

SUMMARY

The present issue is mainly devoted to the cultural phenomenon usually described as post-modernism. Still, the discussion of the leading topic is preceded by some programmatic texts of the "Ethos" connected with the pontificate of John Paul II, namely, a dissertation by Tadeusz Styczeń SDS about the genesis of the conception of the human person, and two articles by Robert Spaemann and José L. Illanes, respectively, pertaining to the latest papal encyclicals.

The proper body of materials of the issue, entitled *Facing Postmodernism*, contains three blocks of articles. As the text *From the Editors* indicates, the phenomenon of post-modernism essentially constitutes an expression of a crisis which has its roots in the age of the Enlightenment, when the concept of true freedom, that is, freedom oriented towards the realization of the law of nature, was questioned for the first time. The present epoch seems to betoken a spiritual turning point in the history of humanity. This is indicated by John Paul II in the fragment of his address to the representatives of culture and science, delivered during his pilgrimage to Lithuania, quoted at the beginning of the issue. In this perspective, postmodernism seems to be a sign – largely a negative one – of the cultural consequences initiated by the so-called age of modernism. Postmodernist culture is characterized by problematization rather than solving of the crucial questions in human life. Hence, particular sections of the issue are formulated as questions.

The first section offers answers to the question: *What is Postmodernism?* The issue is taken up by Andrzej Szahaj who presents a general characterization of postmodernism in art, science and philosophy. In turn, Andrzej Bronk SVD reconstructs the rich ideological background of this trend, assuming the form of antifundamentalism. In his philosophical analysis, Heribert Boeder, a disciple of Heidegger and professor of the University of Osnabrück, justifies the total inherence of the culture called postmodernism in the age of modernism. A similar thesis, though particularized to the Marxist aspect, is presented by Fr Alfred Wierzbicki in his paper. Stefan Morawski discovers the features of postmodernism, especially its criticism and self-questioning, in the general paradigm of philosophizing.

The next section is entitled: *The Question about Identity or about Pluralism?* It begins with an article by Fr Tomasz Węclawski who tries to determine the space of the dialogue between catholic theology and the ideological-moral contents of the postmodernist attitude. It is in the latter attitude that Ireneusz Ziemiński perceives a manifestation of the modern dilemmas of the human being. The last two texts in the block expose the destructive aspects of the culture of postmodernism: Andrzej Grzegorzczak reveals the ethical consequences of contesting the value of truth, while Paweł Bortkiewicz TChr justifies the popularity of the mentality typical of sectarianism in postmodernist ideology.

The last section asks a question: *A Threat or a Challenge?* Ethical, philosophical and artistic threats resulting from postmodernism, especially for Christian culture, are pointed out by the articles by Bp Józef Życiński, Adam Chmielewski and Fr Jerzy Szymik. In turn, Jadwiga

Mizińska perceives an impetus towards the rehabilitation of metaphor in philosophizing in post-modernist thought, while Jacek Salij OP beholds a historiosophic challenge in the culture of postmodernism which Christian Europe has to face.

The section of articles contains a standing block devoted to the problems of modern family. It is entitled: *Polish Family, Familial Europe, Human Family*. In his article Fr Piotr Pawlukiewicz offers a spiritual diagnosis of the state of the Polish nation after the presidential election in 1995. (An evaluation of this state in the context of recent Polish history can also be found in the article by Tomasz Strzembosz published in the standing column *Thinking about Fatherland*.) Successive articles concern moralphilosophical and moral-theological aspects of particular members of the family, of the child (an essay by Wojciech Chudy), of the wife and mother (an essay by Fr Sławomir Szczyrba), and of the father (an essay by Fr Bronisław Mierzwiński). The block ends with an article by Ryszard Fenigsen which is a kind of a report from the "battlefield" between the supporters and opponents of euthanasia in the United States.

The present issue contains a particularly expanded section of *Polemics*. It contains critical remarks by Janusz Gula concerning the methodological and substantial significance of the controversy about abortion by representatives of natural sciences, and polemical notes by Jacek Wojtysiak and Fr Alfred Wierzbicki concerning the style of deliberations displayed by Fr Józef Tischner.

The section *Discussion and Reviews* concerns several items connected with the main subject of the issue. Natasza Szutta discusses a book which is a result of a conference on post-modernist literature which was held in Warsaw in 1992. Sr Barbara Chyrowicz critically reviews two books by Zygmunt Bauman, while Arkadiusz Robaczewski expresses his negative views on a book by Odo Marquard. The other reviews concern books which assume a stand opposed to postmodernism. Józef Fert discusses a book by J. Kaliszewski about the poetry of Zbigniew Herbert, while Anna Truskolaska – an album which constitutes an expression of the need of art in sick or incapacitated persons (*Sztuka zwana naiwną – The Art Called Naive*). The section of reviews ends with a sketch by Tomasz Mickiewicz about the analogies and differences in the economic politics of the Polish government before World War II and today. The section *Reports* contains discussions of the Sixth Polish Congress of Philosophers in Toruń, 1995 (Wojciech Chudy), of the 21st Week of Spirituality at the KUL in 1996 (Fr Mariusz Starczewski), and the inauguration of the Postgraduate Studies of Rhetoric at the Jagiellonian University in the academic year 1995-96 (Fr Zbigniew Krzyszowski). An account by George Weigel of the pilgrimage of John Paul II to the United States in 1995 is published in the section *The Pontificate in the Eyes of the World* (the text first appeared in "Crisis").

The feuilleton section *Through the Prism of the Ethos* contains an article by Cezary Ritter who, against the background of the latest events in international politics, touches the problem of the interference of superpowers in the plans and aspirations of smaller countries.

The issue ends, as usually, with a *Bibliography* of the speeches by John Paul II, this time concerning his addresses on the subject of the attitude of the Church towards modern culture (Maria Filipiak), and *Notes about Authors*.