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CHRYSTUS FUNDAMENTEM CZŁOWIECZE STWA. JANA PAWŁA II WIZJA KULTURY W KONTEK CIE KRYZYSU CZŁOWIEKA I SPOŁECZE STWA

CHRIST AS THE FOUNDATION OF HUMANITY: JOHN PAUL II'S VISION OF CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CRISIS OF MAN AND SOCIETY

Streszczenie

W eseju zaprezentowano wybrane elementy nauczania Jana Pawła II o kulturze. Papież postrzegał kulturę jako naturalne środowisko humanizacji człowieka. Skoro kultura europejska ukształtowała się dzięki chrześcijaństwu, Europejczycy – by „być sobą” – potrzebują Chrystusa. Papież wytrwale promował chrystologiczny model kultury i osoby ludzkiej. Dlatego, ostrzegając przed redukcjonizmem antropologicznym, postulował ewangelizację kultury tak, by sprzyjała ona (jako kultura „prawdziwa” i „autentyczna”) integralnemu rozwojowi osoby ludzkiej i społeczeństwa. W czasie swego pontyfikatu jasno diagnozował zagrożenia ze strony „kultury śmierci”, czyli prądów filozoficznych i trendów społecznych, które zakłámują prawdę o człowieku.

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Paweł II, kultura, chrześcijaństwo, kryzys

Abstract

This essay explores selected aspects of John Paul II's teachings on culture. The Pope perceived culture as the essential milieu for the humanization of mankind. Given that European culture has been shaped by Christianity, Europeans, to truly "be themselves," require Christ. John Paul II consistently promoted a Christocentric model of culture and the human person. Consequently, he warned against anthropological reductionism and advocated for the evangelization of culture, aiming for it to support the holistic development of both the human person and society as a "true" and "authentic" culture. Throughout his pontificate, he keenly identified the perils of the "culture of death," referring to philosophical currents and social trends that distort the truth about humanity.

Keywords: John Paul II, culture, Christianity, crisis

Introduction

In Poland, older generations are widely aware of the profound impact of Pope John Paul II and his pontificate, recognizing their remarkable significance not only for Poland and its recent history but also for Europe and humanity as a whole. As a distinguished shepherd of the Church, he engaged with a breadth of knowledge and freedom that extended beyond ecclesiastical boundaries. He naturally advocated for the Gospel of "human liberation" and engaged in dialogue with the global community. One key aspect of his teaching was his engagement with the realm of culture. Even when addressing audiences distant from the Gospel, Pope John Paul II approached the "question of man" from a perspective of Transcendence, considering human existence in relation to God. His Christocentric anthropology—often implicit—emphasized the inherent dignity of the human person and the shared nature of humanity. This vision, which has faced resistance since its inception, is at odds with post-Enlightenment anthropocentrism and materialism. In contemporary times, including in Poland, the rise of postmodernity and the apparent dominance of "doubt in man," driven by a "forgetting of God" or deliberate exclusion of the divine from discussions about human and societal issues, have become increasingly evident.

Therefore, this presentation will first examine John Paul II's perspective on culture and its intrinsic connection to human personhood. Following this, we will explore the origins and manifestations of the contemporary cultural crisis, which the Pope referred to as the "anti-culture" and the "culture of death." His observations from over three decades ago highlight his early recognition of the threats posed by the marginalization of God in both personal and societal contexts.

1. John Paul II's vision of man and culture

For Pope John Paul II, the foundation of any reflection on culture is the understanding of humanity as the image and likeness of God. This theocentric and Christocentric perspective of "anthropocentrism" permeates his speeches and writings. To John Paul II, man, redeemed and beloved by Christ, serves as the "key" to comprehending the world, society, and culture¹.

¹ Katarzyna Parzych (*Jan Paweł II o dialogu Kościoła z kulturą*), in: *Symposium „Dialog kultur”*, UWM, Olsztyn, 6 IV 2000, ed. Marian Borzyszkowski (Olsztyn: Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski, Wydział Teologii,

Central to this understanding is the primacy of Christ, a concept developed in the context of *Gaudium et Spes* 22, and articulated vividly in his sermon at Victory Square in Warsaw: "Man cannot be fully understood without Christ. Or rather: man cannot fully understand himself without Christ. He cannot understand either who he is, or what his true dignity is, or what his vocation and ultimate destiny are. He cannot understand all this without Christ".²

John Paul II contends that the Christian view of the human person, including inherent rights and their primacy over material things and human constructs, has profoundly shaped European culture³. This view has influenced European philosophical and social thought, legal frameworks, ethical norms, and educational systems, thereby inspiring individual and societal consciousness. The Pope affirmed this in his statement: "Christian culture is permeated with a sense of the transcendence of the human person, because it sinks its roots into the fertile soil of the Christian faith, according to which man was created in the image and likeness of God, became a child of the Heavenly Father through grace, and was called to participate in His supernatural happiness. Through the mystery of the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection, Christ opens time to the dimension of eternity, gives meaning to suffering, and provides strength to combat sin⁴." Having experienced the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century firsthand, the Pope viewed the rising acceptance of moral relativism in democratic Europe as an opportunity to highlight the sources of cultural crises and to caution against the potential emergence of relativistic forms of totalitarianism, whether explicit or covert. At the heart of this crisis, according to the Pope, lies a flawed anthropology. In *Centesimus Annus* (no. 13), he identified the fundamental error of socialism as anthropological, arguing that it reduces individuals to mere components of the social organism, subordinating individual good to the economic and social mechanism. This erroneous understanding of human nature and societal

2000), 40–42) notes that John Paul II's emphasis on the primacy of the person in culture is a derivative of his earlier studies. See Karol Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn (Person and Act) and Other Anthropological Studies*, ed. Tomasz Stycze (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1994).

² Jan Paweł II, „Homilia Ojca wi tego wygłoszona na Placu Zwyci stwa” (*Homily of the Holy Father Delivered at Victory Square*), in: *Pielgrzymka do Ojczyzny. Przemówienia i homilie Ojca wi tego Jana Pawła II (Pilgrimage to the Homeland: Speeches and Homilies of the Holy Father John Paul II)*, ed. Ada and Zdzisław Szubowie (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1980), 47–48. The Christocentrism of papal anthropology is evident in: Jan Paweł II, *Encyklika „Redemptor hominis” (Encyclical "Redemptor Hominis")* (Rome, 1979), no. 10. Further on, Jan Paweł II states: “In Christ and through Christ, God has most fully revealed Himself to humanity, has drawn closest to it – and at the same time in Christ and through Christ, man has attained full awareness of his dignity, his exaltation, the transcendent value of humanity itself, the meaning of his existence.” Jan Paweł II, *Encyklika „Redemptor hominis”*, no. 11.

³ Józef yci ski, *Europejska wspólnota ducha. Zjednoczona Europa w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II (European Community of Spirit: United Europe in the Teaching of John Paul II)* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo ATK, 1998), 61.

⁴ Jan Paweł II, „Przemówienie do uczestników sympozjum posynodalnego, 31 pa dziernika 1991, Rzym” (*Address to the Participants of the Post-Synodal Symposium, October 31, 1991, Rome*), in: *Jan Paweł II, Europa zjednoczona w Chrystusie. Antologia (John Paul II, Europe United in Christ: Anthology)*, ed. Leszek Sosnowski, Gabriel Turowski (Kraków: Biały Kruk, 2002), 165.

"subjectivity" has its roots in atheism. The Pope contends that a denial of God strips humanity of its foundational dignity, leading to a social order that neglects personal dignity and responsibility⁵. These observations are particularly pertinent to liberal democracies influenced by Enlightenment-era utilitarianism and hedonism⁶. As Jacek Salij notes, when individuals are uncertain about the existence of God, they cannot meaningfully address the ultimate purpose of human life or the concept of *bonum honestum*, which aligns with the purpose of our humanity. Instead, only the *bonum utile* and *bonum delectabile* are considered⁷. The Pope elaborated on the Council's teaching, asserting that without God and the hope of eternal life, human dignity suffers "serious damage," leaving profound questions about life's meaning, guilt, and suffering unresolved and potentially leading to despair⁸.

The divine origin of the human person, pivotal for understanding the culture created by humanity, was most explicitly articulated by Pope John Paul II in his renowned speech at UNESCO: *Genus humanum arte et ratione vivit*. He cited the words of one of Christianity's greatest intellectuals, who continued the legacy of ancient thought, to illustrate that culture, as articulated by Saint Thomas Aquinas, is integral to human life. According to the Pope, culture represents the essential form of human existence, distinguishing humanity from other beings in the visible world. Culture is not merely an aspect of human life; it constitutes the very way in which humans exist and interact, forming the basis for interpersonal and social relationships. *Man lives a truly human life through culture*. In his address, the Pope emphasized the exceptional status of the person as the subject and purpose of culture. He argued that culture is fundamentally linked to what it means to be human, rather than what one possesses. Culture, therefore, reflects the ontological subjectivity of humanity, with human beings being both the creators and the ultimate purpose of culture. As John Paul II observed, "Man, who in the visible world is the only ontological subject of culture, is also its only proper object and purpose. Culture is that through which man as man becomes more of a man: more 'is'." This perspective underscores the distinction between human essence ("being") and possessions ("having"), asserting that culture's essential connection is with human "being." Its relationship with what a person "has" (possesses) is not only secondary but

⁵ Jan Paweł II, *Encyklika „Centesimus annus”* (Encyclical "Centesimus Annus") (Rome, 1991), no. 13.

⁶ Jan Paweł II, *Pamięć i tożsamość* (Memory and Identity) (Kraków: Znak, 2005), 124–125. At this point, the Pope describes Europe as a "continent of devastation."

⁷ Jacek Salij, „Teolog” (“Theolog”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Człowiek kultury* (Man of Culture), ed. Katarzyna Flader, Witold Kawecki (Kraków: Rafael, 2008), 354.

⁸ Sobór Watykański II, „Konstytucja duszpasterska o Kościele w świecie współczesnym «Gaudium et spes»” (“Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World 'Gaudium et Spes'”), in: Sobór Watykański II, *Konstytucje, dekryty, deklaracje. Tekst polski* (Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations: Polish Text) (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Pallottinum, 1967), no. 21.

also entirely relative⁹. John Paul II draws attention to the subjectivity and agency of the person who is ontologically situated "before" culture. The person is "always the first fact: primordial and fundamental." The person must be perceived integrally, in their spiritual-material subjectivity. Consequently, the works of material culture bear witness to "spiritualization," while those of spiritual culture are marked by a particular "materialization."¹⁰ Emphasizing again the primacy of the person in culture, he adds: "Man, and only man, is the agent and creator of culture; man, and only man, expresses himself in it and confirms himself through it."¹¹

The Pope's reflections on culture highlight the indivisible nature of humanity, encompassing both spiritual and material dimensions, *compositum humanum*¹².

According to Andrzej Szostek, disrupting the balance between these dimensions—such as through Manichean-Platonic disdain for the body or excessive veneration of the physical—leads to a distortion of culture and a misrepresentation of human nature. Szostek also notes that idolizing freedom at the expense of communal relationships, such as in marriage, undermines the communal (*communio personarum*) and corporeal dimensions of human existence¹³.

John Paul II posits that culture's value lies in its ability to express and affirm human rationality and freedom. The more accurately and profoundly culture reflects human truth, the more "true" it is. When this is not the case, culture impoverishes man, spiritually sterilizing him. Since "man is himself through truth and becomes more himself through an ever fuller knowledge of the truth"¹⁴, man "carries within himself" the duty to seek the truth and to root himself in it¹⁵. Culture's educational or formative role is thus emphasized¹⁶, as it shapes

⁹ Jan Paweł II, „*W imi przyszło ci kultury. Przemówienie w UNESCO Pary , 2 czerwca 1980*” (“*In the Name of the Future of Culture: Speech at UNESCO, Paris, June 2, 1980*”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Wiara i kultura. Dokumenty, przemówienia, homilie (Faith and Culture: Documents, Speeches, Homilies)*, Foundation of John Paul II (Rome: Polish Institute of Christian Culture, 1986), 67–68.

¹⁰ Jan Paweł II, „*W imi przyszło ci kultury. Przemówienie w UNESCO Pary , 2 czerwca 1980*”, 69.

¹¹ Jan Paweł II, „*W imi przyszło ci kultury. Przemówienie w UNESCO Pary , 2 czerwca 1980*”, 68.

¹² Ryszard Wójtowicz provides a thorough analysis of Karol Wojtyła's anthropology in *Człowiek i kultura. Prolegomena do Wojtylińskiej myśli antropologicznej (Man and Culture: Prolegomena to Wojtylian Anthropological Thought)* (Rzeszów: University of Rzeszów Publishing House, 2010), 57–114.

¹³ Andrzej Szostek, „*Człowiek i kultura w ujęciu Jana Pawła II*” (“*Man and Culture in John Paul II's View*”), *Łódzkie Studia Teologiczne (Łódź Theological Studies)* 6 (1997): 161.

¹⁴ Jan Paweł II, „*W imi przyszło ci kultury. Przemówienie w UNESCO Pary , 2 czerwca 1980*” (“*In the Name of the Future of Culture: Speech at UNESCO, Paris, June 2, 1980*”), 76.

¹⁵ Szostek, „*Człowiek i kultura w ujęciu Jana Pawła II*” (“*Man and Culture in John Paul II's View*”), 160.

¹⁶ In the Pope's teaching, considerable attention is given to the diversity of cultures (the Church does not identify with any particular culture) and the dialogue between them. Marek Szulakiewicz, „*Jan Paweł II wobec problemów odmienności kulturowej*” (“*John Paul II and the Issues of Cultural Diversity*”), in: *De revolutionibus orbium populorum Joannis Pauli II. Papie wobec wykluczenia społecznego (On the Revolutions of the Orbs of Peoples of John Paul II: The Pope Facing Social Exclusion)*, ed. Krzysztof Pilarczyk (Warsaw: Sejm Publishing House, 2015), 287–313.

individuals by reinforcing their rational freedom through love and creative endeavors. The Pope's thesis acknowledges potential concerns about ideologizing culture. However, he critiques the commercialization and marketization of culture, warning against the abandonment of its educational mission and its impact on integral human development¹⁷. John Paul II advocates for a moral culture that fosters the development of rational freedom through virtuous actions and creative work, thereby enhancing human dignity¹⁸.

In his pastoral addresses, Pope John Paul II, while remaining faithful to the traditional conception of culture—which encompasses science, morality, art, and religion—emphasized the fundamental primacy of God as the guarantor and primary source of authentic culture. In a notable speech delivered in Strasbourg, he asserted: "The message of the Church concerns God and the ultimate destiny of man, and thus pertains to aspects deeply embedded in European culture. Is it conceivable to imagine Europe without this transcendent dimension? The modern era has witnessed the rise of philosophical currents that have rendered the concept of God increasingly obscure to contemporary thought, creating a persistent tension between the perspectives of believers and those who adhere to agnostic or atheistic humanism¹⁹."

The Pope delineated two contrasting viewpoints: believers, who view adherence to God as the foundation of true freedom leading to truth and goodness, and secularists, who reject any divine dependence and consider human constructs and societal norms as self-sufficient. For secularists, ethics is derived from the social contract, and freedom is constrained only by the rights of others. This perspective often leads to the marginalization of religion, which is viewed as an impediment to the realization of civil liberties and individual autonomy. John Paul II argued that the resolution to this dichotomy does not lie in a return to a nostalgically idealized past nor in the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. Instead, he advocated for a clear demarcation between "what is Caesar's" and "what is God's" (cf. Mt 22:21), thereby ensuring genuine freedom for religious faith²⁰. This is especially pertinent in secularized Western societies, where religion is frequently perceived as a hindrance to

¹⁷ Andrzej Szostek (*Szostek, „Człowiek i kultura w ujęciu Jana Pawła II”*, 162) notes that market forces destroy culture, as cheaper and lower-quality products that cater to mass tastes typically displace ambitious works requiring intellectual and spiritual effort from the audience.

¹⁸ Szostek, *„Człowiek i kultura w ujęciu Jana Pawła II”*, 161–162.

¹⁹ Jan Paweł II, *„Przemówienie w Parlamencie Europejskim, 11 października 1988, Strasburg”* (“*Speech at the European Parliament, October 11, 1988, Strasbourg*”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Europa zjednoczona w Chrystusie (Europe United in Christ)*, 114.

²⁰ Jan Paweł II, *„Przemówienie w Parlamencie Europejskim, 11 października 1988, Strasburg”* (“*Speech at the European Parliament, October 11, 1988, Strasbourg*”), 114–115.

individual well-being and autonomy²¹. Jan Socho highlights the importance of the "primacy of God" in John Paul II's anthropology, particularly in works such as *Person and Act*, which emphasize the "religious experience" of the individual. Wojtyła underscored the necessity of understanding the person as possessing a fixed ontic structure that is manifested through human actions, both spiritual and corporeal. Hence, a person's acceptance of God—His revelation and self-giving—occurs in a rational and free manner²².

Following the collapse of the communist regime, John Paul II remarked that European culture cannot be fully comprehended without reference to Christianity. He stated, "The Gospel forms the bedrock of European culture, having been proclaimed and lived out over twenty centuries by courageous apostles and countless believers. The dynamism of Christian faith has unleashed vast creative potential within European culture, which, despite the disappearance of numerous civilizations and cultures, has continually renewed and enriched itself through its dialogue with the Gospel. This dialogue, though often fraught with conflict, has consistently proved fruitful²³." On another occasion, he noted: "European culture, within the heritage of Christian faith, has been distinctly guided by the Christian conception of humanity. The belief in man's likeness to God and his redemption through Jesus Christ has established a historical and salvific foundation for recognizing human value and dignity and for respecting the need for individual development within a framework of human solidarity²⁴." John Paul II recognized that the fall of the Iron Curtain did not automatically resolve the profound issues surrounding human existence or the cultural devastation wrought by atheistic regimes. The collapse of ideological oppression and systemic dechristianization, which had produced societies where God was no longer a point of reference, was succeeded

²¹ Chantal Delsol, *Nienawi do wiata. Totalitaryzmy i ponowoczesno* (*Hatred of the World: Totalitarianism and Postmodernity*), translated by Marek Chojnacki (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 2020), especially chapter: „Fatalny proces emancypacji” (“*The Fatal Process of Emancipation*”), 28–67. From a cultural-legal-political perspective on the presence of religion (its influence) in public life, see Rowan Williams, *Wiara na areopagu. O wizji Europy, roli państwa oraz o tym, dlaczego współczesne społeczeństwo nie przetrwa bez Boga, religii i wartości moralnych* (*Faith on the Areopagus: On the Vision of Europe, the Role of the State, and Why Modern Society Will Not Survive Without God, Religion, and Moral Values*), translated by Grażyna Gomoła, Aleksander Gomoła (Poznań: Wydawnictwo “W drodze”, 2018), especially chapter 2, *Sekularyzm, wiara, wolność* (*Secularism, Faith, Freedom*), 34–52.

²² Jan Socho, „Filozof” (“*Philosopher*”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Człowiek kultury (Man of Culture)*, ed. Katarzyna Flader, Witold Kawecki (Kraków: Rafael, 2008), 323–344; Bronisław Wildstein, *Bunt i afirmacja. Esej o naszych czasach (Rebellion and Affirmation: An Essay on Our Times)* (Warsaw: PIW, 2020).

²³ Jan Paweł II, „Przemówienie do uczestników sympozjum posynodalnego, 31 października 1991, Rzym” (“*Address to the Participants of the Post-Synodal Symposium, October 31, 1991, Rome*”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Europa zjednoczona w Chrystusie. Antologia (Europe United in Christ: Anthology)*, ed. Leszek Sosnowski, Gabriel Turowski (Kraków: Biały Kruk, 2002), 164–165.

²⁴ Jan Paweł II, „Przemówienie podczas Nieszporów Europejskich, 10 września 1983, Wiedeń” (“*Address During the European Vespers, September 10, 1983, Vienna*”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Europa zjednoczona w Chrystusie (Europe United in Christ)*, 38–39.

by a "pressure of a culture devoid of spiritual roots."²⁵ In this context, the Pope urged Polish bishops in 1993 to remain vigilant regarding the "use of freedom" within the nation. He warned against moral relativism, which he identified as a wave of demoralization masquerading as "modernity and liberation," justified under the guise of "misunderstood tolerance and pluralism." John Paul II cautioned that such trends could lead to a voluntary submission to a new form of totalitarian oppression. The evangelization of culture became crucial in this scenario. However, the Church's presence in public life faced significant opposition from various groups²⁶.

The Pope addressed the "clash" between the culture of life and love versus the culture of death with notable clarity. He referenced *Gaudium et Spes* (no. 36), observing that while scientific and technological advancements have made Western culture appealing to other continents, it has simultaneously become impoverished in humanistic, spiritual, and moral dimensions. Consequently, Western culture attempts to achieve human good independently of God, the ultimate Good. As the Second Vatican Council warns, "without the Creator, creation disappears" (GS 36). A culture severed from its connection with God risks losing its soul and veering towards a culture of death, a reality evidenced by the tragic events of the 20th century and the pervasive nihilism evident in much of the Western world today²⁷. Piotr Mazurkiewicz cautions against oversimplification, noting that labeling proponents of abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment as representatives of a "culture of death," and their opponents as champions of a "culture of life," risks misrepresenting the complexities involved. John Paul II was more concerned with the broader issue: every culture, and every individual, is affected by the *mysterium iniquitatis* (mystery of iniquity). This intrinsic flaw necessitates ongoing purification and salvation, leading every culture to resist the Gospel to varying degrees²⁸.

For the Pope, the discourse on culture—and fundamentally on understanding and respecting the truth about humanity—transcends mere ideological or philosophical preferences. It concerns the most essential matter: the possibility of eternal salvation or

²⁵ Jan Paweł II, „Audiencja dla członków Papieskiej Rady ds. Kultury, 10 stycznia 1992, Watykan” (“Audience with the Members of the Pontifical Council for Culture, January 10, 1992, Vatican”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Europa zjednoczona w Chrystusie (Europe United in Christ)*, 185–190.

²⁶ Jan Paweł II, „Przemówienie do II grupy Biskupów polskich, 15 stycznia 1993, Watykan” (“Address to the Second Group of Polish Bishops, January 15, 1993, Vatican”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Europa zjednoczona w Chrystusie (Europe United in Christ)*, 215–216.

²⁷ Jan Paweł II, „Dialog między kulturami drogą do cywilizacji i pokoju. Orędzie na światowy Dzień Pokoju 1 stycznia 2001 r.” (“Dialogue Between Cultures as a Path to Civilization and Peace: Message for the World Day of Peace January 1, 2001”), no. 9, in: Jan Paweł II, *Wiat nie jest zamtem... (The World is Not a Chaos...)* (Warsaw: Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003), 296.

²⁸ Piotr Mazurkiewicz, „Jan Paweł II i zderzenie historii” (“John Paul II and the Clash of History”), *Teologia Polityczna (Political Theology)* 3 (2005–2006): 91–93.

damnation. In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul II defines salvation as liberation from evil. This liberation extends beyond mere social or historical evils—such as exploitation, disease, or natural disasters—to encompass the radical, ultimate evil of eternal damnation. Such evil is characterized by the rejection of God, which contrasts sharply with salvation. Both concepts are inextricably linked to the human destiny of eternal life, presupposing the immortality of the human soul²⁹. John Paul II advocated for what he termed "authentic culture," defined as one that fosters the integral development of the human person towards their ultimate and salvific fulfillment. In his view, authentic culture is inherently open to all truth, including the divine. Cultures that systematically or inadvertently exclude God are deemed inauthentic, as they tend to dehumanize individuals. For a culture to be considered authentic, it must be grounded in a sound and "true" anthropology, which avoids absolutizing either material or spiritual dimensions. Furthermore, authentic culture must be inherently religiously oriented³⁰. To summarize, John Paul II's vision of authentic culture encompasses three main objectives: first, the pursuit of genuine truth and values; second, the affirmation of human dignity; and third, the structuring of social development to prioritize the person over material things, the subject over the object, and to ensure that scientific and technological advancements are governed by ethical considerations.

2. The Crisis of Christian Culture in the West

It is arguably accurate to assert that Christianity and the culture it has inspired are in a state of ongoing crisis. This predicament is intrinsic to the nature of evangelization and the Church's mission, which are not confined to mere organizational or institutional power, the influence of Catholicism in public and political spheres, the success of religious institutions (such as educational, healthcare, and charitable endeavors), or even high levels of religious observance (such as regular Sunday Mass attendance). Instead, the true objective of evangelization and Christian life is the attainment of holiness, characterized by the profound resemblance of believers to Christ. In discussing the contemporary situation in the Western world, it is pertinent to address the crisis of living faith, the weakening of religious practice, and the

²⁹ Jan Paweł II, *Przekroczy próg nadziei. Jan Paweł II odpowiada na pytania Vittoria Messori* (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope: John Paul II Answers Questions from Vittorio Messori*) (Lublin: KUL Publishing House, 1994), 68.

³⁰ Wójtowicz, *Człowiek i kultura. Prolegomena do Wojtyłańskiej myśli antropologicznej* (*Man and Culture: Prolegomena to Wojtylian Anthropological Thought*), 205.

various crises within and affecting the Church³¹. John Paul II frequently identified the origins and exacerbating factors of the crisis within European culture. During a meeting with the academic community in Lublin on June 9, 1987, he remarked: "The Enlightenment era, and even more so the 19th century, propagated the notion of a fundamental opposition between science and religion. This dichotomy contributed to the Marxist critique of religion as an alienating force. The reduction of 'man in the world' to mere immanence in relation to the world not only evokes the Nietzschean notion of the 'death of God,' but, as was increasingly recognized, also implies a 'death' of 'man' within this materialistic framework, leaving him with no eschatological possibilities beyond those of the other objects in the visible universe.³²" The consequence of this "death of God"—where God is dethroned to make way for absolute, anarchistic freedom—leads to the temptation of rejecting dependence on the Creator and, in a form of existential self-destruction, attempting to assert one's absolute autonomy. Henri de Lubac argues that such rebellion against one's own condition ultimately results in the temptation of self-annihilation³³. In his address delivered in Santiago de Compostela on November 9, 1982, John Paul II highlighted the impact of secularist ideologies on public life: "Public life is affected by the repercussions of secularist ideologies, which range from denying God or restricting religious freedom to ascribing disproportionate significance to economic success over human values and production. The threats posed by materialism and hedonism endanger family values, the sanctity of life, the moral education of youth, and exacerbate issues such as poverty, emigration, the plight of ethnic and religious minorities, the ethical use of mass media, and terrorism.³⁴" By the end of his pontificate in 2002, John Paul II expressed concern over the ongoing secularization trends that, since the late 18th century, had sought to expunge God and Christianity from all facets of public life. This secularist shift, which relegates religion to the private sphere and eliminates divine and

³¹ Compare, among others: Grzegorz Górny, Krystian Kratiuk, Paweł Lisicki, *wiat i Kościół w kryzysie (The World and the Church in Crisis)* (Kraków: Esprit, 2023); Robert Skrzypczak, *Między Chrystusem a Antychrystem (Between Christ and the Antichrist)* (Kraków: Esprit, 2022); *Non possumus. Niezgoda, której uczy Kościół (Non possumus: The Disagreement Taught by the Church)*, ed. Paweł Milcarek, Tomasz Rowiński (Warsaw: Demart S.A., 2021); Agnieszka Turo-Kowalska, „Kryzys kultury europejskiej w ujęciu Leszka Kołakowskiego” (“The Crisis of European Culture in Leszek Kołakowski’s Perspective”), *Studia Politicae Universitatis Silesiensis (Silesian University Political Studies)* 13 (2014): 153–175.

³² Jan Paweł II, „Przemówienie do przedstawicieli wiata nauki, Lublin, 9 czerwca 1987 r.” (“Address to Representatives of the World of Science, Lublin, June 9, 1987”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Pielgrzymki do Ojczyzny: 1979–1983–1991–1995–1997. Przemówienia, homilie (Pilgrimages to the Homeland: 1979–1983–1991–1995–1997. Speeches, Homilies)* (Kraków: Znak Publishing House, 2002), 400.

³³ Henri de Lubac, *Dramat humanizmu ateistycznego (The Drama of Atheistic Humanism)*, translated by Arkadiusz Ziernicki (Kraków: WAM, 2004), 337.

³⁴ Jan Paweł II, „Akt Europejski, Santiago de Compostela, 9 lipca 1982” (“European Act, Santiago de Compostela, July 9, 1982”), in: Sławomir Sowiński, Radosław Zenderowski, *Europa drogą Kościoła. Jan Paweł II o Europie i europejskości (Europe Through the Church’s Path: John Paul II on Europe and European Identity)* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 2003), 192.

moral considerations from public discourse, was underscored by the Pope's observation: "Is it not significant that any direct reference to religion, and thus to Christianity, has been omitted from the European Charter?"³⁵ The "death of God" within contemporary society manifests as a drive to exclude religious dimensions and the "question of God" from the public and social spheres. John Paul II, addressing the distinction between political and faith communities, asserts: "In the wake of Christ, society can no longer be absolutized as a collective entity that subsumes the individual along with his inalienable destiny. Society, the state, and political authority are temporal constructs, subject to change and ongoing refinement. No social program can establish the Kingdom of God, which is an eschatological state of perfection on earth. Political messianism frequently results in the most severe forms of tyranny. The structures that societies create lack inherent ultimate value and cannot alone fulfill all of humanity's aspirations. They cannot replace individual conscience or address the quest for truth and the absolute."³⁶

Acknowledging the autonomy of religion—what "belongs to God"—establishes necessary limits for authorities, which include conscience, ultimate purpose, the highest meaning of existence, openness to the absolute, and the pursuit of unattainable goals. The Pope cautions that removing God from public life has "grave consequences." God is the ultimate ethical standard and the primary safeguard against the abuse of human power³⁷. John Paul II recognized the perils posed by ideologies, particularly within the context of the then-existing communist regimes, and warned against the absolutization of society or groups that disregard human dignity and freedom. He observed: "When man ceases to seek support from a transcendent value, he risks falling victim to the arbitrary power and pseudo-absolutes that can ultimately destroy him"³⁸. The secularized European experience increasingly reflects what might be termed the "death of prosperity," characterized by a loss of hope, youthful nihilism, confusion, and chaos. The Pope remarked nearly four decades ago: "Western society has evolved into a complex, pluralistic, and polyvalent environment where individuals attempt to

³⁵ Jan Paweł II, „Do uczestników III Międzynarodowego Forum Fundacji im. Alcide De Gasperi, 23 lutego 2002, Watykan” (“To the Participants of the III International Forum of the Alcide De Gasperi Foundation, February 23, 2002, Vatican”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Europa zjednoczona w Chrystusie (Europe United in Christ)*, 409.

³⁶ Jan Paweł II, „Przemówienie w Parlamencie Europejskim, 11 października 1988, Strasburg” (“Speech at the European Parliament, October 11, 1988, Strasbourg”), 116. The Pope adds that the order of the state and public life are based on civic virtue, which is a form of "obedience" to the common good (expressed in positive law), which must be objectively just and good. The law must be grounded in transcendent truth and justice.

³⁷ Jan Paweł II, „Przemówienie w Parlamencie Europejskim, 11 października 1988, Strasburg” (“Speech at the European Parliament, October 11, 1988, Strasbourg”), 116.

³⁸ Jan Paweł II, „Przemówienie w Parlamencie Europejskim, 11 października 1988, Strasburg” (“Speech at the European Parliament, October 11, 1988, Strasbourg”), 117.

define their own goals, values, and meaning through independent reason. Yet, they often navigate blindly through metaphysical assertions, ultimate aims, and ethical frameworks. This so-called mature and free individual frequently escapes from true freedom into conformism, experiences loneliness, faces spiritual dilemmas, seeks to delay death, and succumbs to profound hopelessness³⁹." These observations encapsulate the consequences of postmodern ideological trends that were becoming apparent at that time⁴⁰.

John Paul II underscored that technological progress, when disconnected from ethical considerations, poses a threat to humanity. He emphasized: "Among the pressing issues of our century is the quest for 'meaning,' as ideological voids have stripped man of stable reference points, rendering him a lost soul adrift in a storm. Without eternal illumination, humanity is vulnerable to a fatalistic view of history as a blind mechanism driving destructive conflicts. The future of Europe largely depends on awakening consciences, achievable only through Christ, who is the beginning and end of human history. The Church believes it liberates humanity by introducing it to the mystery of Christ⁴¹."

Before his papacy, John Paul II was already cognizant of the conflict between the 'culture of life' and the 'culture of death.' He advocated for Christians to cultivate a "strong critical sense" (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 95). A significant litmus test for this conflict was the sanctity and inviolability of human life. He called for a "universal mobilization of consciences and a collective ethical effort" to defend life and urged for the construction of a new culture of life: John Paul II wrote that it is imperative to establish a culture that is "new," meaning one that possesses the capacity to address and resolve both existing and previously unrecognized issues related to human life⁴².

One might question whether, within Western nations, including Poland, there remains any belief in the potential to counteract the prevailing trends that manipulate both the lives of others and one's own. The erosion of the recognition of each individual's inherent worth is leading to the disintegration of the cultural and human foundations. The remaining "sacred"

³⁹ Jan Paweł II, „Do uczestników VI Sympozjum Biskupów Europejskich, 11 października 1985 r.” (“*To the Participants of the VI Symposium of European Bishops, October 11, 1985*”), in: Jan Paweł II, *Europa zjednoczona w Chrystusie (Europe United in Christ)*, 74.

⁴⁰ Andrzej Bronk, *Zrozumie świat współczesny (Understanding the Contemporary World)* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1998), 23–113; Janusz Mariański, *Megatrendy w społeczeństwach ponowoczesnych. Studium socjologiczne (Megatrends in Postmodern Societies: A Sociological Study)* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek Publishing House, 2016).

⁴¹ Jan Paweł II, *Przemówienie do uczestników sympozjum posynodalnego, 31 października 1991 r.* (“*Address to the Participants of the Post-Synodal Symposium, October 31, 1991*”), (Rome, 1991), 166.

⁴² Jan Paweł II, *Encyklika „Evangelium Vitae” (Encyclical “Evangelium Vitae”)* (Rome, 1995), no. 95.

elements of communal life are increasingly called into question⁴³. Marek Jurek observes that, within Polish politics, there is a notable lack of substantial political or cultural commitment to the genuine protection of unborn life. A clear and definitive stance on the sanctity of life would likely face resistance from a society that is, to some extent, already morally compromised⁴⁴. Under these circumstances, it can be argued that John Paul II's vision of culture is becoming progressively viewed as unrealistic and "idealistic."⁴⁵ This assertion gains validity with each passing day, especially considering the profound impact of virtual reality over the past three decades⁴⁶. The virtual environment significantly influences individuals—particularly the younger generation—who are not required to confront existential questions about God, the nature of humanity, or the meaning of life. In this virtual realm, which increasingly intertwines with and often eclipses the physical world, the personal God of revelation is notably absent. As a result, serious contemplation on human existence and the concept of salvation fades from view. Additionally, the traditional transmission of culture from one generation to the next is disrupted by technological advancements, which foster a "prefigurative culture" oriented toward the future. In this context, the past becomes irrelevant, and the present is reduced to mere moments. The core value of contemporary culture is increasingly centered on the notion of "the future." Post-industrial or information societies, marked by business, global transformations, and technological advancement, exhibit a

⁴³ Bronisław Wildstein, *Bunt i afirmacja. Esej o naszych czasach (Rebellion and Affirmation: An Essay on Our Times)* (Warsaw: PIW, 2020), 70–79. The journalist notes that in many countries, defending the "right to life" (which is the foundation of all other human rights) is seen as a threat to "human rights." The rejection of the fundamental norm of natural law results in every human existence being dependent on the grace (or lack thereof) of those who grant the status of humanity to some while denying it to others.

⁴⁴ This is discussed, among other places, in the interview: Marek Jurek, „Prawdziwa wolność Kościoła. Wobec potęg tego świata” (“True Freedom of the Church: Facing the Powers of This World”), in: *Non possumus. Niezgoda, której uczy Kościół (Non Possumus: The Disagreement Taught by the Church)*, ed. Paweł Milcarek, Tomasz Rowiński (Warsaw: DEMART, 2021), 171–195; Charles J. Chaput, *Obcy w obcej ziemi. Życie wiary w postchrześcijańskim świecie (Strangers in a Strange Land: Living Faithfully in a Post-Christian World)*, translated by Magda Sobolewska (Warsaw: Loretan Sisters Publishing House, 2019), 13–40. The retired bishop of Philadelphia, in the chapter “Cudzoziemcy z kart stałego pobytu” (“Foreigners with Permanent Residency”), shows the society's (Americans') departure from Christian principles (living "before God") and the near-total victory of relativism.

⁴⁵ This issue is addressed in: Katarzyna Kalinowska, „Idealna Europa? Wizja Europy w myśli Jana Pawła II” (“The Ideal Europe? John Paul II's Vision of Europe”), in: *Jan Paweł II i Europa (John Paul II and Europe)*, ed. Katarzyna Kalinowska, Barbara Brodzka, Małgorzata Zamojska (Toruń: Nicolaus Copernicus University Scientific Publishing House, 2009), 63–71.

⁴⁶ For over 60 years, television has been a medium that diminishes tradition and culture (and especially the ability for critical and abstract thinking). On the irreversible harm caused by television to child development: Giovanni Sartori, *Homo videns. Telewizja i postmyślenie (Homo Videns: Television and Post-Thinking)*, translated by Jerzy Uszyński (Warsaw: UW Publishing House, 2007); Michel Desmurget, *Teleogłupianie. O zgubnych skutkach oglądania telewizji (nie tylko przez dorosłych) (Telebrainwashing: The Harmful Effects of Watching Television (Not Just for Adults))*, translated by Ewa Kaniowska (Warsaw: Czarna Owca Publishing House, 2012); Derrick de Kerckhove, *Powłoka kultury. Odkrywanie nowej elektronicznej rzeczywistości (The Skin of Culture: Discovering the New Electronic Reality)*, translated by Witold Sikorski, Piotr Nowakowski (Warsaw: MIKOM Publishing House, 1996).

paradoxical blend of prosperity and civilizational progress alongside the fragmentation of interpersonal relationships, heightened individualism, consumerism, and cultural disintegration. These factors contribute to a weakening of individual and group identities, resulting in a "hybrid world" where values and categories are fluid and subject to constant change⁴⁷. Despite this, religion has not been entirely excluded from public discourse⁴⁸. The pressing question is whether it is possible to preserve human dignity and a "true" culture that aligns with human nature amidst these shifts. Generational changes, occurring approximately every 15 years within this hybrid world of virtual and physical dimensions, challenge classical models of cultural and human understanding. They compel educators and parents to continuously adapt their methods of engaging with and understanding younger generations⁴⁹.

Additionally, the rapid digitalization of user mentality, driven by technological advancements, poses significant challenges. Although information technology tools are invaluable for expanding human potential, they can also lead to the instrumentalization of individuals and the erosion of cognitive abilities⁵⁰. Early and prolonged exposure to electronic

⁴⁷ Ewa Karmolińska-Jagodzik, „Komunikacja międzypokoleniowa – rozważania wokół różnic kulturowych” (*Intergenerational Communication: Reflections on Cultural Differences*), *Studia Edukacyjne* 21 (2012): 191–210. In such a culture, there is a break with tradition and the past. The “old” becomes useless. The family vanishes, traditional authorities collapse because the younger are “smarter” than the older. Chantal Delsol, *Czym jest człowiek? Kurs antropologii dla niewtajemniczonych (What Is Man? An Introduction to Anthropology)*, translated by Małgorzata Kowalska (Kraków: Znak Publishing House, 2011), 123–162. The French philosopher states that “man is born strangely unfinished,” so his existence (and development) is highly dependent on culture. “Human life is extraordinarily artificial compared to the life of advanced animals, which only know the seed of that artificiality called culture. For humans, transmission plays an absolutely determining role, because man is the being most distanced from nature, a creature that inhabits ‘somewhere else’ in relation to the nature from which it emerges,” writes Delsol (p. 125). The prefigurative orientation places man in a “desperate situation,” as he must adequately respond (adapt) to rapid changes. Margaret Mead, *Kultura i to samo: studium dystansu międzypokoleniowego (Culture and Identity: A Study of Generational Distance)*, translated by Jacek Hołówka (Warsaw: PWN, 2000).

⁴⁸ Radosław Sierocki, *Praktykowanie religii w nowych mediach. Katolicka przestrzeń Facebooka (Practicing Religion in New Media: The Catholic Space of Facebook)*, Toru: Adam Marszałek Publishing House, 2018.

⁴⁹ Marzenna Nowicka, „Młodzi z pokolenia Z i Alpha jako zadanie dla pedagogów, czyli o konieczności «łapania fali»” (*Generation Z and Alpha as a Challenge for Educators: The Need to ‘Catch the Wave’*), *Kwartalnik Naukowy Fides et Ratio* 4, 44 (2002): 164–176. Dominik Batorski, „Dzieci z sieci – dostanie korzystanie z internetu przez dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym” (*Children of the Net: Access to and Use of the Internet by Preschool Children*), in: *Małe dzieci w świecie technologii informacyjno-komunikacyjnych. Pomiędzy utopijnymi szansami a przesadzonymi zagrożeniami (Young Children in the World of Information and Communication Technologies: Between Utopian Opportunities and Exaggerated Threats)*, ed. Jacek Pyalski (Łódź: Eter Publishing House, 2017), 79–94; Mark McCrindle, Ashley Fell, *Understanding Generation Z: Recruiting, Training and Leading the Next Generation* (Norwest NSW: McCrindle Research Pty Ltd., 2019); Victoria Turk, *Understanding Generation Alpha* (UK: Hotwire Consulting, 2017); Jean M. Twenge, *iGen. Dlaczego dzieciaki dorastają w sieci są mniej zbuntowane, bardziej tolerancyjne, mniej szczerze – i zupełnie nieprzygotowane do dorosłości i co to oznacza dla nas wszystkich (iGen: Why Today’s Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood)*, translated by Olga Dziedzic (Sopot: Smak Słowa, 2019).

⁵⁰ The issue of the impact of technology (the internet) on intelligence and cognitive abilities of its users, and consequently on their mentality, spiritual life, moral behavior, and social relations, has a rich literature. Janusz Morbitzer, *Edukacja wspierana komputerowo a humanistyczne wartości pedagogiki (Computer-Supported Education and the Humanistic Values of Pedagogy)*, Kraków: Academy of Pedagogical Sciences Publishing

media—such as television, tablets, smartphones, and computers—has been shown to alter the structure and functioning of the human brain⁵¹. Prolonged online engagement often results in the development of "hypertext minds," characterized by a shift from linear to multi-threaded thinking. While digital natives may retain vast amounts of information, they frequently struggle with interpretation and creativity. Furthermore, excessive screen time can impair the prefrontal cortex, which is crucial for empathy, higher cognitive functions, and tolerance⁵². Scholars have debated the implications of this digital shift, with some characterizing the internet as a form of "new dictatorship" that not only controls users but also shapes and formats their cognitive processes⁵³. Janusz Morbitzer adopts a more nuanced view, acknowledging the threats posed by new technologies while also recognizing the internet's potential as a vast source of information. However, he emphasizes that technology itself is not inherently problematic; rather, its impact on intellectual development depends on how it is used. The issue lies in the shallow and chaotic nature of collective knowledge, which promotes mental laziness and diminishes critical thinking, will, emotions, and social

House, 2007; Janusz Morbitzer, „Refleksje pedagogiczne na temat intelektualnej kondycji cyfrowych tubylców” (“Pedagogical Reflections on the Intellectual Condition of Digital Natives”), *Psychologia Wychowawcza* 5 (2014): 115–130; Don Tapscott, *Cyfrowa dorosłość. Jak pokolenie sieci zmienia nasz świat (Digital Adults: How the Network Generation is Changing Our World)*, Academic and Professional Publishing, translated by Piotr Cypryański (Warsaw, 2010); Nicolas Carr, *Płytki umysł. Jak Internet wpływa na nasz mózg (The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains)*, translated by Katarzyna Rojek (Gliwice: Helion Publishing House, 2013); James R. Flynn, *O inteligencji inaczej. Czy jesteście my mądrzejsi od naszych przodków (How We Learn: The Versatility of Human Intelligence)*, translated by Agnieszka Nowak (Sopot: Smak Słowa, 2012); Gary Small, Gigi Vorgan, *iMózg. Jak przetrwać technologiczną przemianę współczesnej umysłowość (iBrain: Surviving the Technological Transformation of the Modern Mind)*, translated by Sy Borg (Poznań: Wespert Publishing House, 2011). Manfred Spitzer (Manfred Spitzer, *Cyfrowa demencja. W jaki sposób pozbawiamy rozum siebie i swoje dzieci (Digital Dementia: How We Are Losing Our Minds and Those of Our Children)*, translated by Andrzej Lipiński (Słupsk: Dobra Literatura Publishing House, 2013), 64–65) warns that replacing books with screens impairs the development of synapses in a child's brain.

⁵¹ Morbitzer, *Refleksje pedagogiczne na temat intelektualnej kondycji cyfrowych tubylców*, 118–120. The educator notes that digital natives are characterized by a lack of resilience to adversity, absence of mental fortitude, and sense of responsibility. To their older relatives, they are “foreigners” inhabiting “another anthropological space.”

⁵² Morbitzer, *Refleksje pedagogiczne na temat intelektualnej kondycji cyfrowych tubylców*, 118–120. According to studies from a decade ago, the network generation shows little interest in politics, religion, and work. Many exhibit behaviors akin to autism. Carr, *Płytki umysł*, 21.

⁵³ Samobójstwo O wieceniach? *Jak neuronauka i nowe technologie pustoszą ludzki świat (The Suicide of Enlightenment? How Neuroscience and New Technologies Are Devastating the Human World)*, ed. Andrzej Zybertowicz et al. (Kraków: Kasper Publishing House, 2015); *Cyber kontra real. Cywilizacja w techno-pułapce (Cyber vs. Real: Civilization in the Techno-Trap)*. Prof. Andrzej Zybertowicz, interviewed by Jarema Piekutowski (Warsaw: New Confederation Publishing House, 2022). Meanwhile, American professor Mark Bauerlein (Mark Bauerlein, *The Dumbest Generation Grows Up: From Stupefied Youth to Dangerous Adults* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 2022)) extensively tracks the decline of education (especially higher education) in the USA, attributing this decline to the mass (and mandatory) computerization of schools and the educational process. Since “the dumbest generation” is approaching fifty, he argues that not only American culture but the very existence of the United States as a state is at risk. For example, as early as a decade ago, students spent only about 7 minutes a day reading. According to him, Western culture is mortally threatened by “savage” and idiotic relativists whom contemporary education and society are producing.

behavior⁵⁴. Therefore, the cultural crisis—especially pronounced within the context of Western Christian culture—is intrinsically linked to both the evolving postmodern societal trends and the pervasive influence of new technologies, particularly the Internet.

Conclusion

The analyses reveal that John Paul II ardently championed Christian culture with notable success, garnering acclaim not only from the Church's faithful but also from political, cultural, and scientific elites. Unlike his predecessors on the papal throne, he distinctly emphasized the intrinsic dignity of the human person, a dignity ultimately derived from God as revealed through Jesus Christ. In this framework, culture achieves its "authentic" and "true" nature when it enables individuals to fully realize their identity as beings created in the image and likeness of God. John Paul II maintained that only through Christ can humanity come to grasp its true essence and inherent dignity. Thus, a culture that is open to God—embodied in Jesus Christ—promotes the comprehensive development of the human person and safeguards against dehumanization.

John Paul II's reflections on humanity and culture, as articulated in the context of the challenges and threats of his era, continue to exhibit profound relevance today. These insights are not merely reflective of the dire scenarios he anticipated; rather, they offer a key to understanding both humanity and culture. Amidst contemporary confusion, his teachings highlight the source of genuine, profound hope: the True Man, Jesus Christ.

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⁵⁴ Morbitzer, *Refleksje pedagogiczne na temat intelektualnej kondycji cyfrowych tubylców*, 126–128. The author adds that “digital dementia,” as described by Manfred Spitzer, may be an “intended effect,” as narrow elites suffice to govern society and generate progress. Furthermore, the internet and computer lobbies are interested not in “human development” but in profit. Morbitzer questions why, as a society (parents, teachers), we permit “hard media determinism,” which is destructive to humanity.

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