁵ It postulates the moral autonomy of the subject in the assessment of good and evil. The whole utilitarian theory (that is, of the 19th and 20th centuries) is anti-metaphysical²⁶ and uses a vague notion of “pleasure.”²⁷

For J.S. Mill (qualitative hedonism), what is desirable is valuable—both individually and socially;²⁸ with a perfectionist attitude, we distinguish between what is *desired* and what is *desirable*.²⁹ In ideal utilitarianism (G.E. Moore), value is a simple feature of the object (and not of the subject), but it is not directly proportional to the pleasure produced and its quality.³⁰ In the theory of values of J. Narveson, utilitarianism appears as a kind of superstructure over other theories covering the social and individual complexity of moral life.³¹

Generally, usability as an instrumental value depends on the goal achieved practically for the “benefit” of a possibly large group. Utilitarians refer to “*states of affairs*” manifesting their specific value: valuable states in sensory experiences (J. Bentham); states of pleasure that go beyond sensory experiences (J.S. Mill); intellectual states that exceed the pleasure experience in general (G.E. Moore); satisfaction states caused by the fulfillment of desires of any nature (J. Narveson).³²

Usability indicates “this property of the object, through which it promotes the production of benefits, profit, pleasure, good or happiness or prevents the occur-

²⁴ Cf. Dorota PROBUCKA, *Utylitaryzm. Aksjologiczno-etyczne aspekty kategorii użyteczności* [Utilitarianism. Axiological and ethical aspects of utility category] (Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo WSP, 1999), 7. The first philosopher who used the word “utilitarian” was J. Bentham (1748–1832), although it is commonly attributed to J.S. Mill (1806–1873) – see *ibid.*, 11.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 13.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 14.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 16.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 23.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 26.

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 33.

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 37.

³² Cf. *ibid.*, 38.

rence of damage, distress, evil or unhappiness of the interested party.”³³ In so-called *negative utilitarianism* (K. Popper), usability is preventing evil and not creating good (the value is what minimizes the suffering of as many people as possible—as in the 18th century, Voltaire suggested).³⁴

Utilitarians can be accused of “wanting to maximize usability, [...] being insensitive to the distribution of the goods of a given group. They would recommend unfair, unequal, exploitative models of society.”³⁵

Max Scheler in his axiology refers to the five systems of qualitative values³⁶ that guide human societies. In his gradation, the highest degree is the value associated with sanctity (*des Heiligen*)—an unprovable, absolute value which is the foundation of all other values.³⁷ It is hierarchically superior to spiritual values (*geistigen Werte*)—understood anthropologically, concerning the knowledge of truth, goodness and beauty. Successive levels in hierarchy are vital values (*vitalen Fühlens*),³⁸ utilitarian values (*das Nützliche, Zivilisationswerte*) and hedonistic values (*des Angenehmen*) related to pleasure.

According to Scheler, the predominance of the merchant-industrial mentality over the theological and metaphysical mentality led to the loosening of the axiological hierarchy, and therefore the lower values have now taken the place of the higher ones.³⁹ His statement is very pessimistic: “[...] With the development of modern civilization, *nature* (which man had tried to reduce to a mechanism for the purpose of ruling it) and *objects* have become *man’s lord and master*, and *the machine* has come to dominate *life*. The “objects” have progressively grown in vigor and intelligence, in size and beauty—while man, who created them has more and more become a cog in his own machine.”⁴⁰

³³ Ibid., 39. Cf. Hanna BUCZYŃSKA-GAREWICZ, *Wartość i fakt. Rozważania o pragmatyzmie* [Value and fact: Considerations on pragmatism] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1970), 285. Pragmatism—an American variant of utilitarianism—has finally gone so far away from the classic assumptions of utilitarianism that it cannot be identified with it.

³⁴ Cf. D. PROBUCKA, *Utylitaryzm*, 69.

³⁵ Krzysztof SAJA, *Język etyki a utylitaryzm. Filozofia moralna Richarda M. Here’a* [Language of ethics and utilitarianism. Moral philosophy of Richard M. Here] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo AU-REUS, 2008), 232–3.

³⁶ See M. SCHELER, “Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik,” in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. II (Bern: Francke, 1954), 125–30. In the first part of his book he reduces this system to four qualities (without hedonistic ones), in the second part of his book, as well as in his another book *Vorbilder and Führer*, he mentions five qualities; see “Vorbilder und Führer,” in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. X (Bern: Francke, 1957).

³⁷ Cf. L. HOSTYŃSKI, *Wartości utylitarne*, 31.

³⁸ In his *Ressentiment*, Scheler still associated the value of utility and the vital value, classifying them as important values “that have medium rank.” See Max SCHELER, *Ressentiment* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 150.

³⁹ Cf. L. HOSTYŃSKI, *Wartości utylitarne*, 33.

⁴⁰ M. SCHELER, *Ressentiment*, 172.

John Paul II—an expert on the thought of Scheler—wrote: “In earlier stages of development, man always lived under the weight of necessity. His needs were few and were determined, to a degree, by the objective structures of his physical make-up. Economic activity was directed towards satisfying these needs. It is clear that today the problem is not only one of supplying people with a sufficient quantity of goods, but also of responding to a *demand for quality*: the quality of the goods to be produced and consumed, the quality of the services to be enjoyed, the quality of the environment and of life in general” (*Centessimus Annus*, No. 36). The pursuit of better living conditions and greater wealth is justifiable. It is problematic to generate new needs, always expressing a specific concept of man and his real good. Here, “*the phenomenon of consumerism* arises. In singling out new needs and new means to meet them, one must be guided by a comprehensive picture of man which respects all the dimensions of his being and which subordinates his material and instinctive dimensions to his interior and spiritual ones. If [...] a direct appeal is made to his instincts — while ignoring in various ways the reality of the person as intelligent and free — then *consumer attitudes* and *life-styles* can be created which are objectively improper and often damaging to his physical and spiritual health” (ibid.).

Economic systems do not have adequate criteria to properly distinguish good forms of satisfying human needs from the needs artificially created and disrupting the formation of mature personalities, “*thus a great deal of educational and cultural work* is urgently needed, including the education of consumers in the responsible use of their power of choice, the formation of a strong sense of responsibility among producers and among people in the mass media in particular, as well as the necessary intervention by public authorities” (ibid.).

A lifestyle based on the principle “to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment” (ibid.) cannot be considered adequate to the dignity of a person. Economic and investment decisions require a reasonable and free choice of the person, but also taking into account the possibility of supporting others through charity and a sense of shared responsibility for those who are economically less entrepreneurial and need new job offers. Co-responsibility also includes environmental issues. “In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth [...] Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose” (ibid., No. 37) which refers to future generations.

Consumerism is a “derivative and at the same time an element of modernity.”⁴¹

⁴¹ Piotr KOPIEC, *Konsumpcjonizm. Perspektywa protestanckiej koncepcji człowieka i społeczeństwa* [Consumerism: Perspective of the Protestant concept of man and society] (Lublin: Wydaw-

It is based on the “vision of secular salvation.”⁴² According to the American philosopher David Loy, it can be regarded as an element of the “new, though naturally false religion of market capitalism, religion that increasingly colonizes the Western world and leads to its self-destruction.”⁴³ This deified market imposes one commandment on society: “You shall get rich.”⁴⁴

The community of producers had a proper ethos, and its value system was based on deferred gratification, that is, work and savings were the key to social prestige. The foundation of the economy was production, which, while not meeting demand, easily acquired buyers. This type of society valued, among others, durability and security, which had an impact on the attitude towards objects.⁴⁵

Consumerism arrives when “consumption takes over the key role played by work in the society of producers.”⁴⁶ The society of consumers considers the process of “using and consuming” goods (and services) to meet real needs or needs artificially created by marketing as the most important value.⁴⁷ In the world of consumption, “more is better” and “the new is better” than the one we already have. Man always remains an unsatisfied consumer, because he is aware of the fact that there are good things that he “could have” and “should have” if striving for social prestige.⁴⁸ As Bauman pointed out, “The consumerist cultural syndrome consists above all in the emphatic denial of the virtue of procrastination and of the propriety and desirability of the delay of satisfaction...”⁴⁹ While the market used to give people what they needed, now the business puts pressure on them, “consumption is increasingly omnipresent, and important to people, indeed in some cases it can be said to have become their ‘central life interest’.”⁵⁰

nictwo KUL, 2016), 11. It is with the onset of “the era of liquid modernity” (Zygmunt Bauman’s concept) that the producer society has evolved into a consumer community – cf. Damian MAZUR, “Szczęście w nabywaniu. ‘Samotrawiąca namiętność’ społeczeństwa konsumentów [Happiness in buying: The self-consuming passion of the consumer society],” *Logos i Ethos* 22 (2016), no. 1: 78.

⁴² P. KOPIEC, *Konsumpcjonizm*, p. 158.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 153. See David LOY, “The Religion of the Market,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65 (1997), no 2, 275–90.

⁴⁴ Cf. P. KOPIEC, *Konsumpcjonizm*, 154.

⁴⁵ Cf. D. MAZUR, “Szczęście w nabywaniu,” 78.

⁴⁶ Zygmunt BAUMAN, *Consuming Life* (London: Polity Press, 2007), 28.

⁴⁷ Cf. D. MAZUR, “Szczęście w nabywaniu,” 79.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 80. Cf. Joanna MYSONA BYRSKA, “Odpowiedzialność konsumenta w świecie konsumpcji [Consumer’s responsibility in the world of consumption],” in *Spoleczna odpowiedzialność gospodarki. Perspektywa interdyscyplinarna* [Social responsibility of the economy: An interdisciplinary perspective], ed. Stanisław Fel (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2014), 151.

⁴⁹ Z. BAUMAN, *Consuming Life*, 85.

⁵⁰ George RITZER, Jeffrey STEPNIKY, and Jon LEMICH, “The Magical World of Consumption: Transforming Nothing into Something.” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 49 (2005): 119.

According to J. Baudrillard,⁵¹ this new reality created “new rights,” socially accepted, especially the right to: beauty, rest and holidays, knowledge and culture, clean air and silence, nice view outside the window, etc. At the same time, recommendations based on the “well” principle appeared: to look well, earn money well, play well, and eat well.⁵² The term “well” means: according to the current fashion, which should be followed and respected. Consumer society is also a “therapeutic society,” because it still uses experts in health, appearance, needs, etc.⁵³ A man is subject to constant information pressure regarding the issue of what to do, eat, put on oneself, etc., in order to feel happy. This “terrorism of solicitude” sustains the conviction that the “needs” of one's own self are the most important. The products organized in series, collections and packages⁵⁴ obscure the world of people, so a person becomes antisocial, self-centered, frustrated by the fact that everything has its market price.

Damian Mazur speaks about the phenomenon of “self-consuming passion” (the term used by Richard Sennett⁵⁵), because the consumer, trusting in marketing activities, considers the purchase of a given product as necessary for happiness, experiencing frequent disappointments here.⁵⁶ “Consumer syndrome” radically shortens the period from a desire to its fulfillment, that is, the moment when the object is used and removed.⁵⁷ The whole action is hectic, and its stages boil down to: acquire-use-consume-acquire new ones. It means a large waste of products which is generated by the apotheosis of new offers for those that are “yesterday’s” ones. It’s not just about *motor of fashion* (the term used by Vance Packard) and planned aging of products through the so-called seasons (sales, withdrawing obsolete collections). Accelerated aging is somehow inscribed in the nature of the goods offered on the market, which is a paradox that can be ironically described as a transition: from utilitarianism to utilization. “The rich man can, and even should waste goods spectacularly, in order to demonstrate his position, prestige...”⁵⁸

⁵¹ Jean BAUDRILLARD, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: Sage, 1998).

⁵² Ibid, 58.

⁵³ Ibid., 184.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 168

⁵⁵ “In poetic usage, a consuming passion can connote a passion that burn’s itself out by its own intensity; put in less lurid form, in using things we use them up. Our desire for a dress may be ardent, but a few days after we actually buy and wear it, the garment arouses us less. Here the imagination is strongest in anticipation, grows ever weaker through use. Today’s economy strengthens this kind of self-consuming passion, both in shopping malls and politics.” Richard SENNETT, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 137–8.

⁵⁶ D. MAZUR, “Szczęście w nabywaniu,” 85.

⁵⁷ Cf. ibid, 84.

⁵⁸ J. MYSONA BYRSKA, “Odpowiedzialność konsumenta w świecie konsumpcji,” 151.

It is a travesty that in this consumption the so-called prestige value grows to the rank of “fundamental values, that is, the values co-creating this kind of consumer society.”⁵⁹ Here, prestige is associated with owning certain things⁶⁰ (branded, or vintage products). The consumer perceives and values other people through the prism of material things. Baudrillard emphasizes that “the beneficiary of the consumer miracle also sets in place a whole array of sham objects, of characteristic signs of happiness, and then waits (waits desperately, a moralist would say) for happiness to alight.”⁶¹ However, Richard Layard’s research⁶² shows that after satisfying basic needs, the subjective sense of one’s happiness grows much slower than his income.⁶³ This reveals the illusion of assumptions inscribed in the ideas of utilitarianism and consumerism, as well as the necessity to look for new foundations for the theory of social life.

3. STRATEGIES FOR THE RECOVERY OF SPIRITUAL HAZARDS (PERSONAL AND SOCIAL)

Benedict XVI in the encyclical on integral human development *Caritas in Veritate* (issued on 29 June 2009) stressed that in the era of globalization, when “economic activity is no longer circumscribed within territorial limits, while the authority of governments continues to be principally local, “the canons of justice” should be respected from the outset, as the economic process unfolds (No. 37). It is also necessary to open the market to those economic entities that “freely choose to act according to principles other than those of pure profit, without sacrificing the production of economic value” (ibid.) The globalized economy “seems to privilege seems to privilege the former logic, that of contractual 23 exchange, but directly or indirectly it also demonstrates its need for the other two: political logic, and the logic of the unconditional gift” (ibid.)

Lifestyle, which leads to hedonism and consumerism, can be changed by molding mentality to appreciate other styles, “in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments” (ibid., No. 51). This also includes international tourism following “a consumerist and hedonistic

⁵⁹ Lesław HOSTYŃSKI, *Wartości w świecie konsumpcji* [Values in the world of consumption] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2006), 91.

⁶⁰ Cf. ibid., 92.

⁶¹ J. BAUDRILLARD, *The Consumer Society*, 31.

⁶² See Richard LAYARD, *Happiness. Lessons from a new science*, London: Penguin Books, 2005.

⁶³ Cf. D. MAZUR, “Szczęście w nabywaniu,” 90.

pattern, as a form of escapism [...] not conducive to authentic encounter between persons and cultures” (ibid., No. 61).

Technical progress and social relations, based on the “benefits” principle, will not provide such a division of goods and resources that would allow genuine development for everyone. or at least for some (see Matthew 16:26: “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?”) A side effect of globalization processes, largely accomplished through new information technologies, is the spreading of materialistic and individualistic elements of the West in all cultures. A utilitarian vision of education⁶⁴ that reaches the university level is dangerous. Private or social advantage, hard pragmatism cannot be the main educational criterion. The instrumentalization of science is dangerous because it promotes the total subordination of man to the principles that reduce and deform his humanity.

Pope Francis notes that some new religious movements propose “a spirituality without God,” thus responding to “a materialistic, consumerist and individualistic society.” They come to fill “a vacuum left by secularist rationalism” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, No. 63). When assessing the state of current civilization, we can say that “in some places a spiritual ‘desertification’ has evidently come about, as the result of attempts by some societies to build without God or to eliminate their Christian roots. In those places ‘the Christian world is becoming sterile, and it is depleting itself like an overexploited ground, which transforms into a desert’”⁶⁵ (ibid., No. 86). In these sterile spaces—where the desire for happiness and ultimate meaning lies in human souls—people of faith are urgently needed who “are called to be living sources of water” (cf. ibid.). They must, however, have a spirit filled with what they would offer to others as a gift.

Purely market-based thinking deprives reality from the ethical-moral dimension, reducing everything to a common denominator of profits and losses. Then, “social Darwinism” is revealed, which results in the economically strong and efficient members’ primacy of the community.⁶⁶ Weak units, that are economically less efficient, are marginalized, and because they cause a sense of discomfort among consumers—in their “quiet consumption”—they are sometimes

⁶⁴ Józef WARZESZAK, “Antropologia Benedykta XVI na tle błędnych antropologii współczesnych [Anthropology of Benedict XVI against the background of erroneous contemporary anthropologies],” *Studies in Dogmatic Theology* 1 (2015): 271.

⁶⁵ John Henry NEWMAN, “Letter of 26 January 1833,” in *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 204.

⁶⁶ Cf. Joanna MYSONA BYRSKA, “Wpływ wartości świata konsumpcji na sferę publiczną [The impact of the value of the world of consumption on the public sphere],” *Filo-Sofija* 29 (2015), no. 2/1: 111.

separated (driven out) from the living environments of rich members of the community. Such monitored, gated housing estates—inside the city, not on a closed private property—divide the community into separate categories, where only one provides access to shops and services that are inaccessible to others.⁶⁷

In the apostolic times, St. Jacob strongly admonished Christians that they should never “dishonor the poor” (James 2:6), by special treatment of the rich who oppress society. This Christian measure is still valid today. However, we observe that Christian customs and principles do not clearly affect the behavior and way of reasoning of those who are baptized. They also easily adopt a foreign style with a “spirit” regarding social coexistence, references at work and in leisure time. A typical “consumer” wants to enjoy life from Friday afternoon to Sunday evening (in accordance with the right to rest and comfort). Taking care of the appropriate level of consumption during the week, he “acquires” the right to have fun at the weekend. It even becomes a necessity for him as he needs to recover from tension and stress.⁶⁸ “Research shows that we are dealing with an increase in the level of ludicity, ludicism and lack of seriousness. However, seriousness is often needed to stop looking at the world from an egoistic perspective.”⁶⁹ The number of places, offers and fun opportunities is still growing. A businessman, a politician, or an official—caring for his own position in the face of market triumphalism—shall “attend” the so-called meetings organized by specific circles. After attending such a meeting, which is “useful” for his job and interests, he returns to his guarded house, so he may not understand the situation in the homes of ordinary citizens who represent the majority of the community. Michael Sandel aptly compared closed housing estate to the “phenomenon of lodge,” which adversely affects the public sphere and the democratic order.⁷⁰ The theatrical or stadium “lodge” separates the seated from the others, settled down below, and a high degree of comfort of reception of the spectacle or match demonstrates their prestigious position. If democracy does not require perfect equality, then, according to Sandel, it requires “living together,” that is, using the same roads, shops, cinemas, and stadiums. And even when the contact with the community lasts for a while, it has meaning. When it disappears, a strong sense of strangeness arises, which, in the case of divergent positions, does not lead to negotiations but

⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 111-112.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* For more information, see Ryszard KANTOR, *Zabawa w dobie społeczeństwa konsumpcyjnego. Szkice o ludyzmie, ludyźności, powadze a w istocie o jej braku* [Fun in the age of consumer society. Sketches on ludism, ludicity, seriousness and in fact its lack] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013), 17–32.

⁷⁰ Cf. J. MYSONA BYRSKA, “Wpływ wartości świata konsumpcji,” 112. See Michael SANDEL, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 120 ff.

rather to separation. It blocks civic attitudes, generates individualism, which shows that consumptionism “strongly changes the public sphere.”⁷¹

Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes that a globalized society “makes us neighbours”—in the sense of access to many goods and information—“but does not make us brothers” (*Caritas in Veritate*, No. 19). Reason is capable of giving stability to civic co-existence, but it cannot establish fraternity, especially as “universal” as those given to humanity by God in the Son (see *ibid.*). Scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them, the Church offers to the world its “distinctive contribution: a global perspective on man and human realities” (*Populorum Progressio*, No. 13). Engaging in the temporal social life, it directs his hopes towards “Christ, to whom every authentic vocation to integral human development must be directed. *The Gospel is fundamental for development*, because in the Gospel, Christ, ‘in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals humanity to itself’” (*Caritas in Veritate*, No. 18). Without questioning the principle of corporate social responsibility in matters of development, the Church offers an additional factor of supernatural character to support the joint effort.

Culture in the classical sense includes “going beyond what is visible and apparent to the real basis of things and, at its heart, opens the door to the Divinity. Bound up with that [...] is the other feature, of the individual transcending his own self and finding mutual support for himself in a greater social agency, whose perceptions he can, as it were, borrow and then, of course, also carry farther and develop for himself. [...] This social agent preserves and develops perceptions that go beyond what any individual is capable of—insights we may describe as preration and supration. In doing this, cultures refer to the wisdom of the “elders”, who were closer to the gods; to traditions from the beginnings, which have the character of revelation, that is, they are the result, not simply of human questioning and reflection, but of aboriginal contact with the ground of all things; to communications from the Divinity.”⁷²

It means that one should develop humanistic cultural synthesis, open to transcendence, also by means of a new evangelization. Since “man is [...] affected [...] by truth itself” in order to lead him out of the state of alienation and interpersonal divisions, we must recognize “the vision of a common standard that does no violence to any culture but that guides each one to its own heart, because each exists ultimately as an expectation of truth.”⁷³ And if it does not pose a threat

⁷¹ J. MYSONA BYRSKA, “Wpływ wartości świata konsumpcji,” 113.

⁷² Joseph RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 61–2. The author refers to the thought of Josef Pieper, *Überlieferung, Begriff und Anspruch* (München: Kösel, 1970).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 67.

through uniformity, believers should strive to “send all peoples to the school of Jesus, because he is the truth in person and, thereby, the way to be human.”⁷⁴ Inclusion in the Church means for everyone—a certain *exodus* from their own culture and at the same time—“entering a separate, active cultural entity with her own many-layered intercultural character.”⁷⁵

In this way, faith creates a “new culture,” revealing to man who he is and what he should do for the perfect formation of his humanity. He is opposed to a technicalist spirit who has “the tendency to consider the problems and emotions of the interior life from a purely psychological point of view, even to the point of neurological reductionism” (*Caritas in Veritate*, No. 76). A prosperous society, “highly developed in material terms but weighing heavily on the soul, is not of itself conducive to authentic development. The new forms of slavery to drugs and the lack of hope into which so many people fall can be explained not only in sociological and psychological terms but also in essentially spiritual terms. The emptiness in which the soul feels abandoned, despite the availability of countless therapies for body and psyche, leads to suffering” (*ibid.*), which cannot be ignored by the silence or passivity of attitudes.

Stanisław Grygiel rightly emphasizes that culture should not be identified with what calculating reason produces as a technical civilization. Culture is symbolic and cultivates values that reveal the meaning of life to man. “In turn, technical civilization is not interested in human fate. It is far from the symbolic dimension of thinking and work [...] it does not transcend itself. Technical thinking is based on unambiguity. It only refers to the objects it produces and measures the value of human life according to them, while culture gives life to hope for something infinitely greater. It grows out of the dream of the future, through the specter of which we cultivate the earth in ourselves in dialogue with others and with God.”⁷⁶

In addition, we have to return to the concept of the people “ready to celebrate” that do not stay locked within a limited horizon. If we want to spread such a spirituality, we have to teach people how to celebrate, and not just “recovery” through play and stimulants that are used for the escape from everyday life. Especially in Europe, in a society “often closed to transcendence, oppressed by consumeristic behaviour, easily falling prey to old and new forms of idolatry yet at the same time thirsting for something which goes beyond the immediate” it seems urgently needed to rediscover “the sense of “mystery” in the liturgy and ensure greater silence in prayer and in contemplation also outside the temple (*Ecclesia in*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁷⁶ Stanisław GRYGIEL, *Jestem, więc modłę się* [I am, so I pray] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo FLOS CARMELI, 2012, 56.

Europa, No. 69). It seems that ludic addictions can be overcome by reevaluating them in what deserves to be called authentic celebration. The so-called party people do not confirm the fulfillment of their hopes regarding entertainment. “Perhaps this is where disconnection and understimulation meet to create a particularly powerful sense of boredom”⁷⁷ Evangelical stimuli may also help bored consumers, because they appeal to the deeper layers of human insatiability than emotions brought to infantile “desires,” which are actually aroused lusts and passions.

Evangelical spirituality can sober up, enlighten, “bring out” man from these entanglements, which led him to feel tired of himself and of all around him. Authentic development of man and of nations demands to take into account the spiritual dimension, “new eyes and a new heart, capable of rising above a materialistic vision of human events” (*Caritas in Veritate*, No. 77). Moreover, “only a humanism open to the Absolute” turns out to be socially helpful in creating structures, institutions, culture and ethos that are able to protect people from ensnarement “by the fashions of the moment” (*ibid.*, No. 78)

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When contrasting the ecclesial spirituality with the spirit of such ethical and social trends as utilitarianism or consumerism, we conclude that the interactions are mutual. If the “right to ...” consume and use spreads spontaneously, not without economic inspiration and marketing strategy, it also reaches Christians and (de)forms their mentality. The ecclesial spirituality must, therefore, present such an expressive identity that the “experiences” offered to believers in the environment of life do not imprison them in horizontalism. Circulation of the spirit (in the anthropological sense) is limited to a “flattened” level, subject to the dynamism of keeping an eye on new offers and the effort of acquiring. The pace at which this kaleidoscope of offers is presented is amazing and lulls man into a false sense of security. Many people—fascinated with novelties like a child—cannot get away from them. Spiritual danger, then, lies in the force of attraction, which stops the entire “spirituality of a person” on a horizontal level, and reducing life to one level causes a state that can be called being possessed by “temporalism.”⁷⁸

The ecclesial spiritual option assumes alternating—in a free and intelligent way—vertical and horizontal orientation, strengthening the sense of human dignity. As a consequence, we experience fulfillment in temporal terms, which

⁷⁷ Richard WINTER, *Still Bored in a Culture of Entertainment: Rediscovering Passion & Wonder* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 23.

⁷⁸ Cf. Teresa PASZKOWSKA, “Prestiż – potrzeba czy iluzja? [Prestige—need or illusion?],” *Pastores* 43 (2009), no. 2: 35. Temporalism means such an erroneous narrowing of the horizons of thinking, perceiving and acting that man is trapped in temporality.

gives us further reason to hope for eternal (final) fulfillment. It is difficult to blame this option for lack of logic, since it contains a reference to small (achievable) desires, as well as mobilizes the ability to long-lasting desire and strive for a great goal, integrating personality. The internal struggle of man—with himself and with the world—turns out to be useful when “in the name of reasons accepted as essential” (here: grace of faith) man can “uncover the objective meaning of subjective experience.”⁷⁹ Pleasant “intoxication,” prestigious layouts,⁸⁰ financial prosperity and good health condition do not fully satisfy the human spirit. These human experiences always call for a transcendent reference, valuing them in a supernatural context. The evangelical offer is perfectly suited to this personal “need,” but its usefulness must be made credible to those who do not know the Gospel. The mission of credibility remains the duty of everyone who has been incorporated into the Church and shaped in it.

Nowadays, spiritual vigilance is necessary—as indicated by Cardinal Henri de Lubac—that those who proclaim a “return to spirituality” would not be fooled by the utopias present in the socio-political space, and “an obscuring of Christianity and its own very spirit by the gods of the age; and that, in aiming at the liberation of a Gospel that they believe to be in captivity, some well-intentioned Christians are doing little more than striking a compromise—without wishing to do so—with the forces that wish to suppress it by either suppressing or subjugating the Church.”⁸¹

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⁷⁹ Anna GAŁDOWA, *Powszechność i wyjątek. Rozwój osobowości człowieka dorosłego* [Widespread and exception: The development of an adult person's personality], 2nd edition (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2000), 175.

⁸⁰ “It is difficult to say how much the need for prestige is innate (inherited along with the deformation contained in original sin, and how much it is acquired, that is, aroused by the environmental situation and personal aspirations of a particular person.” T. PASZKOWSKA, “Prestż – potrzeba czy iluzja?,” 38–9.

⁸¹ Henri DE LUBAC, *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 175.

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