

ROCCO BUTTIGLIONE –

HONORARY DOCTOR OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF LUBLIN – 18 MAY 1994

Tadeusz STYCZEŃ, SDS

LAUDATORY ADDRESS IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR ROCCO BUTTIGLIONE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONFERRAL UPON HIM
OF THE DOCTORATE *HONORIS CAUSA*
BY THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF LUBLIN
The Great Aula, 18 May 1994

“But the wise shall shine brightly
like the splendour of the firmament,
And those who lead the many to justice
shall be like the stars forever”
Daniel 12:3

“...we preach Christ Crucified,
...[who] is the power of God and
the wisdom of God”
I Corinthians 1:23-24

Your Excellency, the Distinguished Reverend Archbishop and Grand Chancellor
of the Catholic University of Lublin!

Your Magnificence, the Distinguished Reverend Rector!

Academic Senate of Our Institution!

Distinguished Sister Dean and Colleagues of the Faculty of Philosophy!

Your Magnificence, the Distinguished Rector of the International Academy of
Philosophy in the Principality of Liechtenstein!

Distinguished Professors, Rectors, and Friends of Rocco Buttiglione, his wife,
and his four charming daughters!

All Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Distinguished Professors of Our Institution!

Beloved Students of the Catholic University of Lublin and of the International
Academy of Philosophy in the Principality of Liechtenstein!

18 May 1994. This date has a special eloquence for everyone who makes up the academic family and community of the Catholic University of Lublin. It has that significance for three different reasons, reasons which overlay and mutually complete each other. Today, to these three reasons, there is added a fourth.

Rocco Buttiglione. That name is the fourth reason for the significance of this day, on the occasion of the awarding to him the highest honour and distinction which a University can confer upon a man of learning: the title of doctor *honoris causa*. But what are the three other reasons behind the special significance of this day?

18 May is, first of all, celebrated at this University as an especially festive day. It is the birthday of Karol Cardinal Wojtyła, professor of ethics at this University since the 1953-54 academic year, and since 16 October 1978 the Holy Father Pope John Paul II.

Secondly, this particular birthday is especially festive for our University community because it falls during the fifteenth year of this extraordinary pontificate.

Lastly, this is a day particularly important and festive for our University because it falls during the seventy-fifth anniversary year of this institution's founding, in this city, in Lublin, the "Jagiellonian City," a city of the Union of 1569, unprecedented in human history entered into less than forty years after the famous Augsburgian *cuius regio, eius religio*. It was here, in this place, that seventy-five years ago a University was born. It was a University for this city but not only for this city. It was born for Poland, for Europe, for the world. It was born as a University of culture, teaching to everyone that royal service of God and country, *Deo et Patriae*. That University came into existence at the same time that, after century-long years of servitude, our most illustrious Polish Republic was reborn, a state erased from the maps of Europe and the world by the rape of her neighbours.

And today, amid these three-fold extraordinary reasons for celebration there arises a fourth. The eighteenth day of May 1994 becomes, as a result of an act to take place in a moment, the birthday of a new doctor *honoris causa* of our University. By virtue of this act there will enter into the circle of our academic family a proven friend of this University, to remain inscribed there in the birth registry of the Catholic University of Lublin. He is one of the most distinguished of contemporary philosophers, a genuine man of wisdom, a lover of truth and one of the most distinguished statesmen on Italy's political scene. He is a politician, an expression of the supremacy of the cause of truth over force in all human relationships. That philosopher and politician is Rocco Buttiglione.

Why did we choose this particular day as most fitting and appropriate to confer the title of doctor *honoris causa* upon Professor Rocco Buttiglione? Why have we waited with this "good wine" until now? Because there are truths which, like a priceless treasure, one cherishes in the depths of one's heart. That

mystery grows ripe and waits to be revealed. It waits for the one day when one uncovers it, when it can shine with the brightness of its truth, enriching all and not just the residents and friends of the home. But now the moment has come and the reason is upon us to remove the veil from that truth. We wanted to offer to Professor Rocco Buttiglione, along with this highest honour that as a University we can offer him, the precious and rich fullness of this day which is so special to us. We also note, in the eloquence of this day, that it was Rocco Buttiglione himself who pointed out to us the rich significance of this date. Was it not Rocco Buttiglione himself who makes us aware of the demands of truth to rule over force – *plus ratio quam vis!* – in the midst of different and diverse pressures from opposing forces, material and external, from East and West, providing that silhouette which the profile of Polish history casts upon the background of the history of Europe? Who has more profoundly interpreted the eloquence of that question posed to the whole world from this place by Karol Wojtyła in his poem “Thinking about the Fatherland”: “Can history flow against the currents of conscience?” Who has captured more deeply than him the eloquence of the poem “Stanisław,” on the role of witness as the greatest argument in the scale of arguments of wise men, teachers, and genuine leaders of nations and societies? “The word did not convert; would the blood?” Oh professor, friend of our University! Oh when will this Aula, bearing the name of the great Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, ever forget your lectures delivered in it? This Aula remembers. And those who were not present for them can always reach for the introduction to your magisterial work, *Il pensiero di Karol Wojtyła* (Jaca Book, Milan 1982), or to texts subsequently published in the quarterly journal “Ethos.”

Thus, today did this hour strike, an hour dictated by the logic of the heart. It is the logic of the heart which determined the time to try to do the impossible: to try to pay the unpayable debt of gratitude which we owe to you. The manner of paying the unpayable has something about its chronology which we might call the logic of time. It is precisely the logic of time which points out to us that we should make this day, 18 May 1994, already triply eloquent for us, quadrupally so. It requires us to choose this day as the only day which could be most fitting to confer upon you, Professor, the title of doctor *honoris causa* of the Catholic University of Lublin. “This is the day that the Lord has made.” Even more so: This is the day that the Lord has chosen, directing the voice of the logic of time to the voice of the logic of the heart. He who loves, understands.

Of course, on the day when you enter into the circle of our family as the youngest doctor *honoris causa* in its history it is hard not to keep in mind everything which, with the Creator God at the forefront, had a role in the mystery of the birth of a boy who came into the world on 6 June 1948 in the home of his parents, Pasquale and Liliana Pedone Buttiglione, in Gallipoli,

a small town in sunny Italy, formerly New Greece. A boy who came into the world to the great joy of his two older sisters, Angela and Mariana, today distinguished ladies and figures in the Italian mass media. It would also be hard not to call to mind Professor Buttiglione's own family, which today makes its home in Rome near the Villa Borghese, a home whose beginnings reach back to a walk along the golden seashore in the town of Rimini when a young dark-haired philosopher-lawyer met a girl by the name of Pia, a girl with flaxen hair who seemed to have been born not so much from the azure waves of the Adriatic as – it is hard to explain this miracle of Rimini – from the cold emerald waters of the Baltic. We Poles associate the beauty of the blonde Pia with the women of the amber coast, girls with hair the colour of the dunes and beaches upon which the Baltic waves from time to time cast the resinous gold of amber. And the family of Rocco and Pia: all girls, girls with inimitable faces which show forth the living traces of both parents. They are: Benedetta, followed by Francesca, after which comes, of course, Chiara. And who cannot not be, who must of course obviously be: Beatrice.

Rocco Buttiglione, now a Roman, residing on a street with the charming name Via delle Tre Madonne, sees his cultural patrimony in the forefathers of the great culture of his native Italy. Among them are the great Florentines: Dante Alighieri and the post-war Mayor of Florence, the Servant of God Giorgio La Pira. There is also, too – but not as *secundum quid* – another Florentine, Niccolò Machiavelli. Among those who gave birth to Rocco Buttiglione, the philosopher and politician, are his immediate teachers: the great Italian philosopher Augusto Del Noce, a Roman, and earlier the distinguished lawyer from Turin Norberto Bobbio. Among the other columns, columns of philosophy and religion, were the spiritual youth leader and founder of the *Comunione e Liberazione* movement, Father Luigi Giussani, and the radiating spirit of wisdom, the late-lamented Father Francesco Ricci. And finally there was Father Karol Wojtyła whose book *The Acting Person* was discovered in Polish by the young Rocco in Cracow while the book's author was still a Cracovian (though engaged already for many years with Lublin and, more precisely, the Catholic University of Lublin). This Rocco Buttiglione became author of the best monograph published to date on the thought of the Polish Pope, *Il pensiero di Karol Wojtyła*, known already today in various translations.

I must now give expression to the voice of Rocco Buttiglione himself:

If we were to have a different mother or father we would certainly be different people. Those among us who are married would certainly be different people if we had met a different woman or man. We discover the value of our femininity or masculinity in large measure through our encounter with another person, a person whom we love or a person who has loved us. Nights spent over the cradle of our children or in the company of those close to us tell us a lot about ourselves. Our masters, those

whom we have taken as models, likewise have impressed their stamp upon our lives (R. Buttiglione, "Introduction" in: T. Styczeń, *Urodziłeś się, by kochać* [You Were Born to Love], Lublin 1993, pp. xvii-xviii).

It was precisely under the influence of his Roman master, Augusto Del Noce, that Rocco Buttiglione began his studies in the history of Marxism, dedicating his first works to the so-called "critical theory of society" (*Dialettica e nostalgia*, Milan 1987; *La crisi dell'economia marxista e gli inizi della Scuola di Francoforte*, Rome 1979). His attention was reforged on the well-known statement of Karl Marx: "Previous philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, whereas it is rather a question of changing it." But can one build a better world, asked the young philosopher, if one has not first come to know it in its truth, goodness, and beauty? The basic error of Marxism therefore, according to Buttiglione, was not its emphasis on exalting human praxis but its neglecting the fact that authentic human praxis is the result of a moral decision of man, i.e., a decision in which he chooses obedience to the truth, goodness, and beauty that he has come to know. On the basis of these convictions Buttiglione developed a critique of Marxism which retains its validity even after the fall of the systems of real socialism. Its essence is the statement that man is not just an object of economic life but is at the same time and in a way more important for his essential self-fulfillment – the subject of ethical life, the servant of "the normative power of truth."

A servant. Undoubtedly man constitutes himself in the role of master of himself only through that service. He concerns himself with his self-constitution, he discovers the truth about himself and rules himself only when, in recognizing the truth about himself, he guides and governs himself by that truth through his own choice to which he subjects himself and to which he gives himself in service. By serving the truth about one's self, one governs one's self and reigns over one's self. And in the service of that truth one encounters on the road to one's self every other person as a second "I" (*L'uomo e il lavoro. Riflessioni sull'enciclica "Laborem exercens"*, Bologna 1982; *Metafisica della conoscenza e politica in S. Tommaso d'Aquino*, Bologna 1985).

These convictions naturally led Professor Rocco Buttiglione to an encounter with the thought of Karol Wojtyła. In the philosophy of the human person, which sees man as he who discovers himself and returns to himself only in recognizing the truth about himself and by free choice becoming its servant and lover, Buttiglione simultaneously perceives both the chance and necessity of rescue precisely on the grounds of a realistic philosophy of being – which is an accurate intuition of contemporary philosophy. Because of that discovery of truth recognized by man, the world, the truth of being, being the occasion to discover within its compass someone wholly extraordinary, who also recognizes that world, who nevertheless as the subject of that knowing and at the same time the subject of knowing one's self, ceaselessly transcends everything that

is in this world and which can only be the object of knowing, i.e., a thing and not, like man, a subject in this world, i.e., a person. Buttiglione sees that it is precisely that metaphysical and epistemological realism which causes the philosophy of man to open itself up completely upon its subjective reality, upon its subjectivity, and in the name of the demands of the objectivity of truth about man. Being is surprised at itself when it personalizes itself and becomes a person. In man, being attains to the level of making itself aware of itself. Likewise, in man the truth of being, by the power of its recognition, acquires its witness and in a certain sense its trustee. This is precisely where the philosopher of being and the philosopher of man is born, i.e., simultaneously the lover of the truth of being and of the truth of man. It is therefore not accidental that the seal of the International Academy of Philosophy in the Principality of Liechtenstein (whose vice-rector is Rocco Buttiglione, and whose rector, His Magnificence Prof. Josef Seifert, is among us), carries the Platonic *Dilligere veritatem omnem et in omnibus*; so classical and at the same time so contemporary!

The meeting at this point of two paths, the philosophical path of Prof. Rocco Buttiglione and the path of the Professor of the Catholic University of Lublin Karol Wojtyła could have, independently of all other possible or factual influences, only one final source. It is the profound bending over of man on the world surrounding him and the profound surprise of man at the greatness within him, a greatness which could only be – and is! – a reflection and gift of Him who is not of this world, a gift and reflection of the face of the Creator Himself, the Father of man. Hence the philosophy of Rocco Buttiglione as a servant of the truth of being: of subject and object, showing the lack of a base to an anthropology that styles itself “the dialectic of master and slave,” sees the highest and only adequate way of expressing that truth by the expression of man’s gratitude to His Creator, thankfulness for the gift of being sons and daughters of such a Father. It is also gratitude of being at the same time brothers and sisters who are equally amazed at and proud of the glory of their “royal dignity,” of their divine patrimony. Thus, for Rocco Buttiglione to live is to philosophize and to philosophize is to remain in thanksgiving (*Über die Dankbarkeit im Denken Karol Wojtyłas* in: J. Seifert, ed., *Danken und Dankbarkeit. Eine universale Dimension des Menschseins*, Heidelberg 1992, pp. 211-233).

Is it permissible for the wise man to hide the results of these discoveries beneath a bushel basket? Should not the discovered treasure rather be shared with everyone? Can the wise man surrender the mission of proclaiming the truth and guiding its fate within the histories of the free decisions of individual peoples and of nations?

This is why Rocco Buttiglione, who in many ways can be recognized as a wise man, who sees what is eternal and at the same time extraordinary in

man; this is why Rocco Buttiglione became a statesman. He is today a member of the Parliament of the Italian Republic, a politician with the insight of a master strategist who knows when to throw the switch to begin certain initiatives and when this best ought to take place so that the train of history can carry people in the direction of giving concrete embodiment to what is eternal in man (*Il problema politico dei cattolici. Dottrina sociale e modernità*, Casale Monferrato 1993). He knows that only in this way will the ideal not be left suspended in the realm of the abstract or buried in books on philosophers' desks. Since the ideal is the truth which is written in the very being of man, so that he who builds himself up one day by the act of its discovery can choose it and transform his acts by it into living truth, that he be born again and so fulfill himself by leading his being to the fullness of its perfection! That is what the ideal is for, so that it can be embodied in reality, touched by the concrete, that it might in the true Norwidian sense of the word, so to say "hit the street."

The Catholic University of Lublin knows who is bestowing more upon whom and who is enriching whom as a result of today's selection. Let us not be ashamed to admit it openly: we want to profit at the same time from this gift, knowing who it is to whom we give it. We count on your help in interpreting the full eloquence of the summons of Divine Providence, a summons which in this particular moment is written upon contemporary European and world history. We count on it in interpreting the whole eloquence of the place in which Divine Providence situated this Catholic University of Lublin, as if assigning to it the role of the heart of Europe and simultaneously the keystone between East and West on the Continent. I shall never forget the words which the "Padre bianco" (as Pia Buttiglione calls the Holy Father) spoke in the Aosta Valley after reading Rocco Buttiglione's paper, *Suverenność narodu przez kulturę* [Sovereignty of the Nation through Culture]: "I do not know if there is anybody in Poland who would know how to write better, or at least as competently and profoundly, about these matters than has Rocco Buttiglione." At the time nobody besides me heard this. Perhaps Mont Blanc, Monte Bianco, heard it. But so what if, as Pascal put it, the Mount does not even know its own elevation? Could it not also be therefore that this day was given to us so that we could speak those words in this distinguished circle? I do not know what weighed more heavily in the Holy Father's assessment: his thankful admiration for the young philosopher from Italy or a touch of sadness that someone from beyond their own country has to show this to the Poles, who so often do not recognize their own prophets. In a lively connection with those remarks the Holy Father years later spoke thus at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, 8 June 1991:

The legacy of the Constitution of the Third of May revealed and still reveals the path towards our Polish identity in Europe: our identity as a society and as a political community. This is important on the thresh-

old of the Third Republic when “thrust upon ourselves” we continually still seek the road towards “ourselves,” towards a political and economic form of that sovereign subjectivity which is our proper share.

Allow me once again to quote the words of a contemporary thinker, not a Pole but an Italian, which with special penetration enter into our Polish subjectivity:

Poles can either enter directly into a consumeristic society, taking last place in it before it definitively closes its doors to newcomers, or they can lead to the rediscovery of the greater, deeper, and more authentic tradition of Europe, proposing to it simultaneously the alliance between the free market and solidarity (R. Buttiglione, *Jan Paweł II a polska droga do wolności*, [John Paul II and the Polish Road to Freedom], in: “Ethos” 1990 Nos. 3-4, p. 49).

In the person of Rocco Buttiglione our family is given today by Divine Providence a master of discernment and a demanding teacher. He is one who knows how to tell us “you do not know what you have” but who also knows how to say “why are you giving up the pearl of great price for the swill that they feed elsewhere to the swine?” He is one who knows how to observe: “He who endured persecution and the solidarity of the oppressed and then goes over to the mentality of the victors, to the logic of force, he is in a certain sense the more guilty” (R. Buttiglione, *Introduction* in: T. Styczeń, *Solidarność wyzwala* [Solidarity Liberates] Lublin 1993, p. 21). Can we not see in the words of Rocco Buttiglione the message which is conveyed to his fellow countrymen on this, his birthday, as a gift from the concerned heart of the author of such epochal documents as the encyclicals *Centesimus annus* and *Veritatis splendor*?

May therefore the concern of Rocco Buttiglione that mutual love join all peoples together as one be made our concern. From now on let our mutually borne concerns be a lighter load, a lighter weight and, perhaps even as Christ assures, a sweet yoke. Let the voice of our world today above all sound forth joy in the discovery and common experience of our friendship, of that *idem velle et nolle*, to want and to not want the same things. In the midst of its concerns for our contemporary world and our mutual concerns, may the heart of our University live today to speak out words of joy! In this moment let there sound forth *Carmen Patriae* that hymn of joy, *Gaude Mater Polonia prole fecunda nobili!* Let our hearts today beat with the joy of a mother when she gives birth to a child, with a mother’s joy that her family is enriched by the gift of such a son! Indeed, a mother knows best who it is who bestows whom with the gift of life. That is why it is she who sees best whom it really is who enriches her family by the birth of a child. And therefore: “*Gaude Mater Polonia prole fecunda nobili!*” – “*Raduj się, Matko Polsko!*”

May this distinguished audience pardon me for not having attempted a summation of many other important dimensions and priceless threads in the

extraordinary philosophical synthesis whose author is our new doctor *honoris causa*. This is not due to cowardice or fear. If it is fear, it is the fear of honour, of respect for the master, *timor reverentialis*.

Therefore, let the master himself complete the summit of this hour of our joy on 18 May 1994 here in Lublin! Let him speak to us himself! Let the works of the Master praise him! I know the creativity of Rocco Buttiglione at least that much to be certain that he is the master of revealing the whole from freely chosen fragments. He knows how "to speak about the whole through the parts," speaking in the language of the poet of Lublin. Let us allow him the freedom to pick those pieces himself!

I now ask His Magnificence, the Reverend Rector, Professor Stanisław Wielgus, as well as the honorable Sister Dean, Professor Zofia Zdybicka, to carry out the ceremony of conferring upon Professor Rocco Buttiglione the title of doctor *honoris causa* of the Catholic University of Lublin. I then ask Professor Rocco Buttiglione, as our doctor *honoris causa*, to speak to us.

Lublin, 18 May 1994

Translated by *Dr. John M. Grondelski*