

Eugenics as an Element of the Worldview and the Basis of Nazi Pedagogy in the Criticism of Polish Humanists

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ABSTRACT: The article is devoted to the presentation of the main points of criticism of Nazism emerging in Germany in the 1930s. This criticism was carried out in Polish scientific literature before September 1, 1939, that is, i.e. before the armed attack of Germany on Poland. Its authors were Polish pedagogues and philosophers. An important thread of the entire Polish trend of Nazism criticism was the disapproval of eugenics. It was understood at that time as an element of the Nazi worldview that the Third Reich implemented in education. The role of eugenics was strengthened by its understanding as a scientific basis of racism. Education equipped with eugenics created a trend of pedagogy known today as Nazi pedagogy. With its participation, the Germans tried to create an ideal German (Nordic) race – a master race.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Eugenics; Criticism of racism; Polish criticism of Nazism; Racism as a worldview; Nazi pedagogy; XX Century.

Introduction

The article was created as a result of research into archival historical sources, which are publications created in Poland in the years 1930-1939. As can be seen from the bibliography, the works published at that time were: independent scientific monographs (books), scientific articles (in the area of pedagogy, philosophy of education, philosophy, and even theology), and articles in the press. All of them created the Polish trend of racism criticism, in particular eugenics criticism. They also belong to the broader area of Polish criticism of Nazism, which took place before the outbreak of World War II. There are many written historical sources in Polish scientific literature and journalism

showing the dangers of Nazism emerging in the Third Reich. A modest selection of them was published in the journal «Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna» [«Polish Pedagogical Thought»]¹.

Criticism of German national socialism (Nazism)² is, alongside the unrivaled in the world Polish Sovietology, one of the essential elements of the culture, science, and political life of Poles in the first half of the 20th century.

1. *Eugenics – the inspiration and scientific justification for racism*

When the fashion for eugenics swept the Western world, the majority of the Polish intelligentsia was very cautious. In 1917, in the Kraków newspaper «Przegląd Powszechny», Father Stanisław Podoleński gave a detailed overview of the international development of the eugenics movement, also noting its presence in Poland and attempts on the part of its advocates to influence legislation. In strong words, he wrote about eugenics as a threat to humanity³.

The attitude of Polish conservative-nationalist and Catholic circles towards the activities of eugenicists should be considered on at least two levels. The broader one, which at the same time carries the so-called hard statements, is the level of references to the ideological dimension of eugenics and its presence among political, social and cultural movements in the world. These movements, linked to different types of socialism and the ways in which they were implemented in the 1930s, usually with violence, deception and blood (Spain, the USSR, China, Germany), carried – as an integral part of the new civilisation with the new man – also the question of a ‘better’ race and an improved man, along with the dangerous examples of hard eugenics (e.g., sterilisation) already present in the 1930s.

The eugenics movement, which drew its justifications from socialist and Marxist aspirations, carried with it the marginalisation of the Christian worldview, particularly Catholic morality, and the marginalisation of all religions. On the part of the Christian religions or, more generally, of the Latin civilisation, the limits of the eugenics movement were set where it violated the dignity of the person by introducing instrumental treatment or the elimination of persons with developmental deficits. In the Polish discourse on the demands of eugenics, a discourse rooted in Catholicism, there are no compromising

¹ J. Kostkiewicz, *The Polish Current of Criticism of German National Socialism (Nazism) Before 1939, Bibliography of Sources*, «Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna», vol. 6, 2020, pp. 349-362.

² See J. Kostkiewicz, *Polski nurt krytyki nazizmu przed rokiem 1939: aspekty ideologiczne i pedagogiczne*, Kraków, Arcana, 2020.

³ S. Podoleński, *Eugenika i ruch eugeniczny*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 193, 1932, pp. 319-324.

comments. The hard methods of eugenics, such as isolation to avoid procreation, sterilisation, forced abortions, euthanasia and others are called evil.

The second level of reference to the eugenics movement concerns its soft dimension (practised outside the eugenics movement), such as premarital medical examinations and certificates, mother and childcare, and physical education. Here, the possible ideologization depended on the methods of implementation (for example, excessive competition or sports research led to the objectification of the person and was not advisable). On these issues, there was openness to solutions that promoted health and proper human development, and no criticism of elements that served health education.

1.1. Reception of the discourse on the development of eugenics in the Western world

It is evident in the writings forming the broad Polish current of criticism of Nazism that the worldwide eugenics movement was seen in a dual role: as one of the inspirations for racism, and eugenics itself as its 'scientific' justification for it. Consideration of both these roles was combined with reference to the British naturalist and anthropologist Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), who was considered to be the founder of eugenics, particularly to his work *Hereditary Genius* (London 1869)⁴, and also to the myriad of eugenics societies and their journals. The main critics of eugenics in Poland were Father Franciszek Sawicki (Pelplin), Father Stanisław Podoleński (Kraków), Father Ignacy Świrski (Vilnius) and others. Podoleński linked the name and the beginning of eugenics to Galton's research into heredity in humans and animals and the idea of using it to improve the human race. He called the science that was to deal with the study of the data needed for eugenics (of Greek etymology) meaning «born of a good race», «hereditarily endowed with noble qualities»⁵. Stanisław Podoleński did not overlook the fact that, from Galton's perspective, eugenics was intended to serve the generations to come. He stressed that the laws Galton proposed were based on insufficient empirical material and, in the light of later research, proved to be wrong, but this did not prevent Galton or his followers from spreading the idea itself.

Podoleński and Świrski recalled important moments in the history of the eugenics movement. In 1905, a chair in national eugenics was established at

⁴ In the writings of Polish critics of Nazism, we find the information that, for example, Galton left a huge sum of money to the University of London for the establishment of a chair (laboratory and library) for eugenic research (I. Świrski, *Eugenika a moralność*, «Ateneum Kapłańskie», vol. 32, 1933, pp. 433-434).

⁵ Podoleński, *Eugenika i ruch eugeniczny*, cit., p. 320.

the University of London, followed by Cambridge and several American universities. Świrski established that, with Galton's efforts, the *Sociological Society* was founded in 1903 and *The Eugenics Education Society* in 1908 to popularise the view of the need to elevate and improve the biological dimension of the human race⁶.

In Poland, the Western eugenics movement was judged to be powerful, with particularly good grounds for growth in England and the USA⁷. Those who wrote about it claimed that they had data at their disposal, including the names of the main researchers and organisers of the movement, the titles of the periodicals promoting it, the aims of the movement, the titles of the works and the research results published in them. In the Kraków based «Przegląd Powszechny» Stanisław Podoleński reported that the *Eugenics Education Society*, renamed in 1926 as the *Eugenics Society*, published the journal «Eugenics Review» and was founded in 1908 with the participation of Charles Darwin's sons. Another journal, «American Breeders Association», was the organ of a society founded in 1903 that functioned as *American Genetic Association* since 1914. The monthly «Journal of Heredity», and many other journals published by various eugenics societies, were also mentioned. The activities of the *American Eugenics Society* formed at the second International Eugenics Congress held in New York in 1921 (the first was held in London in 1912) were commented on. Podoleński spoke of the *Eugenics Record Office*, the publisher of «Eugenical News» that practised, in his opinion, the strongest eugenic propaganda⁸.

The observation of the world arena of eugenic movements with a socialist profile brings us to the conclusion that, parallel to the Anglo-American movement, a movement called *Rassenhygiene* (hygiene of race) initiated by W. Schallmayer and A. Ploetz, emerged in Germany. Polish commentators anticipated the dangers to humanity from the development of eugenics and noted that German eugenics moved in a slightly different direction than the British-American. Both Sawicki and Świrski point to a different understanding of the whole question of race hygiene in Germany from Galton's, particularly in the use of a different concept, namely, the hygiene of the races or the hygiene of reproduction and, most importantly, its extension beyond the dimension of the individual. In Germany, the reference to the human race was replaced by a reference to a particular race.

With many typologies of the human races popularised at the time⁹ and

⁶ Świrski, *Eugenika a moralność*, cit., p. 433.

⁷ Podoleński, *Eugenika i ruch eugeniczny*, cit., p. 321.

⁸ Id., *Eugenika i ruch eugeniczny*, cit., pp. 321-322.

⁹ Examples of typologies of human races and various comments on the results of research can be found, among others, in: F. Sawicki, *Nowoczesne teorie rasowe*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 201, 1934, pp. 19-33.

the research into them, this shift was of vital importance. Thus, German eugenics is a totality of measures for the successful development of the Nordic race (and not the human race in general), through which both individuals and collectivities could be subjected to eugenic measures. The understanding of eugenics as racial hygiene, adopted after Ploetz, included sanitary statistics, evolutionary theory regarding selection, protection of maternity, infant care, physical education and other issues¹⁰. Reports that dominated the pages of Polish conservative and Catholic scientific journals focused on what Anglo-Saxon and German eugenics shared with the aspirations of the West, which was their reliance on Darwin's theory. While Galton's starting point was heredity, the Germans (W. Schallmayer and Ploetz and others) were concerned with the elimination of degeneracy in the form of reduced physical and mental development of offspring.

On Ploetz's initiative, the *Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* was founded in Berlin in 1905, and was renamed in the following year as *Internationale Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene*¹¹. The influence of the Society was mainly through the work of Ploetz himself. In 1910, a second major Society was founded under the name *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene*, with its headquarters in Berlin and branches in other cities. Subsequently, Ploetz founded *Das Archiv für Rassen und Gesellschaftsbiologie*, intending to publish papers on eugenics research. This archive was to become a centre for eugenics, collecting all the available knowledge about the Germanic race. According to the Polish intellectuals Father Podoleński, Father Świrski, Father Sawicki, Father Tochowicz and Father Pastuszka, these centres worked primarily for the promotion of Germans and Germany, which was negative in its expressed attitude towards other races and nations; for this reason, their activities were interpreted as anti-Polish and anti-Slavic.

The Germans labelled themselves as the master race, joined the eugenics movement under the very name, continued to escalate the development of the grand vision of their nation. Father Świrski claimed that the eugenics movement in Germany was awakening independently of Galton's and was supposed to have been inspired by Ploetz's book *Die Tüchtigkeit unserer Rasse und der Schutz der Schwachen*, which was well-known in the scientific circles of the time. Meanwhile, the tone of the Polish discourse on the eugenics movement expressed great disapproval of its presence and activities.

According to its Polish critics, eugenic propaganda across the world was effective not only because of Germany's contribution but mainly in connection with its spread in the Anglo-Saxon countries. And even though the traces or beginnings of eugenics can be found in antiquity, in Plato but also in the practices of Sparta and China, it was only the great industrialisation of the

¹⁰ Świrski, *Eugenika i moralność*, cit., pp. 433-434.

¹¹ Podoleński, *Eugenika i ruch eugeniczny*, cit., pp. 322-323.

19th century, Podoleński claims, that, by throwing millions of lives into the misery of industrial cities, unhealthy conditions, social pathology and social and moral disaster for entire families and communities, ultimately led to visible physical and spiritual degeneration. This fact alone was regarded by the founders of eugenics as legitimising its development, while among its Catholic critics in Poland it was a call for an immediate improvement of the workers' lives.

The knowledge of the eugenic aspirations in the Western world was extensive in Poland and it became an important element of the decisions and choices made at the state level, particularly the refusal to adopt eugenics legislation, while in the West eugenic laws had already been adopted. In Poland, the criticism of eugenics and its applications was fundamentally rooted in the Catholic religion.

The criticism of the eugenics movement raised clear questions about the relationship between it and Catholicism. Polish intellectuals identified with the position taken in the encyclical *Casti connubii* of 31 December 1930 and the Vatican decree *De educatione sexuali et de «eugenica»* of 21 March 1931. In them, eugenics was not condemned as a science, but Pius XI rejected certain views and aspirations of scientific and practical eugenics leading to the biological improvement of the race, listed in detail in the encyclical¹². The instrumental treatment of man was rejected, and it was acknowledged that eugenics could only be applied following natural and divine law, for man must benefit from the achievements of science¹³.

Church documents thus rejected eugenics as insofar as it was against Catholic anthropology and morality. In the interpretation of Polish humanists, however, German National Socialism used eugenics to justify racism, with its intention of practically stopping the process of racial mixing. This, in turn, underpinned the idea of strengthening the Nordic element among the German population, for the defence of racial purity became the most important goal of the German Reich. It was believed that races and individuals were not equal. The value of a race was proposed to be measured by its cultural productivity throughout history, and the value of individuals according to their racial affiliation and the life energy they provided¹⁴.

Most Polish critics of the eugenics movement spoke of the unfortunate success of its propaganda in the world. Polish humanists thought that the Germans might just look silly with the self-imposed label of the master race, had it not been for the widespread approval of the eugenics movement and the significance given to it by the universities' involvement in eugenics research.

¹² See: *Encyklika o małżeństwie chrześcijańskim*, Kraków, Księża Jezuici, 1931, pp. 37-39.

¹³ Podoleński, *Eugenika i ruch eugeniczny*, cit., pp. 329-331.

¹⁴ J. Pastuszka, *Rasizm jako światopogląd*, «Ruch Katolicki», vol. 9, 1939, p. 105.

Catholic conservatives were, of course, very sceptical and mistrustful about its findings¹⁵.

As early as 1917, Father Podoleński noted the presence of the eugenics movement in Polish liberal-left and secular circles and their attempts to influence Polish legislation¹⁶.

In Poland, as it regained its independence in 1918, alongside the substantive and ideological rejection of eugenics there was also a growing awareness that the German eugenics movement, as a justification for German racism, was a threat to neighbouring nations. Strong opposition came to the fore as Hitler's vision of eliminating Jews came into public view. Notably, at this point, the weekly magazine «Myśl Narodowa» reported that the loudest opposition to the National Socialist plans of Hitler's government was raised by Polish nationalists and Jews.

This fact confirmed the position of Polish nationalists towards Jews. While strongly criticising Jewish involvement in politics and the economy, they did not raise racial or religious issues as being subject to negation or rejection, hence it is safe to say that the Polish nationalist movement was critical of Jewish domination, but it was not anti-Semitic in terms of race and religion.

Socialists and liberals on the other hand reacted moderately or approvingly to the demands of eugenics. When the defence of racial purity was proclaimed as the most important goal of the German state, Polish critics of Nazism saw that it was part of a cultural trend present in Europe, which acted as a protective umbrella for German racism. In Poland, the fact that racism adhered to a principle of the inequality of races and individuals was received with disapproval. On the one hand, it was regarded as such an absurdity that it would have no negative impact on Europe. On the other, the self-label of race of masters was seen as a manifestation of German hubris, with which Poles were well familiarized during the years of the partitions. Now, however, with the growing importance of eugenics it was recognized that it had found new arguments in a new space. As a result of their own historical experience, Poles could not accept any tendencies of this kind.

Various minorities enjoyed great political and cultural freedoms in the Poland of the time, and it was from these circles that the project of the Eugenics Act, prepared by the *Polish Eugenics Society* (for its membership see M. Gawin¹⁷), emerged; this did meet with a positive response from Polish society, even though it was broadly criticised or ignored by Catholics. Finally, several

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Podoleński, *Eugenika i rucheugeniczny*, cit., pp. 323-324.

¹⁷ M. Gawin, *Rasa i nowoczesność. Historia polskiego ruchu eugenicznego (1880-1952)*, Warsaw, Neriton-IH PAN, 2003.

negative reviews of the project were published¹⁸ and eventually, the draft of the Eugenics Act was not approved by the Sejm of the Second Polish Republic.

And so, the attempt of Poland's liberal-left to follow 'progressive' Europe failed even though, according to progressive Europeans, this fact alone should have been a source of shame. But today, Poles can be proud of their rejection of eugenics laws with racist tendencies. The attitudes of Poles towards the eugenics movement clashed with the positions of the countries that adopted eugenics-based legislation. These were mainly countries dominated by Protestantism (except Britain). In the words of one of Polish Catholic philosopher, eugenics may give some guidance to the health policy of the nation, but

An hour of doom would strike for a nation that would regard the inheritance of its blood as evil fate, from which there was no way out to the grand paths of history¹⁹.

Konstanty Michalski made this statement in the context of Polish-German and German-Jewish relations to point to the one-sided and fragmented choice of arguments made by those who succeeded in incorporating eugenic thought into the practice of collective life. As early as 1934, Michalski foresaw the dangers of eugenics through racism, based on his philosophical analyses and knowledge of history. He mentioned many circumstances which may or might not turn out to be tragic in human history but also enumerated the many fatal errors of the promoters of racism. Standing by scientific argumentation and avoiding a politically committed stance, he addressed German scholars with an appeal to stop eugenics, racism and National Socialism because he disapproved of these decisions by people with well-known names²⁰. Michalski, a Jagiellonian University professor at the time, argued that European affairs had certainly taken a wrong turn.

1.2. *Eugenics as an inspiration for and justification of racism*

A critical stance towards the existing eugenic laws in various countries appeared in many Polish periodicals of the time. It was believed that in Poland eugenics was supported mainly by medical circles representing liberal-

¹⁸ S. Podoleński, *Projekt polskiej Ustawy Eugenicznej*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 204, 1934, pp. 387-393.

¹⁹ K. Michalski, *Tomizm wobec współczesnej filozofii dziejów*, Księga pamiątkowa Kongresu Filozofii Tomistycznej, Poznań, 1934, p. 10.

²⁰ In footnote 11 of his work *Tomizm wobec (ibid.)* Michalski regrets that that Prof. E. Fischer, Head of the Berlin Institute for Anthropological Research, has begun to lean towards the idea of racism. He spoke about it in his 1933 Rector's Lecture on *Der völkische Staat biologisch betrachtet (ibid.)*.

left views, which Father Podoleński discussed in his writings more than once, and which has been confirmed since²¹. Given this, conservative-Catholic and national-Catholic circles were forced to express their critical position, not only concerning eugenic propaganda abroad but also at home. This included the hard eugenic issues, which were unquestionably rejected, but also the soft approach, such as the debatable matter of pre-nuptial medical advice and certificates. According to Podoleński, this was a topic that was broadly discussed in international scientific literature and therefore required a position being taken on it²².

To assess the significance of the debate undertaken by Podoleński, it is worth looking first into the progress in eugenics-based legislation, which is where he began. In his view, the devastation of the population in the First World War became one of the reasons for the immediate concern about the development of the population (increase in numbers and condition of the health of the population). Hence the legislation on compulsory pre-nuptial examinations was beginning to appear, varying in form in different countries.

The earliest appeared in the United States, in Connecticut as early as 1895, followed by other states. Podoleński mentions the appearance of laws and regulations concerning prenuptial medical examinations in the following countries: Norway (1919), Denmark (1922), Sweden (1915), Turkey (1925); Czechoslovakia (draft in 1928) and Germany (1934); in France various drafts were under discussion²³. In Poland, at the time of publication of the text quoted here (in 1934), the matter was still open²⁴.

²¹ This is confirmed by the work of: Gawin, *Rasa...*, cit. p. 90 and p. 281.

²² S. Podoleński, *Problem lekarskich porad i świadectw przedślubnych*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 204, 1934, pp. 45-63.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-63.

²⁴ *Ibid.* (see also: *Projekt polskiej Ustawy Eugenicznej*, «Przegląd Powszechny» 1934, vol. 204, pp. 387-393. In the matter of premarital medical examinations Podoleński speaks of three possibilities: the first leaves everything to the will of the parties involved and excludes any intervention from state authorities. The parties involved can communicate the result of the examination to each other or not (the majority of the supporters of this form believe that the fiancées should present each other with a medical certificate). The second and third forms no longer allow for discretion. The second has various modifications of its own, asserting ultimately not only that the test be carried out and its fact (though not the result) communicated to the authorities, but also that those concerned exchange their results. The third and most severe form would oblige the submission of the test result to the authorities, with a negative result meaning the postponement (prohibition) of the union until the completion of the required treatment, or its abandonment. Podoleński stresses that the last formula takes away the right of decision from those concerned and puts it in the hands of the state. He is astonished by the legitimacy of this kind of thinking in the world, which also permeates Poland. Podoleński identifies with the preferences of Catholic circles on this issue, and they are as follows: in order to guarantee the freedom of those wishing to marry, it is best to adopt the first form as free from the interference of the state and leaving the handling of the whole matter to the interested parties and their families. Ideally, it should become a universally applicable custom, protecting all involved from unpleasant surprises and having an educative effect on society. In doing so, Podoleński discusses

In 1934, Podoleński wrote a whole article on the draft eugenics law prepared by the Polish Eugenics Society, which he severely criticised and considered unworthy for approval. It is worth quoting Podoleński on the definition and function of the new science formulated by him at that time:

Eugenics, as the science deliberating the conditions for raising the physical and spiritual virility of the race (biologically considered), is a way of appropriately influencing reproduction and offspring²⁵.

Podoleński did not entirely disapprove of the sense and desirability of physical and spiritual improvement; these in themselves he considered good and worthy of realisation, but he proposed other, less controversial methods, such as raising the standard of hygiene of, economic regeneration, elevating the moral condition of the family and society and medical care. However, in the project he completely rejected negative eugenics, as an extreme denial of love for one's neighbour, as well as the confinement in institutions of people among whom reproduction was considered undesirable (sterilisation), forced abortions, which he called a bloody massacre, and propaganda for the prevention of pregnancy. Particularly that all this was supposed to happen, Podoleński says, with the poverty of so-called positive eugenics, deficiencies in hygiene and in legal regulations for working mothers and others. He finds the project unacceptable for Catholics²⁶. Eventually the Sejm of the Second Republic never adopted eugenics laws.

In 1934, in connection with the eugenics law passed in Germany, Father Dr Władysław Wicher undertook a critique of it against the background of a negative assessment of German National Socialism. He emphasised the restriction of family rights contained therein and the excessive rights of eugenics activists. He mentions the nine eugenic indications for sterilization listed in the German National Socialist law of 1934, including congenital mental illness, schizophrenia, persecution mania, epilepsy, Sydenham's chorea, hereditary blindness, hereditary deafness, severe alcoholism and physical underdevelopment. As is apparent, not only eugenic but also economic considerations come into play here. Wicher balks at the total state control over parental rights introduced in Germany²⁷, reminding his readers that the encyclical of Pius XI

many issues that are medical, social, and ethical (he points out the risk of corrupt behaviour in obtaining certificates). He demonstrates his knowledge of the positions of many authorities in the medical field and their highly sceptical attitude to the issue of statutory medical pre-nuptial certificates. He cites the positions of prominent European moralists and jurists, both in line with and opposed to his views. He refers to Pius XI's encyclical *Casti connubii*, in view of which the third formula, placing the decision on the possibility or impossibility of marriage in the hands of the state, should be rejected (Podoleński, *Problem lekarskich badań i świadectw*, cit., pp. 51-60).

²⁵ Podoleński, *Projekt polskiej Ustawy eugenicznej*, cit., p. 387.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

²⁷ W. Wicher, *Świadome macierzyństwo*, «Ateneum Kapłańskie», vol. 34, 1934, p. 483.

places important limitations on this issue. Sterilisation may not be carried out either by the state or by an individual; it is allowed only if it would serve to save the health or life of the sterilised person. Wicher is also critical of what is called positive eugenics' defence of motherhood outside marriage, which was promoted in Germany by Alfred Rosenberg (in *Der Mythos des 20 Jahrhunderts*, München 1933, p. 582)²⁸, seeing it as an instrumentalization of women. In his criticism, Wicher draws on various grotesque ideas from German writers, mentioning the peak of absurdity he found in the ideas for the effective and rapid improvement of the German race through special experiments. He cited Willibald Hentschel's project, which proposed «to lock in 1000 racially healthy German girls with 100 racially healthy young men, the result will be 1000 racially pure German children»²⁹. He also adds Staemmler's statement that «the right to the struggle for existence, fertility, selection, inheritance and others..., are the most sacred rights, more sacred than religion, than the rights of peoples»³⁰. Wicher sensed an air of horror in these ideas; saying that among many areas of life and their laws – laws of science, technology, economics – human rights are not mentioned in German writing. He criticises Zimmermann for his views expressed in *Deutsche Geschichte als Rassenschicksal* (Leipzig 1933), for denying the family its natural rights concerning procreation, for placing the rights of the state over the child above those of the parents. As a Catholic priest criticising and judging eugenics from a religious perspective, Wicher says:

- Caring for the body is a good, but it is subordinate to the soul.
- Eugenics understood naturalistically and biologically puts the rights of the totalitarian state before the rights of human beings, which is unacceptable.
- The state does not have a right to the citizen's body and therefore has no moral right to sterilise.
- Race in itself is good, but it cannot be placed before spiritual goods and the divine, and it can only be ennobled by equitable means.
- The Church does not accuse of grave sin those who, when entering into a family, may presume that their offspring will not be entirely healthy. It therefore considers pre-nuptial medical examinations helpful but not decisive for a person.
- Favouring the exemption of the mother from non-family tasks is understandable, however – following Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* – no injunction or prohibition can be applied³¹.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 484.

³⁰ M. Staemmler, *Rassenpflege im völkischen Staat*, München, 1933, p. 7; after: Wicher, *Świadome macierzyństwo*, cit., p. 484.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 488-489.

A similar state of awareness of and attitude towards the eugenics movement and German racism can be found in the work of the Polish pedagogue Franciszek Śniehota, author of the reports from the journal «*Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde*», published in the pages of «*Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny*». In one of the issues of the journal from the second half of 1933, Śniehota writes about an article whose author takes a middle position between the extreme supporters of heredity theory and the fashionable promotion of eugenics. One can read between the lines a certain submissiveness of the Polish author towards the eugenics movement in Germany. Śniehota seems to fully understand the ideological direction in which German pedagogy was heading. As he reports, Professor A. Busemann openly proclaims in the pages of a peer-reviewed journal the need for the selection of gifted individuals³², concluding that «at present in Germany it is a matter of selecting the most valuable individuals for the uplifting of the Germanic race». Śniehota also discusses the deep fusion of pedagogy and psychology that was emerging in Germany at the time concerning questions of race: pedagogical psychology is today, in terms of theory and practice, the central field of all pedagogy. It is, as it were, the «pedagogical organology»³³, also adding that teacher training takes on the profile of service to the racial-eugenic ideas of National Socialism.

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that in interwar Europe, eugenic postulates were an expression of modernity and were mostly advocated by the left and liberals. Such an interpretation of the European and German reality of the 1930s was conveyed by Polish academics and Catholic clergy³⁴. In Poland, strong criticism of the eugenics movement was shared by the Catholic intelligentsia with a national orientation³⁵, which confirms the thesis about the geographical and historical background for nationalism (Polish nationalism cannot be compared to German nationalism). This conclusion stems from the texts from the 1930s mentioned above³⁶. Polish criticism of eugenics did not concern the promotion of life hygiene, economic regeneration, moral uplift,

³² F. Śniehota, *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde*, Leipzig, 34. Jahrg., 1933, n. 7-12, «*Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny*», vol. 2, 1934, p. 192.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

³⁴ Podolski, *Projekt polskiej...*, cit.; W. Wicher, *Świadome macierzyństwo*, cit., and others.

³⁵ M. Gawin writes: «Polish nationalists rejected eugenics because of the position of the Catholic Church and the anti-Polish aspect of racial hygiene in Germany». This is a true but highly simplistic claim, disregarding Polish national traditions and the resulting attitude to the question of race. If corrected it would read as follows: «Polish nationalists rejected eugenics and racism because their slogans were foreign to the traditions of Polish national culture, including the Catholic faith». Gawin discusses the highly critical stance of the Catholic Church in Poland towards eugenics in the chapter *Kościół katolicki w Polsce wobec eugeniki i kontroli urodzin* (Gawin, *Rasa...*, cit., pp. 240-244).

³⁶ S. Podoleński, *Eugenika dzisiaj, jej drogi i bezdroża*, «*Przegląd Powszechny*», vol. 194, 1932, pp. 166-186.

medical care or the rights of working mothers, which all found full support among the Polish Catholic intelligentsia.

2. Racism – the leading idea of German national socialism

Before 1939, the rejection and stigmatisation of racism due to its association with Nazism were commonplace in conservative-nationalist Catholic circles in Poland. Many examples can be quoted, including the last pre-war issue of the journal «Ateneum Kapłańskie» of July 1939. The volume, published in the face of the approaching war, which was being discussed while the armed forces were mobilised, opens with two timely and tragically accurate articles: Father Dr Jan Czuj's³⁷ *St Augustine and racism*, and Adolf Kliszewicz's *Totalizm współczesny*³⁸, referring to the ideologies of Germany and Russia.

Criticism of racism in Poland began only with the impending German aggression. It took place despite the low priority of racial issues in Poland and the modest volume of research conducted therein compared to Europe at the time³⁹. Even before Hitler's rise to power and the racist excesses in Germany against the Jews, the idea of racism was criticised by Karol Stojanowski in the radical Polish weekly «Myśl Narodowa»⁴⁰. Conducting research of a *strictly* eugenic nature, Stojanowski took an unequivocally critical position towards racism, especially racism in its German version. He stressed that racial thought in its very nature always serves political ends, just as eugenics does. Also, by its very nature, racial thinking is positive when it blurs racial differences, but negative when it exposes them. Either way, it is exploited politically exploited in every instance. Stojanowski's personal motivation for undertaking racial research is not so much a fascination with the issue as an attempt to shield and valorise the Slavic races from the escalating valorisation of the Nordic race in Europe.

In publications critical of Nazism, defensive racism is discussed in Poland

³⁷ Father Dr. Jan Czuj (1886-1957) – from 1938 headed the Department of Patrology with Homiletics at the Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Warsaw; first Rector of the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw.

³⁸ J. Czuj, *Św. Augustyn a rasizm*, «Ateneum Kapłańskie», vol. 44, 1939, pp. 1-12; A. Kliszewicz, *Totalizm współczesny*, «Ateneum Kapłańskie», vol. 44, 1939, pp. 13-30.

³⁹ Eugenic and racial issues were taken up in Poland by: K. Stojanowski: *Eugenika*, «Wychowanie Fizyczne» 1927; L. Jaxa-Bykowski, *Jeszcze o «pacyfizmie» w szkolnictwie niemieckim*, «Myśl Narodowa», vol. 2, n. 32, 1930, pp. 496-498; c.d. vol. 2, n. 33, pp. 518-519. K. Stojanowski's critique of the development of racial studies in Germany and the world and his criticism of German racism was undertaken in his works: K. Stojanowski, *Rasizm przeciw Słowiańszczyźnie*, «Głos», 1934.

⁴⁰ K. Stojanowski, *Myśl rasowa w Szwecji*, «Myśl Narodowa», vol. 20, 1932, pp. 274-275; also K. Stojanowski, *Prężność nordyzmu*, «Myśl Narodowa», n. 32, 1931, pp. 11-12.

(e.g., as in the USA, where racial thought came to the fore most extensively) and offensive racism, of which German racism is a leading example. American racism (the inverted commas are used speaking of American as opposed to German racism), in Stojanowski's opinion, despite its defensiveness, caused political problems such as immigration legislation or the activities of the Ku-Klux-Klan, and could not therefore be something desirable.

Offensive racism, Stojanowski believed, had taken strong hold in Denmark and Norway, but was already difficult to incorporate in Sweden. Despite German efforts, similarly to Poland there was no demand for racism in Sweden. In making a critique of the «demand» for racism before Hitler came to power, Stojanowski asked if it were a coincidence that Swedes, a great nation with a greater cultural tradition than the Danes and Norwegians, had not become aware that Nordic ideology, applied consistently, threatened to annihilate the neighbouring nations that were weaker than Germany⁴¹. Similar opinions and evidence in the narrative of Polish 'nationalists' could be found not only in the weekly «Myśl Narodowa» (the adjectives «national» or «nationalist» will be used in inverted commas in relation to this newspaper to distinguish them from their German meanings), but also in other periodicals.

In 1931, Stojanowski reported in a tone of warning that the Nordic movement, as a serious German force, was expanding into Scandinavian countries, including Norway⁴². He warned that German racists were active through the German-Norwegian Society, founded in 1927. The «Baltic Year 1931» project planned 200 propaganda events in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The Universities of Königsberg, Griffla, Lübeck and Riga were involved in promoting the idea. Even educators were involved in spreading racism; Peter Petersen gave a lecture in Cologne as early as 1929, as part of the «Nordic-German Week of Science and Arts», entitled *Deutsche rund nordisch Geist, ihre Wechsel – wirkungen in Verlauf ihrer Geschichte*, which later opened a book written in the aftermath of the *week*, edited by Ferdinand Hirt, *Deutschland und der Norden*, published in Breslau in 1931⁴³. Significantly, «Myśl Narodowa» mentions Rosenberg's book *Der Mythos des 20 Jahrhunderts* as a manifestation of German racism that was dangerous to the world⁴⁴.

Polish critics' stance against racism not only provided a thorough appraisal of it, but even more accurately – as only World War II would show – was a prediction of its consequences⁴⁵.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 275; see also K.S. Frycz, *Złe źródła faszyzmu i hitleryzmu*, «Myśl Narodowa», vol. 18, 1939, pp. 265-266.

⁴² Stojanowski, *Prężność nordyzmu*, cit., p. 12.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁴ S. Kozicki, *Nacjonalizm niemiecki. Z powodu książki Alfreda Rosenberga Der Mythos des 20 Jahrhunderts*, «Myśl Narodowa», vol. 33, 1932, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁵ See: Z. Mysłakowski, *Totalizm czy kultura*, Kraków, Czytelnik, 1938; J. Pastuszka, *Filo-*

2.1. *Philosophical foundations of racism as interpreted by Polish philosophers*

All theories gain higher scientific status and have a greater degree of influence when rested on philosophical foundations. Empirical concepts then lose their adventitiousness, acquire the character of necessity and become postulates for real life. This also applies to racism. If racism were based only on the biological theory of inheritance, its impact would be limited to experts in their particular field.

In Poland, it is noted with disapproval that Western philosophy has given racism a helping hand. New philosophical trends hardly happen by chance; their development requires a favourable intellectual atmosphere, Pastuszka writes. They emerge from the intellectual currents promoted at a given time, also referring to the achievements of science. The philosophical trail of the promotion of 1930s racism is particularly discussed by philosophers from Catholic circles. They begin by pointing out that materialism was the direction that dominated philosophy at the end of the 19th century. When it emerged from the natural sciences that life could not be reduced to a physical-chemical process, that it exists as a fundamentally different reality from material phenomena, a direction emerged claiming that life was eternal, universal, and so-called philosophical biologism was criticised. On its basis, life was understood as a creative energy, indestructible and universal, possessing a mysterious dynamic. Governed by its own laws, it brings forth ever-newer forms with the ability to differentiate and take ontically distinct parts⁴⁶. Racism referred to the idea of philosophical biologism when:

it considered not the individual but the race as an autonomous, distinguished vital totality concerning man. A race, therefore, is not only an ensemble of people who possess similar physical and psychological characteristics acquired through heredity, but it is a closed circle of specific life energy, a definite, complete expression of the manifestation of all-life. Race rises to the level of the highest value, to an independent field of reality⁴⁷.

The term «philosophical interpretation of the reality defined as race» formulated in the Polish critique of racism appeared at the time, as if interchangeable with the philosophical foundations of racism. This seems a strange procedure; could it be that it was awkward for philosophers to philosophically justify an idea so low? The term «reality defined as race» is found in the definition quoted.

The idea of all-life was reinforced by the ideas of force and struggle. The

zoficzne i społeczne idee A. Hitlera, «Ateneum Kapłańskie», vol. 40, pp. 329-340, 1937; vol. 41, pp. 23-37, 1938.

⁴⁶ J. Pastuszka, *Filozoficzne podstawy rasizmu*, «Ruch Katolicki», vol. 9, 1939, pp. 156-157.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-158.

idea of force, taken from the philosophy of Nietzsche, who is known as the father of National Socialism, states that the goal of every living creature is to amplify its strength. Man also does not desire truth, happiness, material or spiritual goods but the enrichment of life. In this way, man moves towards superhumanity. Starting from these premises, German racism places the development of physical strength through sports education at the forefront, promoting classes in fencing, boxing and other martial arts and physical fitness. Physical strength is to become the basis of willpower; it is also regarded as a prerequisite for the life of ideas, and it reaches its greatest tension in combat. It is not only the opposing forces of nature that fight but also individuals and nations. Pastuszka, in reconstructing this line of the origins of racism, reached back to E. Kriek's *Völkisch-politische Antropologie* (Leipzig 1938), K. Breiner's *Die Welt im Spiegel der Rassenseele* (Breslau 1938), A. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (München 1934) and others.

Moreover, racism, like Darwinism or Marxism, saw the idea of the struggle for existence as the most important factor in evolution and development, extending it to all areas of life. Pastuszka quotes a maxim from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*: «Whoever wants to live must fight, and whoever does not want to fight an eternal battle in the world does not deserve to live» (1934, p. 317). Racism, by considering life as the primordial element of reality and man as its manifestation, consequently referred to man's cognitive talents. It did not take long to conclude definitively that it is not reason, but instinct, intuition, and the heart that are the proper cognitive organs. Pastuszka finds the sources of these views in H. Bergson, Lessing, Ed. Le Roy, L. Klages and others⁴⁸.

As a result, «racism does not want to develop human intelligence, it distrusts reason and emphasises the role of emotion» Pastuszka writes. It wants to develop a strong will, the joy of action, a sense of responsibility. The development of the intellect should come second, while the first place should be given to the development of the energy, willpower and feelings of the individual, especially the social ones, in connection with the instincts of the nation and the race. The soul of the race is expressed through irrational elements, and it is Pastuszka's open intention to expose this tendency. In his intellectual and Catholic home at the University of Lublin, such a position is unacceptable. Within the framework of racism, education is given new priorities that are only apparently good, while this position is alien to the Christian foundations of education. For it contradicts its main philosophical currents – neo-Thomism and personalism – which were dominant in Polish Catholic culture at the time. This kind of unmasking of racism is important for Pastuszka because it contradicts the philosophy of theistic realism (neo-Thomism) which he repre-

⁴⁸ Pastuszka, *Filozoficzne podstawy rasizmu*, cit., pp. 159-160.

sented and the university milieu which, while giving reason the leading role in cognition, rejected such tendencies.

Pastuszka wrote about the role of the «racial soul» as a source of Nazism. It is worth recalling, that the Germanic soul does not flee from the world (as in the East) but strives for new works and new values. The active attitude of the Germanic race is sought in the geobiological conditions of its formation. Pastuszka calls this psychological-biological determinism and points to it as a characteristic of racism and, at the same time, of the materialism of the 19th century⁴⁹.

Philosophical subjectivism and exaggerated historicism provide further support for racism. From Michalski's writings, the reader of the «Przegląd Powszechny» could learn that the so-called decaying currents in German Protestantism came from two sides: a) philosophical subjectivism, which in the field of religion turned into extreme anthropocentrism, in which man became the *raison d'être* of God and religious life a component of culture; and b) the second decaying current came from exaggerated historicism, which had the effect of denying Christianity its immutable value.

Michalski poses the question: «Did the racial movement, embedded in the National Socialist myth, have a transformative effect on German thinking in the field of religion?». The answer is in the affirmative – it influenced and alluded to the two decaying currents mentioned above. The first makes religion appear not so much as a manifestation of personal consciousness, but as a product of collective life with the symbols of race and blood present in it. With regard to the second current, Michalski claimed that the place of historicism had begun to be taken by the philosophy of history⁵⁰. In the context of his thinking, it is clear that the philosophy of history is more pragmatic than historicism, because it draws on the past and looks to the future, where dreams are located, including those for other nations, which are dangerous and absurd. Michalski does not underestimate Rosenberg's constant reference to dreams, for he calls a dream a thought that arouses human feelings to such an extent that it becomes the driving force behind all longings, desires and actions. These must be present in school education – «instilling dreams (!) in young people is like infecting them with an indelible virus», Michalski wrote.

According to racism, the nation is the organism that gives rise to the spiritual culture of the individual. The idea of the organism, present in the philosophy and sociology of the state in the 19th century, is also applicable here, with the difference that the race has taken on the role of the organism. Individuals – as parts of the organism – are to be subordinated to the whole and draw their biological energies from it. The individual, as part of the vital energy of the organism, has no powers of its own; the organism as a whole, i.e. the race, has

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Michalski, *Fermenty religijne w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, cit., pp. 349-350.

them. German National Socialism, with its totalitarian front, was founded on such a conception of the organism and the rank given to the race⁵¹.

Father Józef Pastuszka's search for the philosophical origins of racism and his critical interpretation of them found a new exponent in Father Franciszek Sawicki, a philosopher with ties to German culture who published extensively in German. In 1934 he wrote that racism was flourishing in a new philosophical direction – the philosophy of life⁵². As a co-founder of this movement, he complained that it had been overrun by racial issues. As a result, Christian philosophy had to deal with them more than it wanted to. In fact, in the articles that came out of this milieu, no texts promoted the idea of racism; on the whole, they were either critical or informative. The development of new trends and ideologies in the pages of Catholic, conservative and conservative-nationalist journals was a constant line of discourse with reality. The founders of racial theories and their concepts were presented (including the French pioneer Arthur de Gobineau and others), and their works were quoted⁵³. It is worth presenting them today in order to show how Catholic circles in Poland critically followed the development of racism. Apart from Sawicki and Pastuszka⁵⁴, Stanisław Podoleński⁵⁵, Koniński and Karol Stojanowski⁵⁶ also identified Count de Gobineau as the father of racism.

These Polish authors stress that in the pre-Hitler phase of development, racism was not specific to Germany. In France, according to Pastuszka, there was a widespread belief that the rulers of Gallia and later of France were a race of long-headed blondes; that racism emerged noticeably with the fall of France, when in the 18th century there was an exodus of thousands of Protestant masses of Nordic origin to Prussia, which took place after the Edict of Nantes⁵⁷. The next stage in the incredible spread of racism came after the First World War. It then became

the political and social programme of German National Socialism, a programme in the service of which science, legislation and the efficient apparatus of the great State stood.

⁵¹ Pastuszka, *Filozoficzne podstawy rasizmu*, cit., pp. 161-162.

⁵² Sawicki, *Nowoczesne teorie rasowe*, cit., p. 19.

⁵³ In France: J.A. Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1855); G.V. de Lapouge, *Les Sélections sociales* (1896); Id., *L'Aryen son rôle social* (1899); In North America: M. Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race: Or the Racial Basis of European History* (1923); L. Stoddard, *The Revolt against Civilization. The Menace of the Underman* (1924). These positions are quoted by F. Sawicki (Sawicki, *Nowoczesne teorie rasowe*, cit., pp. 19-33).

⁵⁴ Pastuszka, *Rasizm jako światopogląd*, cit., pp. 101-116.

⁵⁵ S. Podoleński, *Ustawa sterylizacyjna w Niemczech*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 201, 1934, pp. 46-67; Also Id., *Eugenika i ruch eugeniczny*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 193, 1932, pp. 319-331; Id., *Etyka katolicka i eugenika i medycyna*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 214, 1937, pp. 195-208; Id., *Antyreligijny front socjalnej demokracji w Austrii*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 186, 1930, pp. 374-379.

⁵⁶ K. Stojanowski, *Rasizm przeciw Słowiańszczyźnie*, Poznań, Biblioteka «Głosu», 1934.

⁵⁷ Pastuszka, *Rasizm jako światopogląd*, cit., pp. 101-116.

Racism today has many theorists and their work is directed towards stopping the process of racial mixing, strengthening the Nordic element in the German population and defending racial purity⁵⁸.

Pastuszka and Sawicki saw this as the main and most negative goal of the German state. Racism is based on the principle that races and individuals are not equal, and that the value of a race among its members is measured by its cultural productivity. The value of the individual, on the other hand, is measured by his or her racial affiliation and the life energy that is supposed to emanate from it. Pastuszka's account of his studies on the development of racism in Western writing, the treatment of individual life according to the norms dictated by race, and the life of the nation determined by the law of blood⁵⁹, sounds absurd and alien both against the background of Polish cultural traditions and from the perspective of the Catholic religion. In the Polish critique of racism, Niesiołowski's position is remarkable; in his worldview, the issue of race was of little importance, and he would probably never have considered it had it not been for the wave of voices raised on this issue in research and publications in Western academic circles. With reference to this, Niesiołowski suggested that one could speak of «the common characteristics of a nation only in so far as they are historically produced by common development, because, due to such a common mixture of types, the features associated with racial characteristics can prevail at most in this or that part of the nation»⁶⁰. Niesiołowski focused on ways to expose, but also to strengthen, the behaviour of national elites that he considered too weak or absent. He never referred to race in this context, but to the historical legacy, the destiny of the nation, which consolidates some of its characteristics, although, as he said, these could always go in different directions.

Pastuszka, on the other hand, argued with concern that historiosophical racism was popularised in parallel with biological racism by, among others, the Gobineau-Vereinigung, an association of the German intellectual elite that had existed in Germany since 1894. He considered L. Woltmann, L. Schemann and C. Bornhak to be the leading theorists of historical racism on the threshold of the 20th century. He explicitly argued that racism, when it became the political and social programme of German National Socialism, made use of science, legislation and the functioning state apparatus⁶¹. He also wrote about the second wave of racist literature (the first wave had already appeared before the First World War in Germany, France and the United States), the

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁶⁰ A. Niesiołowski, *Formy i metody pracy oświatowej*, Warsaw, Polska Macierz Szkolna, 1932, p. 2.

⁶¹ Pastuszka, *Rasizm jako światopogląd*, cit., p. 104.

existence of which was also emphasised by Sawicki, who spoke of its extent in the 1920s.

In the above interpretations of racism, their authors, especially Sawicki, found the concepts of race and nation problematic for science. They noted that appropriate rearrangements had been made, allowing science to distinguish more clearly between these concepts. As a result, the study of the cultural life of nations was recognised by science as the subject of ethnology, and the study of their physical organisation as the subject of anthropology. This was of little help, however, because under the influence of racial theories and the proclamation of the great importance of race for nationhood, science – especially in its popular form – helped to confuse the concepts of race and nation. In view of this conceptual confusion, Feliks Koneczny defined the concept of race as follows: «It is a variety of zoological species; there are races of animals and there are races of human beings. New and different characteristics often appear, but they rarely become fixed; when they become fixed, one can speak of a race»⁶². Koneczny, however, did not consider the category of race to be relevant. In the accepted juxtaposition of the two categories of race and civilisation, he said that there was no such thing as a pure race and that the alleged struggle between the races was an illusion. Moreover, as human history shows, race need not be pure, but civilisation must be pure, for history is made up of competing civilisations⁶³.

The issue of racism was not a priority for Polish philosophers, especially those of a national-conservative and Catholic orientation. Koneczny was also reluctant to write about this «Western fashion». In terms of research, he considered the subject highly questionable, claiming that the difficulties of anthropology lay in the incompleteness of the material. «There are no studies of the peoples of Asia, so it is impossible to determine which races were original and which came later », he wrote. Koneczny considered skin colour to be an outdated and secondary criterion in anthropology. Attempting to address the widely discussed question of the characteristics of the Nordic race, he wrote: «All the first Slavs were fair-haired, their expansion was of the Nordic type (northward), Slavs of Slavic blood can be found only north of the Carpathians»⁶⁴. Considering the qualities of the mind to be more important than those of biology, Koneczny argues that by bringing together psychological, sociological and historical traits, we obtain what is called civilisation, which is immeasurably more important than race.

⁶² F. Koneczny, *Rasa a cywilizacja*, «Tęcza», vol. 32, 1929, p. 1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

2.2. *Racism as a worldview*

Polish critics of racism have strongly emphasised that racism is not just a philosophical interpretation of the part of reality defined as race; it has a much greater power because it appears «as a worldview, since by explaining the nature of the world and the meaning of human life it attempts to give an ideological synthesis of reality and to delineate a line of conduct in life»⁶⁵. An important feature of a critical discourse on racism as a worldview is to see that, in explaining the concept of worldview, Nazi theorists changed its characterisation as a concept. This fact was emphasised by Pastuszka, among others, who found it most nonsensical that «racism deprives worldview of its casual and arbitrary character and regards it as a necessary function of race and blood»⁶⁶. While acknowledging that the religious element is not always dominant in a worldview, he argued that the leading role is played by an intellectual element derived from the natural sciences, the humanities or metaphysics⁶⁷.

In the critique of racism as a worldview, other absurdities were discovered, particularly in relation to its social, political and cultural role. These were pointed out by Father. Wincenty Granat when he said that it was absurd that this new worldview of the Nazi state, like the worldview of the Bolshevik state, took over all affairs. And the greatest absurdity and at the same time novelty is that the dogma of God was replaced by the dogma of man. Granat foresaw the tragic consequences⁶⁸ even before the German genocide of the 'inferior' races.

Polish philosophers and theologians argued that, from the point of view of Catholic culture, the change of worldview that took place in Germany in the 1930s was an abuse that transgressed and broke the boundaries of Latin civilisation. This was because

The source of the Catholic worldview is dogma – the truth of the faith; the Church defends revealed truth. Human reason can know the existence of God by its own powers, [...] in the act of faith the truth is received by reason under the influence of God's will and grace⁶⁹.

It was assumed that dogmas were of obvious importance in shaping pedagogical theories and practices, and that the truth of the Gospel did not separate people from life, nor did it lead them astray, but on the contrary, it provided for the fullness of life. Such a position was rejected by the Nazis. In the words of Granat: «The theorists of racism, which is an irrationalist system per

⁶⁵ Pastuszka, *Filozoficzne podstawy rasizmu*, cit., p. 162.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ W. Granat, *Zasady pedagogii katolickiej w świetle dogmatu odkupienia grzechu pierwotnego*, «Miesięcznik Katechetyczny i Wychowawczy», vol. 1-2, 1939, pp. 26-27.

⁶⁹ Granat, *Zasady*, cit., p. 27.

excessum, try to construct a new system, a new faith and a new view of life and its goals by means of historical, biological and philosophical ruptures»⁷⁰.

Such an approach was negated all the more because, from a (neo)Thomist and personalist perspective, a worldview is the result of free choice, personal reflection or study. Catholic intellectuals completely rejected the opposite proposition inherent in racism. They claimed that having roots in a particular race only contributed to the initial formation of the individual, whereas for racists a worldview is non-individual, even though it is expressed by the individual originating from the race; as a result, the nation and the race are eternal⁷¹.

The Nazis assumed that racial differences ran deep into psychic life and that, therefore, each race had:

- its own individual way of thinking, so that consequently no science can deviate from the main tone of the worldview;
- its own worldview – the Aryan world is different from the non-Aryan world; the core of its worldview is biological pantheism (the universe as life pervades all being, which, like particles, share the destiny of the whole);
- sources of action – life activity grows from the same soil as thought, from race;
- sources of religion – religion is a product of the race; idealism is emphasised, as is the validity of ideas and fidelity to them;
- Nation and State – are an obvious function of race – as Pastuszka found in Heyse, Hitler, Sombart, Krieck and Rosenberg;
- the focus of this worldview shifts from the state to the nation because it can be opposed to any universalism that recognises the racial equality of human beings;
- views of marriage – based on racial principles, marriage is a condition for the health of the nation (a woman's role in marriage is to concentrate on motherhood, all other aspects, e.g. scientific, professional or political, harm the female maternal side and hence the nation)⁷².

According to Pastuszka's critique, these distinctions of the racist worldview form its ideals and moral norms. Its adherents apparently believe that they are entitled to superiority over all other worldviews. In some of Pastuszka's texts quoted here, he takes the position of a scholar discussing ideologies that order the world according to their own vision. In this case, however, he gives a diagnosis of their real characteristics⁷³. There are also texts in which he

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Pastuszka, *Filozoficzne podstawy rasizmu*, cit., p. 163.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.

⁷³ Id., *Rasizm jako światopogląd*, cit., pp. 101-116.

criticises this phenomenon from the perspective of Christianity⁷⁴ as a religion. Pastuszka shows the racial character of all the phenomena common to German culture in the late 1920s and early 1930s⁷⁵. In his interpretation, racism is so pervasive in Germany that no science is autonomous or attempts to deviate from its core narrative. Its creators are said to nurture the belief that some special emotional elements are inherent in race. And the Nordic element is said to give science its peculiar and German-specific facet⁷⁶.

Polish writers of the time reflected on the groundbreaking nature of the third decade of the Twentieth century and the inevitability of cultural change as a consequence of the racist worldview. These were characterised by a high level of dynamism and an expansive political agenda. The elements of change were short-lived, as if external expansion had exhausted their internal power. Such observations were also made by Pastuszka when he embarked on an analysis and critique of racism. He gave a comprehensive account of racism as a worldview, while pointing out a number of dangers inherent in it. He believed that the ideological elements it contained elements of evil:

- racism, as a biological theory, postulates eugenics, including negative eugenics; it is a kind of messianism with a mystique of the German national soul and a desire for power;
- racism is a historiosophical direction describing the role of nations in the creation of culture; it is a political programme proclaiming the supremacy of the Germans and the taking away the rights of other nations, a point that Stojanowski⁷⁷ and other critics emphasise above all;
- racism is intolerant of other worldviews, it demands unconditionality for itself;
- racism is seen as universal, uncompromising, dogmatic and with pseudo-religious elements⁷⁸.

In the inter-war period, such diagnoses of the development of racism were of social significance, bringing the Polish reader closer to the picture of events abroad. Strong voices of warning were raised by writers critical of racism, as exemplified by Michalski's statement:

A demon of blood is ruthlessly awakened from its thousand-year sleep, while our eyes are closed to what it unites from above as cultural heritage. Once the demon is finally awakened, nations and states will begin to disintegrate, with the Third Reich at the forefront:

⁷⁴ Id., *Krytyka światopoglądu rasistowskiego*, cit., pp. 305-320.

⁷⁵ Id., *Filozoficzne i społeczne idee A. Hitlera (Rasizm)* (completed), «Ateneum Kapłańskie», vol. 41, 1938, book 1, pp. 23-37.

⁷⁶ Id., *Filozoficzne podstawy rasizmu*, cit., p. 165.

⁷⁷ Stojanowski, *Rasizm przeciw Słowiańszczyźnie*, cit.

⁷⁸ Pastuszka, *Rasizm jako światopogląd...*, cit., p. 102.

the choice remains between the primacy of spirit from above or the primacy of blood from below as the leaven of history. It's about primacy, not exclusivity⁷⁹.

Polish critics have identified a variety of justifications for racism among its German founders. These were found in distant times or strange places in history. Michalski cites Rosenberg's absurdly racist account of the Bolshevik Revolution:

Bolshevism was able to triumph because the Russian people declared themselves in favour of love and against honour. In the West, too, the idea of Christian love penetrated as a slogan of life, but time and again a rebellion of blood and honour broke out, whereas in Russia love, together with pity and humility, stood for the weak, the worthless, the sick and the criminal⁸⁰.

If this is the diagnosis of the German spirit of the 1930s, there is no longer any need to justify the German *drang nach Osten* as a supposed privilege due to them.

2.3. *Blood (race) – land – state: the main categories of German Nazism*

National Socialism created the 'grandiosity' of the German people. This claim was secured multilaterally by the idea of blood (race) and the indispensability of soil (living space). Michalski wrote that for Nazism, the idea of blood and soil together constituted what Germans called the nation's inevitable fate, its destiny.

It is in the blood that the past, the race, the constitution, the destiny and the character of each man are born. It is from the soil of the fatherland that the vital forces of individuals and nations flow; it is from it that the bonds that unite the whole cosmos are born, just as it is from blood that the bonds that unite the succeeding generations in history are born. The destiny of the German nation was fulfilled by the Nazi revolution⁸¹.

Given the German mentality, this statement is bitterly ironic; it is a tragic, paraphrased vision of the near future in which Germany, Poland's neighbour, is preparing a plan of annihilation for Poland.

All this happened in the real absence of any scientific justification for racism. Jerzy Ryx said that it was erroneous and unscientific to insist that the human races differed anatomically, physiologically or organismically. To allow the

⁷⁹ Michalski, *Tomizm wobec...*, cit., p. 10.

⁸⁰ Id., *Gasnące blaski*, Kraków, «Czas», vol. 8, 1934, p. 11. Exposing the ways of thinking of the founders of National Socialism is an unmasking procedure deliberately used by Michalski.

⁸¹ K. Michalski, *Fermenty religijne w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 201, 1934, pp. 351-352.

question of racial purity to come to the fore could only be considered alongside a desire to perpetuate positive human qualities. But here, Ryx emphasises, the congealing of a race within itself can only lead to the outgrowth of a race or nation. Ryx called this homozygote fixation negative, and in his discussion he also used many other biomedical terms that were used at the time to justify racial theories. He condemned any attempt to maintain the purity of blood (race) and criticised the very concept of blood used in the ideology of racism. It is not the blood but the chromosome that carries the genes. Similarly, the soul and religion, which are of divine origin, cannot be racial. The concept of race should not be ascribed any law of origin or any measure/rank, let alone the highest or the lowest. On the contrary, if any degeneracy afflicts a race or nation, it can be counteracted by interbreeding with races with positive characteristics⁸². The German National Socialists did not see this error.

Another error of racism is to see race as the source of inspiration for the emergence of the state. According to Ryx, this is a historical error, because it is the individual or group of individuals who recognise that a state is necessary for them. Only individuals grouped together as a collective have the natural right to determine their own destiny and to give it the form of a state. The primacy of racism, in the sense of fulfilling the role of justifying German National Socialism, also came to the fore in the attempt to reconstruct a programme for the state, Hitler's political programme⁸³. Using *Mein Kampf* as an example, the anonymous author (S.M.) showed how broadly racism was understood. It did not only refer to Jews or non-white races but appears as a state-forming element. The author of «Przegląd Powszechny» claimed that Hitler hated Austria because it was becoming «more and more like a Slavic state», which was favourable to the ruling dynasty⁸⁴.

Finally, some critics of racism have pointed to the very existence of the Germanic (Nordic) race, arguing that it is wrong to make race a constitutive element of a state or nation. «The Germans are wrong» says Ryx, «to think of themselves as a purely Nordic race; after all, the Scandinavians have more of its characteristics. Other races, too, such as the Romance or the Slavic, could aspire to all the qualities that the Nordic race does not have (or has less of). Finally, in Germany, the constant influx of southern races (Romance, Mediterranean, Jewish) has produced a conglomerate so diverse that it is impossible to speak of a pure race. The characteristics of today's Germans are only somatogenic, i.e. they are the result of a uniform style of diet, education and exercise. These characteristics are subject to rapid change, as the rapid Polonization of Germans arriving in Poland shows. In Ryx's view, the ease with which the Germans have assimilated into a foreign culture is evidence of their genetic

⁸² J. Ryx, *Błędy rasizmu*, «Prąd», n. 35, 1938, pp. 339-349.

⁸³ S.M., *Adolf Hitler i jego program*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 196, 1932, pp. 3-30.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

unsustainability. This side of the German race is known to its leaders, and they therefore remove the influence of other nations. Anthropologically speaking, Germans are not an original race – Hitler himself is a typical southerner. If today's racist ideology perpetuates certain characteristics of today's Germans that are desirable – good, bad or even criminal – the awakening of Germans from the theory of racism will be tragic»⁸⁵, he adds.

2.4. *Racism and the Christian culture of Europe*

Racism had hardly emerged as an isolated idea; Polish intellectuals understood it as part of a larger whole. Michalski related the religious context to the German Church, describing it as follows:

On its left wing burns the revolutionary bonfire of the Germanic Church, from which the subversive currents of the 'German Christians' flow towards the conservative Evangelicals and Catholics. A few years earlier, the Calvinist pastor, Professor Karl Barth, had warned of currents in which Christian principles could dissolve⁸⁶.

Michalski shared Barth's view, claiming that they would not only change Germany but begin the destruction of European civilisation. Such diagnoses were confirmed from time to time by significant events. In the spring of 1934, the editors of «Prąd» informed their readers that the Vatican, in a decree of 9 February 1934, had condemned two books: *Der Mythos der 20. Jahrhunderts* by Alfred Rosenberg and *Die deutsche Nationalkirche* by Ernest Bermann. It is significant that, contrary to previous practice, the Church authorities gave reasons for the condemnation, including the expression of socialism and racism.⁸⁷ This raises the question of the relationship between racial theories and Christianity, which appears in many of the texts cited here. In Poland, it was asked by Sawicki, among others, although the distribution of emphasis in his later answers varies. Overall, Sawicki argued that racial theories generally contained non-Christian elements. The following are some of the elements that contradict Christianity:

- naturalism and determinism (insofar as they deny the intrinsic nature of spiritual life and see human history as the result of racial characteristics);
- extreme relativism (in demanding a separate religion, ethics, etc., for each race);

⁸⁵ Ryx, *Błędy rasizmu*, cit., pp. 342-345.

⁸⁶ Michalski, *Fermenty...*, cit., p. 349.

⁸⁷ Quoted after «Prąd», vol. 26, 1934, p. 143; in the «Z kraju i ze świata» section, no author given.

- racial pride (non-recognition of the equality of the races);
- selfishness and racial antagonism⁸⁸.

Thus, the general answer to the question of the interaction between racism and Christianity – considered from a Catholic point of view – is negative: racist theories are alien to Christianity.

In 1933, the Polish nationalist Karol Ludwik Koniński wrote that a massive «stripping of the national imagination of Christian images for the purposes of racism, to be replaced by a cult of natural forces in mythological garb»⁸⁹ had taken place in Germany.

Meanwhile, an extensive informal education towards racism took place in Germany with many actual measures taken to achieve this goal. J. B. Fichte's speeches made to the nation after the defeat at Jena in 1807, when French troops were standing in Germany, were brought forward. Fichte referred to the Germans as the 'original people' (*Urvolk*) who maintained racial purity. This was accompanied by a return to Germanic mythology which, Koniński believed, was characteristic of the emergence of national ideas in Germany. Koniński found parallels with different events: it was also the case in the mid-19th century that national ideas were then accompanied by a fresh edition of the Grimm brothers' fairy tales, and J. W. Wolff founded the magazine «Wotan», which was reinstated in the 1930s. Koniński further recalled that this

Mythology is essentially also a disguised materialism, only of a different, more exaggerated kind, and is in any case an extreme naturalism shrouded in a fantastic haze, and as such is an expression of the fundamental secularisation of the spirit⁹⁰.

Jan Kuchta, an educator and employee of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, wrote in a book published in Lvov in 1939 that race, nation and Hitlerism were the main concepts ruling Germany. He was not writing about German Nazism, but about «German racism and neo-paganism», which had defined the political and cultural situation created by replacing God with new idols: race and nation. He drew this conclusion, he explained, from reading the works of Rosenberg, Bergmann, Hauer, Kriek, Fichte and others. His excellent knowledge of the current state of development of German philosophical, ideological, social and political thought led him to adopt the position of a humanist who warned and protested against the emerging racism (Dr Kuchta disappeared without a trace in the first weeks of the Second World War).

The sources cited above clearly point to the anti-Christian (anti-religious)

⁸⁸ Sawicki, *Nowoczesne teorie rasowe*, cit., pp. 20-21.

⁸⁹ K. Koniński, *Logika swastyki*, «Przegląd Powszechny», vol. 197, 1933, p. 307.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

origins of racism. On the basis of Christian theological thought, voices were heard which explicitly referred to racism. Michalski was one of the few critics of Nazism whose assessment of the political landscape in Germany evolved. His 1935 work *Tomizm wobec współczesnej filozofii dziejów*, which was originally presented as a paper at the International Congress of Thomistic Philosophy in Poznań in August 1934, is one of the mildest critiques of racism and the most cautious predictions of its future consequences. At the time, Michalski did not seem to believe that such barbarism was possible in the «great» German culture, even though its anti-Christian character aroused the worst fears. He wrote of a German hierarch's attempt to defend Christianity against the spread of racism as follows:

Four questions were raised by Cardinal Faulhaber⁹¹ in his great speech to German Catholics. He asked what the Germanic tribes were like before Baptism, what Germania gained from Baptism, whether Christianity was against race, whether it killed folk creativity and folk customs. With Tacitus in hand, he proved that Germania had its advantages and disadvantages before baptism. It is true that people lived in polygamy, that the blood of human sacrifices was shed on their altars, that slavery, revenge, laziness and drunkenness prevailed – all this is true, but it is also true that they did not break their word to their chiefs and that they kept the purity of their hearths.

Christianity came to the Germans to intensify each of their advantages and to remove their shadows. The cross introduced the great idea of love between the tribes that were killing each other, and for the first time united them into one powerful nation. [...] to unite under one banner of love 50 tribes that had previously been enemies. The Church does not ask races and nations to renounce their differences, their blood, but she does ask them not to hate each other's blood. The Church does not defend the purity of race, but she opens our eyes to our duties towards the soul. These fundamental thoughts and the great defence of the Old and New Testaments in the face of attacks from the left wing proved that there were inexhaustible religious forces in the German Catholic camp⁹².

Despite Michalski's hopes for German culture, he did not return to them later. He unequivocally exposed the tragedy of events on the European stage and said that, unfortunately, German racism had taken a turn for the worse and the practical consequences would soon follow. Michalski stressed that the myth of Germanic blood also included the philosophy of their history as conceived by Rosenberg and Krieck and that «this is followed by the expansion of a new hierarchy of values, in which a kind of chivalric reverence, honour,

⁹¹ Michael von Faulhaber (born 5 March 1869 in Heidenfeld, Bawaria – died 12 June 1952 in Munich), German cardinal and archbishop, against Hitler's politics, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Michael-von-Faulhaber>> (last access: 15.12.2018). His input or even co-authorship in Pius XI encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* published in 1934 warning and condemning against the National Socialism is widely acknowledged.

⁹² Michalski, *Fermenty religijne w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, cit., p. 366.

comes to the fore instead of Christian love»⁹³. The new ethics of the new people of the «most perfect» race came directly from there. This is also where the space for education would emerge... but already outside Christianity. The argumentation of Archbishop Faulhaber quoted above was considered by the Polish church hierarchs as a soft defence against Nazism. The behaviour of the German hierarchs and the proof of the uniqueness of the Nordic blood served to make it sound like a mysterium. They stood by their rejection of the main ideas of Christianity: sin, grace and mercy. The greatest rejection, however, was that of brotherly love, love for mankind. Following this line of argument, Koniński and Michalski said that racists were offended in the Sermon on the Mount not only by the idea of mercy, but also by the potentially equal value of every human being. They also recognised that Germanic mythology, with its glorification of the Germanic race, came into contact with the «socialist ferment» and took it up as a banner.

The fact that Rosenberg wanted to remove roadside crosses as unworthy of German religiosity and its cult of strength was not only pro-racist but also pro-socialist⁹⁴. The blood myth was thus able to grow deep, becoming a symbol and an internal component of National Socialism. At its core was also the philosophy of history as interpreted in the writings of Rosenberg and Krieck. In Michalski's interpretation, their message led to the conclusion that the moment had come for Germany to rewrite the history of the world, because until then the historical images had been pale, bloodless, and always based on a generalised concept of man.

In the diagnosis of this content found in the writings of Michalski, Koniński and others, there was both a defence of Christianity and a strong voice of warning to the world. It is worth noting that when Michalski wrote the text quoted here, Pope Pius XI had not yet issued the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* (14 March 1937), which dealt with the threat of racism. Importantly, it was not only the teaching of the Catholic Church that protected Poles from the influence of racism. The thousand-year-old traditions of Polish culture also came to the fore – starting with Paweł Włodkowicz, who had already argued for the subjective rights of man at the Council of Constance (1414-1418)⁹⁵.

⁹³ Id., *Tomizm*, cit., p. 10. What is significant today – from the Polish point of view – is that Germany, having lost the First World War, wanted to rewrite its history. They will return to this idea again after the unleashed and lost Second World War and again write their history of alleged war «sacrifices» and share the responsibility for their crimes with the Polish people, who are the most victimised by them.

⁹⁴ Koniński, *Logika swastyki*, cit., pp. 305-306.

⁹⁵ L. Korporowicz, *Polskie korzenie prawa narodów w budowaniu podmiotowości wspólnot kulturowych*, in R. Wiśniewski (ed.), *Eseje o Niepodległej*, Warsaw, NCK, 2018, pp. 103-127.

Summary: The cultural-ideological dimension of the Polish critique of racism

We owe to Father Pastuszka the most profound analyses among the conservative and Catholic sources, and at the same time a fully scientific presentation of racism with a critique of its biological justifications⁹⁶. In the third part of his series on racism in the pages of *Ruch Katolicki*⁹⁷, he published a critique of the historiosophical justifications, arguing that not only biological racism was important for the Germans, but above all historiosophical racism, which seemed to reach the common man more easily. The biological variety of German racism was not only about the biological purity of the race, but also about its spirit – for the Nazis, the spirit of the nation was a function of blood⁹⁸. Drawing on a very wide range of sources, Pastuszka concludes that the Nazis emphasised the need for all kinds of racism to have an impact: especially through science and culture and, during Hitler's reign, through legislation and the repressive apparatus of the state. Among the most ardent popularisers of racism, Pastuszka mentioned the scientific journal *Die Nationalsozialistischen Monatshefte*, published in Munich since 1927. Pastuszka claimed that the dissemination and popularisation of racism in Germany was aided by the work of Richard Wagner, who considered racism to be the greatest scientific discovery of the Nineteenth century and gave prominence to Nazi ideas in his own work⁹⁹.

Józef Pastuszka's descriptive and analytical narrative shifting to a profound critique of racism and other Nazi phenomena of differ significantly from the texts of the eminent scholar, philosopher and theologian of the Jagiellonian University, prof. Konstanty Michalski, who was also critical of Nazism. This medievalist, much respected across Europe, and a representative of the Polish intelligentsia, struck a tragic tone when speaking on topical issues, perfectly reflecting the extent of National Socialism's deviations from the most important ideas of Christian civilisation.

On racism, Michalski stressed that it was prior to National Socialism. He wrote: «Out of psychological anthropology, out of human race and blood, the myth is born in Germany in which the whole mission of the German people is to be summed up»¹⁰⁰. How small this undertaking is, how low the Germans have fallen, we can learn from the totality of the message that this eminent philosopher gave in his work *Nieznanemu Bogu* (Kraków 1936), which in this symbolic title (To the Unknown God – transl. note) captures the message of

⁹⁶ Pastuszka, *Rasizm jako światopogląd*, cit., pp. 102-116.

⁹⁷ Id., *Krytyka rasizmu*, cit., pp. 305-320.

⁹⁸ Id., *Współczesne prądy filozoficzne*, «Kultura i Wychowanie», vol. 3, 1938, p. 207.

⁹⁹ Id., *Rasizm jako światopogląd*, cit., p. 103.

¹⁰⁰ K. Michalski, *Trzy mity*, in Id., (ed.), *Nieznanemu Bogu*, Kraków, Naukowy Instytut Katolicki, 1936, p. 28.

the totalitarianisms of the time – German Nazism, Soviet Communism and Italian Fascism. The reading of the message of the German socialists, which included the category of race, is a big question. For whom and for what purpose did socialists of different origins unhesitatingly sacrifice millions of people (in Soviet Russia, China, Spain, later in Poland, Germany), while playing a total and global game?

The most creative role in the implementation of racism was played – not only according to Michalski, but also by Koniński, Podoleński and others – by Alfred Rosenberg. As Karol Ludwik Koniński wrote explicitly:

Alfred Rosenberg, that Kurland nobleman, in *Der Mythos des 20 Jahr* (1930) created a ‘blood myth’ – that is, a new German faith, which boils down to pseudo-scientific evidence saying that Nordic blood is what will overcome and replace the old sacraments¹⁰¹.

¹⁰¹ Koniński, *Logika swastyki*, cit., p. 306.