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ricercheslavistiche.seai@uniroma1.it

Prof.ssa Monika Woźniak: monika.wozniak@uniroma1.it

Dipartimento di Studi Europei, Americani e Interculturali  
Circonvallazione Tiburtina, 4 – 00185 Roma

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STANISŁAW OBIREK

RUDOLF MARIA HOLZAPFEL  
AND STANISŁAW VINCENZ,  
I.E. CROSSING NOT ONLY RELIGIOUS BORDERS

*Vincenz – philosopher of Socratic questions*

Zygmunt Kubiak, in his “Afterword” to the posthumously published *Postwar Peripetias of Socrates*, one of Vincenz’s most important philosophical works, wrote: “It is a book of disillusionment and bitter, valiant sobriety—an anti-euphoric book, one might say; it is anti-Zarathustra” (Kubiak 1985: 357). This is a reference to Vincenz’s introductory remarks, where he indeed sets himself such a task—to revive the forgotten myth of the wise man asking uncomfortable questions (Vincenz 1985: 9). Furthermore, Vincenz confirms Kubiak’s suggestion by both polemizing with Nietzsche and recommending his struggle with the Socratic legacy. He disagrees with Nietzsche’s diagnosis of the infamous Athenian trial as the failure of rationalism. He states: “Nietzsche’s fantasy that it is a conflict between myth and rationalism makes even less sense” (Vincenz 1985: 8), but also acknowledges: “Remarkable is Friedrich Nietzsche’s attack. The figure of Socrates troubled him constantly and, as he himself later admitted, became his daily conscience in everything he thought. [...] One might ask, however, not without validity, whether Socrates’ various defenses did not bury his living influence more effectively than his trials” (Vincenz 1985: 9).

The source of this ambivalence is explained in a letter written in September 1953 to his friend Alfred Loepfe, a translator of Polish literature. In it, Vincenz writes that:

Socrates, regarded reason as a gift of God and as a companion of Eros, bringing people closer to each other, for them to communicate, and also bringing them closer to God. So, the whole thing is simply a scathing satire and a furious caricature of ‘democracy’ conceived

and handled without character and simply hating individuality. “I am ‘afraid’, though not really afraid, that I will be proclaimed a rabid reactionary. (after Kubiak 1986: 354)

Vincenz’s suppositions did not come true. No publisher took any interest in the emerging book. So it became even worse because the expected dispute did not happen at all, and the book remained in typescript unfinished. We are left with the laborious reconstruction of his thoughts.

Despite the criticism of Nietzsche cited above, I am inclined to see many Nietzschean traits in Stanisław Vincenz’s work. This is particularly evident in his concept of religion understood as an expression of human individualism. Perhaps one should not see it as directly influenced by Nietzsche, since it was filtered through an in-depth reading of the work of Rudolf M. Holzapfel. However, it should be remembered, as Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk rightly points out, that Vincenz did not remain a faithful disciple of Holzapfel and went further down his own path. According to Kowalczyk, the reason for his departure from Holzapfel’s doctrine was his sense of reality (Kowalczyk 1994). I think that this sense of reality meant an almost greedy desire to know and experience the fullness of life, which would again link Vincenz with Nietzsche.

The apologia for such a life was delivered by Nietzsche in the pages of *The Gay Science*, drawing a picture of a free spirit dancing over the abyss, who, unlike the Christian, is capable of living on his own account:

Once a human being arrives at the basic conviction that he must be commanded, he becomes ‘a believer’; conversely, one could conceive of a delight and power of self-determination, a freedom of the will, in which the spirit takes leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, practiced as it is in maintaining itself on light ropes and possibilities and dancing even beside abysses. Such a spirit would be the free spirit par excellence” (Nietzsche 2001: 347).

All the elements of a free spirit understood in this way can be recognized in Vincenz.

A careful reading of his texts, especially the epic *On a High Uplands* as well as his essays, synthesizes to such a recognition. Vincenz’s excellent philosophical background (a doctorate in philosophy

devoted to Feuerbach and a habilitation on Hegel's influence in Russia and Poland, both dissertations lost), close ties with Holzapfel's thought, provide an interesting backdrop for his own explorations and determinations of the place of religion in public space and in private life. Vincenz did not conceal his skepticism about institutional forms of religion, particularly Polish Catholicism, while simultaneously seeking deeper dimensions of religiosity closely intertwined with culture. This renders him one of the most intriguing representatives of Polish culturalism alongside Edward Abramowski, Stanisław Brzozowski, and Florian Znaniecki.<sup>1</sup> The primary source material to support my thesis will be the essays of Stanisław Vincenz, which present a coherent and cohesive idea stemming from the belief that the prevailing model of National Socialist Polish nationalism in the interwar period, bolstered by the Catholic Church, represents a negation of the ideals of humanity and culture founded on humanistic and rational values. Throughout World War II and in the post-war period, Vincenz refrained from being swayed into offering a definitive assessment of the rationale behind the Cold War conflict, although he staunchly sided with the aggrieved. His attitude to the "Kultura" ("Culture") milieu centered around Jerzy Giedroyc is significant. And here, too, it is difficult to make an unambiguous assessment. For on the one hand, he tried to influence it by suggesting topics, suggesting authors, while on the other hand, his lack of political involvement clearly made the editor of Jerzy Giedroyc impatient. It seems to me that in his work Stanisław Vincenz made an effort to overcome the past in the sense that Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht writes about when he writes about "making present and redeeming," or more precisely, the need to create narratives and use magic (Gumbrecht 2006: 121). What the historian does conceptually, the writer does the same by bringing to life a particular vision of the world that aims to both overcome and redeem the past. The Subsequent volumes of *On a High Uplands* are an attempt to conjure up the past using the language remembered from childhood and bring it back to the present, as it were. It is this kind of direct experience of the world that emerges

<sup>1</sup> Antonina Kłoskowska, *Alle radici delle culture nazionali*. A cura di Anna Czajka, con una pres. di Zygmunt Bauman e una lettera di Karl Dedecius. (Biblioteca di Cultura Polacca). Diabasis, Reggio Emilia 2007, 507 pp.

from Vincenz's descriptions. Not only on the pages of the epic, by the way. His abundant, still unpublished correspondence testifies to his intense feeling for the presence of people, especially those belonging to different cultural circles. His friendships with Jews, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Swiss, Italians, Americans and Germans are a subject still to be worked out.

His gesture of breaking with nationalism and chauvinistic tendencies in Poland was his departure from the editorial board of "Droga" magazine. Irena Vincenzowa, in her conversations with her husband under the date of December 3, 1954, noted his confession: "Nothing of activity came out, because I did not want to choose the paved path of some political party or Catholicism" (Vincenzowa 1993). Similarly, his son Andrzej briefly states, "For as long as I can remember, Father's attitude toward Sanacja<sup>2</sup> was, to say the least, reluctant, this was especially true of Brest<sup>3</sup>, then also of Bereza<sup>4</sup>" (Vincenz A. 1992: 33). Stanisław Vincenz said little about it, but the traces he left behind allow the reasons for his dislike of political activity to be partially reconstructed. Although scattered, they are nevertheless numerous and expressive enough to allow us to formulate a certain hypothesis about his conception of nationhood and the state. In my view, the aversion to politics was an outward expression of the writer's dislike of the nationalist and fascist tendencies in Poland that marked themselves after the May Coup of 1926. These tendencies were not isolated; on the contrary, they were an expression of the growing influence of anti-Enlightenment ideology, of which nationalism was only one of the most gripping manifestations (Sternhell 2010).

An abbreviated formula is found in a loose note: "Nations must not have and do not have hard borders. They enter one into the other." (Vincenz 1992: 19). This fluid understanding of ethnic groups and

<sup>2</sup> Sanacja, a Polish word meaning "sanation" or "cleansing", refers to a political movement and regime in interwar Poland, primarily during the 1920s and 1930s. The Sanacja movement emerged in response to the political instability and economic challenges facing Poland after it regained independence following World War I.

<sup>3</sup> The Brest trials were among the most famous trials conducted in 1932, lasting from 26 October 1931 to 13 January 1932.

<sup>4</sup> Bereza Kartuska – a forced labor camp organized and run by the authorities of the Second Republic of Poland in Bereza Kartuska, existing from 1934-1939.

nationalities was documented by Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth and his colleagues in the 1960s in their book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Cultural Differences* (*Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* 1969). Although Barth does not use the concept of nationality only uses the name of ethnic group, nevertheless his assertion that the traditional relationship of ethnicity and culture should be reversed (it is not so much a defining feature, but an effect) and thus one can reflect on the sources and mechanisms of division.

Vincenz was not a systematic political thinker but rather a cultural anthropologist. He expressed himself metaphorically about politics as can be seen in the essay “Gandhi’s Anniversaries,” in which his views on politics were expressed most clearly (Kowalczyk 1990: 48). Konstanty Jeleński believed that reading Vincenz’s texts “undoubtedly constitutes the best antidote to narrow nationalism” (Jeleński 2010: 381). Jerzy Giedroyc had a similar assessment of Vincenz’s value in 1969, writing in a letter to Czesław Miłosz: “If I think of Vincenz’s mare (*On a High Uplands*), it is not because I like the old man, but this book can be a weapon in the fight against nationalism” (Giedroyc 2011: 295). Alexander Hertz described the role Vincenz played in his life this way: “my discovery of Jewry owes a great deal to this non-Jew. It was under his influence that the first lasting thread of solidarity was born in me with a world to which I had formerly referred not without a dose of contempt and which I regarded as completely alien to me” (Hertz 1991: 169). It should be added that this influence refers to encounters in the 1930s.

I think that the withdrawal from active political and public life in the interwar period should be combined with the need to affirm other forms of interpersonal coexistence, especially among different ethnic groups. Probably why, after several years of cooperation with the monthly magazine “Droga” (1925-1927), which was close to the camp of Józef Piłsudski, Vincenz withdrew not only from the work of the editorial board of the magazine, but left Warsaw in general and settled in his hometown in Sloboda Runguska in the Hutsul region. His parting with the magazine was remembered by one of the editors as follows: “Without arguing, he took his hat off the hanger and left the editorial office never to return” (Pieszczachowicz 2005: 18). However, this obvious opposition to the authoritarian rule of Sanacja was only one dimension of his refusal to cooperate in this political project.

In fact, thanks to his studies and ethnographic research, Vincenz had very clearly formed his views on the nation and the state. Unable to realize them in public activity, he devoted himself entirely to literary and scientific works.

For their understanding, the essay “Notes on Popular Culture” from 1938 is particularly important. The comparison of folk culture and its significance for national consciousness to a mystical experience is particularly striking” (Vincenz 1983: 191). For Vincenz, learning about this culture is an indispensable condition for learning about the nation itself: “For any nation, and of course for ours as well, getting to know one’s own folk culture thus illuminated, thus understanding and living with it, will be – getting to know oneself” (Vincenz 1983: 193). This topic also occupied him after World War II. He wrote about it in the sketch “Little Ithaca, Reflections on Popular Culture,” this time emphasizing the close connection between Christianity and popular culture, but contrary to popular belief, he did not see it as “pagan elements” that infiltrated Christianity, but rather a Christianization of the basic dimension of culture: “The Church used the good favors of folklore to the extent that, by sanctifying what was constantly returning, it was to gain some influence over these ‘underground’ traditions, mainly through repainting and renaming” (Vincenz 1983: 165). These remarks by Vincenz about folk culture take on particular significance when they are compared with the ethnographic research of Józef Obrębski, conducted in the 1930s in Polesia. It is from this research that a sharp contrast emerges between the noble culture, identified with Polishness, and the squalor of the Polesie countryside, associated with ‘Ruthenianness’. “Nowhere did the noble culture of reach such a fullness of its expression and this end of its possibilities as in those borderland provinces of the Republic, where Polishness began and ended at the noble court and did not reach the Ruthenian countryside. Nowhere, perhaps, did this culture weigh more heavily on the peasant who was crushed by its burden” (Obrębski 2007: 54). But folk culture was not the only thing that occupied Stanisław Vincenz’s attention. Before he parted ways with the editors of “Droga”, he published articles about his attitude to the ruling political elite and to the increasingly influential Catholicism.

In a double issue from April and May 1927, he wrote about Polish Catholicism’s aversion to modernity: “Ultimately, under the influence of minds such as Newman and Brzozowski, this structure could be

rebuilt, but in fact, Catholicism rejects this pressure because the inflow of modernity into Catholicism is weak.” Vincenz add that “Catholicism does not need to take him into account within itself as an ally, but only as an enemy” (Vincenz 1927a: 92). As we know, he saw modernity as an opportunity to renew Catholicism. In another text he spoke directly about the influence of the National Democrats on Catholicism and police practices, which of course aroused his greatest indignation: “If you take a look at the Polish reality and its attitude to religion, then

Even though we assume completely different and rather Gandhi-like intentions at the foundations of the current government, we dare to say that the implementation – if we can consider it as an implementation and not as hatching of cuckoo eggs laid by the National Democrats – are introducing the police into religion. (Vincenz 1927b: 12)

And in the last issues of “Droga” from 1927, when discussing Max Weber’s work, he wrote: “The main features of Weber’s spirituality, already visible in his early youth, seem to be: a lack of illusions, a critical attitude towards the aspirations and desires that bother us today, and, on the other hand, an interest in everything that is human, what is very far from us” (Vincenz 1927b: 12).

Without much success, he encouraged people to read the work of his spiritual mentor, Rudolf Maria Holzapfel, in “Droga”. First, in January 1925, he pointed out the need for individual effort and the need to shape one’s own spirituality, an example of which is the work of the author of *Panideal*: “Holzapfel tries to investigate the mysterious phenomena of valuation and conscience” (Vincenz 1925: 5). Vincenz himself saw him as “a harbinger of a future worthy of man.” And the fact that “it is based on a great game with official Christian and Buddhist morality” (Vincenz 1929: 605) could not win him supporters. Vincenz, fascinated by the revision of the entire religious and cultural heritage, was out of step with the times. The awareness of this radical difference came to the fore in loosely written notes while in exile in Hungary during World War II. It is their sketchy, even fleeting nature that allows us to sense the enormous emotional charge hidden in their light form.

Thus, the comment about striving for unity becomes a pretext for revealing its illusory nature and even dangerous temptations to politicize religions:

By realizing this unity of the deepest love of the highest ideals with reality, Polish poets, following the example of Mickiewicz (but each in an original way), did what Gandhi did in our times he called it the introduction of religion into politics. There are many opinions that this has harmed religion and politics. This created very difficult positions and even led to a split with the Church among people who were fundamentally attached to Catholicism. [...] We have a problem of pride that Poland fought for freedom. Winkelried of Nations.<sup>5</sup> (Vincenz 1992: 97-98)

The opposition to a peculiarly understood law and nation-building ideology will be even more pronounced in the comment on the topic that ignited emotions in the interwar period, i.e. the so-called Jewish affairs. As far as I know, Vincenz did not return to these very brief thoughts in his post-war work, but they can be traced to their development in the essay on Gandhi. It seems that one of the main elements of Vincenz's dispute with the legacy of the *Sanacja* was the perception of the place of religion in politics. This aspect of political activity was also important to Gandhi. A detailed summary of the situation of Poland and India, which got rid of the British protectorate in 1949, thanks to Gandhi's deeply thought-out political action, is too complex a problem and deserves separate treatment.

Here I would only like to point out the main assumptions of the founder of India's independence. Vincenz emphasizes, first of all, the specific withdrawal of religion from the public sphere and limiting it to alleviating social tensions: "In introducing religion into politics, Gandhi turns against violence, harm and all forms of oppression, as well as against the executioner and fear as the foundations of community, against slavery in all forms. , against contempt and being ruled by the power of contempt and, finally, against relegating the spirit to abstractions, museums and papers" (Vincenz 1980: 258). With great appreciation, Vincenz reconstructs Gandhi's religiosity as a reality beyond and above the institutional one. Even though he was a devout follower of Hinduism himself, he recognized the multi-ethnicity and multi-religious nature of India and recommended an attitude of openness and tolerance towards others:

<sup>5</sup> The phrase "Poland the Winkelried of nations" was uttered by the title character of "Kordian" on the summit of Mont Blanc. Juliusz Słowacki introduced his own unique concept of messianism, slightly different from Mickiewicz's, into his drama.

According to Gandhi's confession, his religion, although it has no visible form, works even more reliably even though it is outside Hinduism, outside Islam, outside of Christianity and others. However, he does not believe that any of these religions should be removed or excluded, he values them, tries to reconcile them, and give reality to their pursuits. He does not believe that only religion could one day reign on earth, and not out of indifference, but rather out of humility towards God's ways towards man. It tries even more to find what is common and, above all, demands mutual respect and tolerance." (Vincenz 1980: 272)

It seems that when Vincenz talked about India and the place of Hinduism in the country, he had in mind Polish Catholicism and its role in the multinational and multi-religious Second Polish Republic.

It is obvious that in the interwar period in Poland, a different view of the place of Catholicism in public space was dominant. An example is the legislative actions of the Polish parliament, which are particularly troublesome towards the Jewish minority (Rudnicki 2004), but not only that. The anti-democratic and nationalistic face of National Democracy, in the light of the latest research, is beyond doubt, and its reference to Catholicism as an inalienable element of Polish and national identity was instrumental (Krzywiec 2009). The Catholic Church treated politics in a similar way, seeing the National Democrats, and especially its main theoretician, Roman Dmowski, as support for their own activities. Significant is the obituary written after the death of Roman Dmowski on January 2, 1939 in "Osservatore Romano", which was eagerly reprinted in the collective edition of the 9th volume of Dmowski's writings in 1939: "The late Roman Dmowski, a great educator of young generations, has emphasized many times recently that the concepts of Polishness and Catholicism are inextricably linked. Therefore, the joyful manifestation of the spontaneous conversion of Polish youth to the Catholic faith is largely due to Him" (Dmowski 1939: VIII). It was this kind of Catholicism that Stanisław Vincenz opposed. He did not find many allies in this, which is probably why, as Andrzej Vincenz wrote: 'My father even considered leaving Poland and moving to France. From my childhood I remember some maps of the areas near Paris, related to the project of buying a house or property there' (Vincenz A. 1992: 34). The historical turmoil made him experience the fate of emigration without his will.

It must be remembered that literature remained Vincenz's true and only passion. His life's work, the 1000-2000-page tetralogy *On a High Uplands*, is indispensable reading for anyone who wants to understand his philosophy of life. Similarly, his essays and extensive correspondence, still awaiting a publisher. It is significant that in the series of the National Library was published Vincenz's *On a High Uplands (a selection of stories)*, which was preceded by an extensive introduction by one of the best experts on the work and life of Stanisław Vincenz, Jan A. Choroszy (Vincenz 2023). Choroszy meticulously recorded the bibliography on the life and work of Stanisław Vincenz.

### *Holzapfel – philosopher of synthesis*

Rudolf Maria Holzapfel thanks to the exceptionally coherent spiritual concept expressed in the book *Panideal* became the inspiration for the pan-idealist movement that is still active today.<sup>6</sup> In his philosophical treatise, Holzapfel, on the one hand, pessimistically diagnosed the spiritual condition of European culture, and on the other hand, outlined ways to overcome the crisis in which. Stanisław Vincenz was a particularly zealous popularizer of his ideas, who saw them as an alternative to nationalist ideologies.

Rudolf Maria Holzapfel was born in Kraków in 1874 in a Jewish family and died in Muri near Bern in 1930. After a short stay for work purposes After his father's death, he was forced to leave Krakow and spent several years working in South Africa in Cape Town and London. Then he moved to Zurich, where he studied with Richard Avenarius and Ernest Mach. From 1898 to 1901 in the south of Russia in Kherson, he wrote the first outline of his life's work, *Panideal*. He then studied in Bern, where he obtained his doctorate in 1903. He published his main work twice, first in 1901 as *Panideal. Psychologie der sozialen Gefühle* (Holzapfel 1901), then in 1923 as a new, revised and enlarged edition in two volumes of *Panideal. Das Seelenleben und seine soziale Neugestaltung* (Holzapfel 1923). He also wrote poetry that was published in a bilingual version (Vincenz 1979). For us, the most important will be the Polish translation of the first volume of *Panideal* by Stanisław Vincenz (Holzapfel 1936). The most important

<sup>6</sup> <<http://www.panideal-holzapfel.ch/index.htm>>.

source for learning about Holzzapfel's life and work is the biography written by his student Vladimir Astrov, with a foreword by Romain Rolland (Astrov 1928).

The foreword by Rolland was translated by Vincenz and published in Polish in the monthly "Droga". Rolland met Holzzapfel in person and his text shows great fascination with both his work and his personality. First, he talks about the vastness of the work itself: "It is impossible to present with dignity such a vast subject as the work of Rudolf Holzzapfel in a few pages." And then he points to Holzzapfel as a new Moses who opened a new chapter in the history of humanity:

And it was a duty of love and honor on my part to pay publicly my homage to the greatest living, the master of the art that transforms humanity, my homage to the one who awakens new things in her heart, flights of longing, and who, like Moses from the rock, brings into life a new stream of forces from the soul". (Rolland 1927: 26)

And he also speaks highly of Astrov's book itself: "The biography of Rudolf Holzzapfel deserves to be incorporated into the lives of some modern Plutarch and to find a place in the Pantheon which, for centuries, has placed humanity against its great men, stoning them first or slowly punishing them out of indifference" (Rolland 1927: 18). In words not devoid of pathos, he recalls his Krakow roots, also mentioning the bitter separation from Polishness:

Holzapfel is the son of ancient Krakow, the capital of kings, the city of memories. The land of Poland imbued him with its intoxicating mysticism as a child, and although since then he has lost contact with it, and the independence of his spirit has condemned him to voluntary exile from the country – whose present-day society he judges with painful delicacy – with his native land they connect him forever. always a bond of longing for the homeland. And to this land he owes its fragrance to his free and deep soul". (Rolland 1927: 20)

From various references by Andrzej Vincenz, Stanisław Vincenz's son, we know that the meeting with Rudolf Holzzapfel was the decisive impulse to write his tetralogy *On a High Uplands*, the main source of Stanisław Vincenz's glory. It is worth recalling this fragment of

Andrzej Vincenz's reflections included in the preface to a selection of Holzapfel's poems, because it sheds interesting light on their mutual relationship:

In the years 1925-1930, my father maintained close contact with R.M. Holzapfel, visiting him in his hermitage near Bern, where the philosopher was immobilized by an illness that would soon end his life. They were united by their studies and common philosophical interests, in particular an interest in the philosophy of religion as well as the direction of these interests: attitude towards nature, the sense of the need for a spiritual hierarchy as opposed to the material or mechanical hierarchy of societies. West. In the period 1925-1930, Stanisław Vincenz published several articles in "Droga" devoted to religious problems, as well as the importance of Holzapfel, in whom he saw a brilliant reformer. Holzapfel was also the first to suggest to him the idea of writing a work devoted to the spiritual culture of the Hutsul region. The later tetralogy *On a High Uplands* was developed from this idea. (Vincenz A. 1979: 13)

Stanisław Vincenz told what role the author of *Panideal* played in his life in a lecture delivered in Bern in 1958 to members of the pan-idealist association. It is worth recalling some fragments of that speech, from which the figure of Holzapfel himself also emerges. Although Vincenz met him when he was already a spiritually and philosophically formed man, he considered these encounters so decisive that he called him "my spiritual master":

Whenever I come to Bern, I vividly remember the figure of Holzapfel, who – 28 years ago – ended his life here, and whose work I read only at the end of the First World War, and with whom around 1928 I became a personal acquaintance, indeed – friendship. I must emphasize that although, as a forty-year-old man, I had already been somewhat shaped by tradition, life experience and studies, my friendship towards him was of the kind one would bestow on one's master. (Vincenz 1997: 188)

He also immediately pointed to the essence of this influence – the ability to seek and find the ideal, which for Vincenz simply meant contact with reality:

Away from conceptual pedantry, including that which necessarily wants to distinguish natural from supernatural things, Holzapfel got to the point things, to an ever-anew emerging and regenerating spiritual process: he presented longing not as a romantic addition, but as the main current of the soul that culminates in the ideal, in searching, finding and realizing. (Vincenz 1997: 189)

As we will see in Holzapfel's work itself, this meant, above all, trust in the man himself, a deep belief that he is able to find the key to happiness within himself:

If ever someone trusted the persuasive power of his work and longing, it was undoubtedly Holzapfel. He sees great possibilities of the art of humanity, as he calls it – although he does not ask in a causal sense what actions and interventions, what possible political activities are needed to transform human society into a kind of work of art. It also avoids utopia – the persuasive power of the work may bear fruit only in the distant future. (Vincenz 1997: 192)

Let us now see, using selected examples, what this search and finding looked like in the *Panideal*. Holzapfel refers to the spiritual richness that he sees in every person. Religious renewal is a necessary point of reference for him, although not the only one. Below I will quote selected fragments of his work, in which the choice of life path and the meaning associated with it play a key role. In the chapter devoted to “Longing”, Holzapfel writes:

But amidst this spiritual disability of modern aspirations, amidst the general, unfortunate blindness of souls, opposition is already rising [...]. It is necessary first to bring to light these often-mysterious phenomena of conscience, creativity, experiences of art, ideals, and religion, which live in a deep well, to full awareness, to discover the conditions for their improvement, their synthetic fusion into the harmonious creation of the universal ideal. (Holzapfel 1936: 73)

Speaking about hope, he points out the need to reject the traditional view of both religion and science: “Only by freeing religion from the shackles of superstition and simultaneous renunciation of science from unscientific judgment of all religious faith could the clouded

sources of hope of human groups be cleansed of ancient poisons, and without exposing them to complete drying” (Holzapfel 1936: 86).

Interestingly, Holzapfel is critical of institutional forms of religiosity, accusing them of ossification and departure from the original, source spiritual experience. This applies equally to Buddhism, which he accuses of being entangled in Hinduism dominated by Brahmins, and to Christianity, which has succumbed to the deforming influence of dogmatism:

The entanglement of the pure teachings of the Buddha with the systems of Brahmin superstition, and now with Hinduism, and the adaptation of scholastic thinking to the dogmas of the Church; the suppression of experience as a source of knowledge by modern metaphysics and pseudo-religion in favor of a vain, subjectively constructed dialectic – are clear historical examples of the mostly or completely unproductive saving of moribund, ancient, superstitiously illusory trust and hope, from lack of self-control, from lack of energy and creative fantasy. (Holzapfel 1936: 95)

Critical remarks about large religious systems do not mean that the individual spiritual path is not fraught with danger. Holzapfel even warns against false forms of prayer: “Misunderstanding, the desire to falsely understand, envy, hatred, cowardice, fear and awe of greater development and power, hypocrisy, flattery, malice, and slavishness – all these complexes are often associated with the prayer of inferior and little natures. those who love development” (Holzapfel 1936: 132).

The central message of the spiritual renewal proposed by Rudolf Holzapfel is struggle – constant struggle – which is a necessary condition for the development of humanity:

For those to whom the development of humanity is dearer than anything else, they will fight as much as possible against everything that hinders, holds back, and opposes the development of humanity, especially when there is no other, more perfect way to remove these obstacles. They will not hesitate to use physical violence in battle, where and when they have no spiritual means, to repel the brutal attack of dark forces on life and the highest values of humanity”. (Holzapfel 1936: 155)

The source of internal rebirth is conscience, to which Holzapfel devotes a lot of space in his treatise, he calls it the temple and the beginning of light, it is in it that it is possible to overcome all resistances and fears that are always associated with the need for spiritual transformation:

Let us say, there are no gangs of thugs waiting for us. Let it be like a temple where solar figures welcome us. Then we will no longer be tormented by fear and anxiety and will not deprive us of hope for improvement or the will to change. The spirit of renewal, the desire for holiness, will prevail and we will be full of devotion in which neither the thought of evil nor the spirit of self-destruction nor cruelty towards one another arises. (Holzapfel 1936: 222)

We are not the first in this fight, we have someone to follow as an example: "It takes warriors of the spirit already beating on the gates of heaven to awaken something more than a dark sense of their breakthrough forces, to challenge rebellion and resistance. Such were Moses, Christ and Buddha, such were Socrates, Isaiah, Dante" (Holzapfel 1936: 272).

And here we come to the heart of Holzapfel's spiritual proposal, which continues to inspire his followers to this day. It is about discovering the organizing principle, which is the pan-ideal:

For the extensive and deep rejuvenation of every community can only flow from an ideal that is even remotely close to the universal ideal. However, the real universal ideal can only be a model most closely and uniformly connected with deeply rooted, harmoniously and completely organically compatible dispositions to the ethical, artistic, and religious assessment of perfection. Under the touch of the wand of the pan-ideal, all fields of life, all relations of individuals and groups would undergo a groundbreaking transformation (Holzapfel 1936: 455-6).

In the last chapter, Holzapfel formulates a specific manifesto of spiritual rebirth, and thus encourages us to follow the path he initiated: "A pan-idealistic creator, transforming humanity, will strive for its comprehensive transformation, for distortion, also including religious life, and therefore he will only create concepts of humanity, the implementation of which may, with the uniformity of the pan-ideal,

satisfy, in addition to ethical and artistic needs, also religious longing” (Holzapfel 1936: 470). Is this a proposal that can be re-read and implemented in the 21st century? It’s hard to figure out. Nevertheless, it seems to me that living in accordance with one’s conscience is the fullest implementation of the idea formulated by Rudolf Holzapfel. Being faithful to oneself may sometimes even require going against the grain. It may mean going against the grain of other people’s opinions, but in practice it may mean breaking ties with your loved ones. It doesn’t have to be this way, but it can’t be ruled out.

### *Reuniting the world*

It seems that Stanisław Vincenz repaid his philosophical debt to his master Rudolf Holzapfel in the book *Postwar Peripetias of Socrates*, which has already been mentioned. It is a historical book, but the way the story is told clearly indicates its attitude to the present. This type of self-awareness of a writer who practices historically engaged writing has only gained its rightful place in culture in recent decades. Today we know that dealing with history is always connected with the present. As Domańska says, “facts are not discovered, but constructed on the basis of information contained in the sources. They are therefore the product of rhetorical and poetic invention” (Domańska 2012: 41). This, of course, also applies to political ideas recalled from the past. I would like to emphasize right away that I will be interested not so much in the political dimension of Vincenzo’s work, but in the way it recreates Galician polyphony through a historical narrative.

Both the essays and literary works of Stanisław Vincenz are the pinnacle achievements of the Polish humanities. Its basic function was to connect people and bring out the dialogical potential of culture. However, for Vincenz, any divisions into high and popular culture made no sense, because he treated it holistically. Similarly, divisions into national and ethnic cultures or distinguishing different eras made no sense, because he treated the past as a whole that could not be divided or differentiated. Hence, he drew with equal ease from ancient Greece, medieval Italy, Elizabethan England, and newly independent India. However, the most vividly felt material was Galicia, remembered from childhood, or more precisely, the beloved Hutsul region,

which became the collective hero of *On a High Uplands*, which, as we remember, he wrote at Holzapfel's instigation.

However, the key that unlocks the essence of the relationship with the author of *All-Island* is the philosophical story *The Post-War Adventures of Socrates* mentioned at the beginning. If you look at it from this angle, it sheds a lot of light on how the intuitions present in the Master's work were developed. A clue to such readings of *Postwar Peripetias* may be Irena Vincenz's entry from September 16, 1953: "St[anisław] says: 'I couldn't sleep at night, I was thinking about Meletos and how to end this chapter. And now I'm very tired from not sleeping. He's just a scoundrel, Meletos, who finished one old one and now he wants another one'" (Vincenzowa 1993: 353).

Aware of the impossibility of the undertaking, he tries to "get into the skin" of Socrates because this is the only way he can face his own life choice. In fact, when we listen to the concise characterization of Socrates by his main accuser, it is impossible to resist the impression that we are talking about Stanisław Vincenz. In fact, Meletos calls Socrates a foreign man (this is how Vincenz was treated in *Sanacja* Poland, who did not want to join the uncritical cult of Józef Piłsudski), "paving the way for foreignness" (this is how Stanisław Vincenz's friendships with Ukrainians and Jews were assessed). Undoubtedly, Vincenz perceived this memory of multicultural Galicia and the possibility of cooperation between various ethnic and religious communities as an opportunity to overcome nationalist temptations, which was strongly rejected by the *Sanacja* government. Poetically, he calls it "the gift of wings" that allows you to overcome all limitations. In his opinion, Socrates gave this gift to the Athenian people: "the gift of wings so that the Athenian man could take off like a bird and, not stuck in the streets or villages, look around the world with a wide breath and set out to sea" (Vincenz 1985: 85). Unfortunately, this gift was rejected by the Athenians, who sentenced the gift giver to death. Vincenz, as we remember, already in the interwar period must have felt an increasing affinity with the lonely Socrates, who unsuccessfully exposed the political arrogance of the rulers and the "public intellectuals" devoted to them. And yet this was his city, his environment, despite the resistance and conflict, Socrates could not imagine life outside Athens.

That is why, when visiting new lands, he always misses Athens (it is a symbol of a place where conversation is possible and where there are

no taboos). Socrates/Vincenz also opposes naivety and constant questioning to the court wise men of the king of Thessaly who guess the despot's will: The thing is that, just in case, I never denied my naivety. Doubting about the words, constantly asking, tearing off the masks of words, I tried not to let a crust of words grow over me and my friends, like those of those mortals who turned into trees" (Vincenz 1985: 225). It is hardly surprising that ultimately no agreement was reached between the king of Thessaly, Tagos, and the sage. The impatient king sends Socrates away from the borders of his kingdom. Socrates does not provide the expected answers, but encourages us to make an effort, to think and search for the truth within ourselves: "You or anyone else will learn nothing from me that you will not learn from yourself. And I am only – and this is what Apollo gave me – like that midwife who facilitates the birth of truth, like a tiny baby that has long been conceived and is just being born" (Vincenz 1985: 236). This was not the advisor the impatient king was looking for. Another advisor quickly found himself who not only pointed out the uselessness of Socratic knowledge, but even condemned its harmful nature. For Khalifro, court physician to the king of Thessaly, says: "Wherever Socrates goes, he brings with him talkativeness talk. And he can unleash chatter. So, I wouldn't be surprised if they politely asked him to go a little further. Let the neighbors taste it too. All the more so because Athens skillfully got rid of him" (Vincenz 1985: 252). So, the conversation did not bring the expected result. Socrates/Vincenz did not allow himself to be included in the chorus of "minions and toadies", which Tagos despised.

So the king made one last attempt to subdue Socrates/Vincenzo – he declared him a hero! The outburst of almost insane enthusiasm ends with Socrates sighing: "Socrates closed his eyes. He whispered to himself: - To Athens. Hurry to Athens" (Vincenz 1985: 324). Because, as his friend Crito argues, truth cannot be decreed, it cannot be possessed once and for all, and it certainly cannot be used to tyrannize others: "The truth is in constant struggle as each person in whom it is sown discovers it anew. Without the rebirth of the source, without the desire for truth and the search for truth, some servile slave or wretched street girl will get her hands on non-truth" (Vincenz 1986: 321). With such understandings of truth, it is difficult to imagine a greater contrast than the royal decree: "People of Thessaly, honor the Hero! Honor the protector of the country, Socrates!" (Vincenz 1986: 313). Is it justified

to look for autobiographical elements in these fragments? In any case, such a hypothesis is worth putting forward, because it sheds a lot of light on Vincenz's numerous friendships, evidenced in the correspondence left behind, in which partnership and mutual respect were the attitude. The admiration declared in letters to him did not always translate into faithfulness to the undertaken obligations. This is particularly important in the context of Vincenz's long-standing friendship with Czesław Miłosz since the early 1950s, as well as their extremely lively correspondence between them. Its release is expected in early 2025. Mirosława Ołdakowska-Kuflowa writes about the importance of this friendship for Miłosz: "he learned to understand what the proper historical perspective was, he freed himself from the influence of Tadeusz Kroński, he freed himself from the sense of tragedy due to the difficulties of emigration life. Feeling that he was warmly welcomed and accepted, he submitted to the 'treatment', as he called the actions and influence of his older friend" (Ołdakowska-Kuflowa 2006: 320). It was probably during these conversations that an alternative cultural project, realized primarily in poetry, appeared in Miłosz's mind. It is also possible that his spiritual patron was the philosophy of Rudolf Maria Holzzapfel, who made Vincenz himself resistant to ideological temptations already in the interwar period.

If the proposed reading of *Postwar Peripetias* can be defended, perhaps what we would be dealing with here is not so much a book about disappointment and "bitter and courageous sobriety," as Zygmunt Kubiak proposed, but rather a description of effectively resisting the temptation to abuse one's intellect for ideological purposes. It is known that Vincenz treated cultural heritage with an openness rare in his times, adopting an attitude of eclecticism and even syncretism. He was rather interested in common ground and had been looking for it since his studies in Vienna, starting by studying law, biology, psychology, and even Sanskrit. Ultimately, he chose philosophy. And yet, this programmatic a systematicity makes his work a useful research field for researchers of religious and cultural memory (Obirek 2012: 21). This voice sounds particularly interesting in the "Galician polyphony", which, as we already know, absorbed, and transformed all otherness in its own way. In Stanisław Vincenz's work, however, gained a completely unique eulogist who, fascinated by the voices from the past that haunted him, contrasted them with "the rudeness that floods us from everywhere." Rudolf Maria Holzzapfel was certainly his patron in this regard.

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STANISŁAW OBIREK

(Uniwersytet Warszawski, Warszawa)

s.obirek@uw.edu.pl

ORCID 0000-0002-8164-2683

*Rudolf Maria Holzapfel e Stanisław Vincenz:  
il superamento di confini non solo religiosi*

Lo scopo di questo articolo è raccontare la storia dell'insolita amicizia filosofica tra Rudolf Maria Holzapfel (1874-1930) e Stanisław Vincenz (1888-1971). Entrambi sono nati e cresciuti in una Galizia multiculturale, multi-etnica e multi-religiosa. Holzapfel iniziò a scrivere l'opera della sua vita, *Panideal*, alla fine del XIX secolo e la completò pochi anni prima della sua morte. Vincenz non solo tradusse in polacco il *Panideal* in stretta collaborazione con l'autore, ma ne fu profondamente ispirato. Infatti, senza questa ispirazione, probabilmente non avrebbe scritto l'opera della sua vita, *On a High Uplands* (Su un altopiano). Per entrambi, l'obiettivo principale era quello di far emergere la forza unificante presente nella vita di ognuno, come si legge nel *Panideal*: "È necessario portare prima questi fenomeni spesso misteriosi, come in un profondo pozzo vivente, della coscienza, della creatività, delle esperienze dell'arte,

dell'ideale e della religione, alla luce del giorno della piena coscienza, per scoprire le condizioni della loro perfezione, della loro fusione sintetica in una creazione armoniosa del tutto ideale". A quanto pare, non solo le loro opere filosofiche e letterarie, ma anche il loro attivismo in vari ambiti ci permette di vedere in loro la stessa idea filosofica. Sia per Holzapfel, che proveniva da una famiglia ebraica, sia per Vincenz, radicato nella tradizione cristiana, attraversare i confini religiosi e culturali era un modo per realizzare il tutto ideale (*Panideal*).

*Keywords:* Religion, Philosophy, Nationalism, Antisemitism, Literature.



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