

Foreword

The year 1980 was of great significance for the history of encounters between the two outstanding Polish thinkers. It was in that year that – by Krzysztof Michalski's account – they met for the first time at a conference on mysticism in Heidelberg.¹ Ever since then the meetings between Rev. Józef Tischner and Leszek Kołakowski took on certain dynamics, which was at first determined by the meetings regularly held at the Pope's summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, organized mainly by Józef Tischner and Krzysztof Michalski. The prominent intellectuals of the latter half of the 20th century, who were invited to participate in the debates at Pope John Paul II's residence, represented various scientific disciplines and worldview orientations. Leszek Kołakowski was always there as one of the representatives of the Polish philosophers. One might say that those summer colloquia held under the patronage of the Polish pope, as well as the collaboration that thrived between Tischner and Kołakowski, also as part of the Institute of Human Sciences in Vienna, were the first significant face of the encounters between the two Poles characterized by – to put it mildly – different spiritual and intellectual backgrounds.

The second significant face of the encounters between Kołakowski and Rev. Tischner revealed itself already after Rev. Tischner's death in 2000. One of these encounters imprinted itself in the memory of those who saw the Jagiellonian University Collegium Novum lecture hall packed full during the third edition of the Tischner Days in Cracow in 2003, when Leszek Kołakowski delivered a lecture of the *Colloquia Tischneriana* series. In this way he warmly remembered and paid homage to his critic, who then turned into his friend of many years' standing.

¹ Cf. K. Michalski, *Eseje o Bogu i śmierci* [Essays on God and Death], Warszawa 2014, p. 121.

Since Leszek Kołakowski's death in 2009 the encounters between the two philosophers have been possible thanks to the people in whose reflection on the meaning of life and dying, research work, and opinion journalism both the philosophers are still alive thanks to their philosophical assessments, the literary artistry of their works, and discreet promptings as to how one can and should consider things of the greatest importance to man's life.

It is this third manner of creating encounters between Rev. Józef Tischner and Leszek Kołakowski that the authors of the present publication identify with. It is one of the results of the 4th Tischner Days in Chojnice. In 2019 representatives of various academic milieus focused their attention above all on the problematic of the encounter of Christianity with the world constructed by Marxist socialism. Therefore, it is clear that the Chojnice debate about the form of this encounter in the post-war history of Poland had to feature a reference to Rev. Józef Tischner's and Leszek Kołakowski's positions. The Polish- and English-language reader is thus presented with the outcome of the Chojnice debate. The authors of the present publication hope that the face of the encounter between Rev. Józef Tischner and Leszek Kołakowski that emerges from their texts will significantly contribute to the understanding of the reality in which we are living nowadays.

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