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## ***HOMO SACER* – ETHICAL PROBLEMS WITH MULTICULTURALISM**

International population migrations are among the contemporary cultural and civilizational phenomena which attract the special attention of the public opinion. Mass migrations have brought with them real and potential changes in both sending and receiving countries. This phenomenon is multifaceted and has been the subject of research by representatives of many disciplines. One of the contemporary issues that affects the ethical plane is the phenomenon of multiculturalism, the "other" issue in our culture often defined as "foreign". Binary thinking has left a special mark on the reflection on "otherness", the debate has been going on for many years according to the dichotomous division: me - the stranger, me - the other. This dichotomy has particularly significant consequences at the level of ethical considerations. The aim of the article is a brief analysis of the issues of multiculturalism and migration in ethical terms. I would like to refer to the philosophy of dialogue, to the texts of Levinas and Tischner, where one can directly find the ethical analysis of this issue. The guiding thought of this text are the words of Józef Tischner. "It would not be my being in a world without the Other, without a word that guides me and shows me things. The world that surrounds me is a great gift of speech, assuming the presence of the Second"<sup>2</sup> and Levinas "If the other looks at me, I am responsible for him, even if in his eyes I have not made any commitments".

**Keywords:** homo sacer, contemporary culture, stranger, the other, ethics.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The changes taking place today at many levels of individual and collective activity attract not only scientists but also "ordinary" participants of social life. International population migrations are among the contemporary cultural and civilizational phenomena which attract the special attention of the public opinion. Mass migrations have brought with them real and potential changes in both sending and receiving countries. This phenomenon is the subject of research by representatives of many disciplines: historians, geographers, anthropologists, demographers, sociologists but also psychologists, philosophers and ethicists as this is a multi-faceted phenomenon. At the end of 2014, UNHCR, a UN body for refugees estimated that there are almost 60 million forced resettled people in the world, which is the highest level recorded in history. Of these, 1,8 million are waiting for a decision on their asylum application, 19,5 million are refugees, and the rest are displaced persons within their own country. Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia are the largest sources of refugees, but many others come from Libya, Eritrea, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Asia, the persecution of the Muslim Rohingya

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<sup>2</sup> J. Tischner, *Myslenie wedlug wartosci*, Kraków 2002, p. 35.

minority in Myanmar has led to a recent increase in the number of refugees<sup>3</sup>. The key issue for this study is above all the problem of ethical issues. Numerous migrations have recently contributed to the emergence of many new ethical problems emerging from specific areas of reflection related to multiculturalism. This issue has raised many new ethical problems, among others: motives of human movement as can we blame people who want to leave conflicted, impoverished countries and start a better life elsewhere, and the issue of “the other” in our culture often defined as “foreign”, and how to treat them, but also gave rise to a new – often unscrupulous and sometimes fatal - industry for smuggling people. All this clearly indicates the need for reflection in the context of migration and multiculturalism. Generating norms, moral assessments or even imperatives in social life have become something natural. Selected ethical concepts are a contemporary attempt to read theories that have arisen in the past (such as the ethics of virtues), but also innovative ethics (such as the ethics of discourse) arise.

## 2. CULTURAL CONSUMERISM AND ETHICS CONSUMPTION?

Modern reality gives us an unprecedented ease of movement and learning about almost every part of the world. Instantly, we can plan and implement the most original fantasy related to learning about other cultures. There is a huge amount of offers available in the market both with travel agencies and customized for a specific customer.

Unfortunately, this is not the case for greater understanding, understanding or broadly understood intercultural dialogue. Tourism, which offers travel agencies are only trips, not expeditions and instead of a real deep knowledge we only have a stroll along the cultural surface. It is a kind of “cultural consumerism”, the desire to taste the exotic at the same time without being immersed in it. An opportunity to reach a real culture requires a real encounter with native people and two weeks of holidays will not achieve this goal. Polish tourists more and more often choose to rest in the Arab Emirates while declaring in the surveys that they do not want to see “dissenters”<sup>4</sup> side by side, they are happy to choose a Roma concert but they do not accept “Gypsies”. Unfortunately, the ease of movement more and more often confirms the anti-culture of dialogue and even prejudice. It is difficult – to look at today's reality – to say that there are no conflicts on the level of cultural or religious diversity. There are also noticeable the weakening borders of countries and, at the same time, increasingly radical divisions within society.

Many people who speak in the discussion, including the ethical one, point to Poland as a religiously and ethnically homogeneous country without the tradition of multiculturalism and migration traditions. Internal migration, related to wars, resettlement actions, border changes and the movement of people from villages to cities, are forgotten. As a result, in our society there are few completely homogeneous social groups for centuries inhabiting one and the same territory. One should also not forget about Poles living outside of our

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<sup>3</sup> [http://filozofuj.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Fi\\_1d\\_2015\\_09\\_10\\_v3.pdf](http://filozofuj.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Fi_1d_2015_09_10_v3.pdf) [5.10.2017].

<sup>4</sup> The “Demos” report from 2017 shows a persistent low level of trust for national and European institutions, growing opposition to immigration and the general mood of pessimism in the perception of the future is ubiquitous in the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Poland and Sweden: <http://www.isp.org.pl/aktualnosci,1,1612.html> [18.10.2017].

country. Today's Polonia is estimated at around 20 million people worldwide – making it one of the largest national migrations<sup>5</sup>.

When, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, crowds of Polish emigrants started to appear at railway stations in New England – mostly “young men” – local newspapers were alarming. The poor, neglected newcomers of “dark faces” were followers of the Catholic hateful in the United States, “faithful to the Pope”, not the ideas of democracy; they had different “habits” and “customs”, and in addition most of them brought to America a family left in Europe. The fact that they agreed to accept the most difficult and least paid jobs on local farms caused aversion and fear of competition among other emigrants, threatening to outbreak of conflicts and social tensions. It did not take long for the newspaper tone to change. Polish newcomers turned out to be hardworking and loyal employees. Although local women made fun of Polish emigrants who, regardless of the sun, worked hard in the field, the journalists admitted admiringly that whole families helped with the harvest, wanting to improve their lives<sup>6</sup>. Many debaters wonder how to assimilate foreign culture in our culture, how to teach respect for our culture? What also seems important is the question of what is Polish culture, what is “our” identity as opposed to foreign one? What is its determinant? Love for Chopin and Polish dumplings? Catholicism and traditionalism? Or maybe combining and “paravanism”?<sup>7</sup>

Most likely, the divisions built on differences will grow with time, and concepts of building ghettos for “others” will emerge with increasing enthusiasm. We need, as never before, a culture of dialogue, because it is very difficult for multiculturalism that we experience to turn into interculturalism. Leszek Kołakowski wrote that “the distinctive feature of European culture in its mature form is [...] its ability to challenge itself, to abandon its own exclusiveness, its will to look at itself with the eyes of others”<sup>8</sup>. Was Kołakowski right? It seems that even if that was the case, we have lost this ability, and we are getting closer and closer to the fragment of Montesquieu from the “Persian Letters”: “It seems to me that we think of things only in unconscious relation to ourselves. I am not surprised that the negroes paint the devil of dazzling whiteness, and the gods black like charcoal [...] that at last all idolaters imagined the gods with a human face and gave them their impulses. It was well said that if the triangles had created a god, they would have made it three sides”<sup>9</sup>. It is worth to look at your own culture through the eyes of others and it becomes noticeable then that people worship themselves hidden under the mask of myths or symbols.

### 2.1. *Homo sacer*?

The main question, which is worth to put who is “different”, who is the “other”, “foreign” in the modern world? It seems that it has become commonplace “to assign responsibility for all the country's troubles and problems to immigrants – aliens, new arrivals, and especially newly arrived strangers – is nowadays a universal planetary covenant. To quote Heather Grabbe, Director of the Center for Research on the European Reform, «Germans accuse Poles, Poles of Ukrainians, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks Ukrainians», while countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia do not have enough to afford a magnet for

<sup>5</sup> <http://uchodzcy.info/infos/mity-i-fakty/> [25.10.2017].

<sup>6</sup> <http://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/czy-imigranci-sa-nam-kulturowo-obcy/> [18.10.2017].

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> L. Kołakowski, *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony i 27 innych kazań*, Kraków 2006, s. 128.

<sup>9</sup> Monteskiusz, *Listy Perskie*, tłum. T. Boy-Żeleński, Warszawa 1979, p. 59.

the hungry and hungry neighbors, they are guided by anxiety and people's anger towards ever-present and ready guilty: Gypsies, local but wandering, deprived of a permanent address, and therefore wherever they are – chronically newcomers and strangers<sup>10</sup>. Giorgio Agamben, is probably best known for his book published in 1998: *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. The author has developed the concept of *homo sacer* which has become a permanent element of contemporary philosophical discourse. *Homo sacer* is a man who can be killed with impunity. According to Agamben, this category has now been applied to so-called “unnecessary” and even unwelcome people such as: refugees, stateless people, or more generally – all those who have been stripped of any rights except the enigmatic “right to life”, laws that as history teaches, nothing really guarantees. A Muslim as an extreme representative of double exclusion because he is deprived of rights by both the camp supervisors and his prisoners, he is particularly interested in the incarnation of modern *homo sacer* – a man who cannot be sacrificed and who can be killed. The same applies to the phenomenon of VP – Versuche Personen – here Agamben cites examples of Nazi practices of releasing death – testing dangerous substances on prisoners of the camp. The grim testimonies of these experimental rabbits juxtaposed with the practice of voluntary participation of prisoners in dangerous experiments in some states of the United States in exchange for a relaxation of the sentence. Some examples of exclusion and *homo sacer* dealing with ordinary individuals are countless in Agamben's book<sup>11</sup>. Contemporary *homo sacer* is an unwanted alien, a stranger who for reasons that are important to him has left his homeland and has to find a new place for himself. The time of the Berlin Wall and fortresses has passed, we cannot separate ourselves from the world, today Kant's words from over 200 years are more and more important today, that on a spherical planet we cannot get away from each other, let alone a “safe distance”, they cannot be more to extend the distance we are trying to divide, the closer we are to trample on our heels<sup>12</sup>. However, these quoted narratives do not serve to auction the sins that humanity has committed against itself, testify to the thinness of the boundaries between what is ethical and unethical.

### 3. “THE OTHER” IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF DIALOGUE<sup>13</sup>

The philosophy of dialogue seems to be very helpful in discussing the encounter with someone else, also culturally, because it is a special kind of dialogue. In the philosophy of dialogue, the meeting is an unpredictable event and the dialogue is only the authentic existence of a human being. The meeting is an extraordinary and direct dialogical relationship, it is approaching and opening to another human being. The world of dialogue is important primarily because it is not a similarity but a difference.

According to Levinas, the main cause of the twentieth century misery is the eradication of the ethical dimension in relations with another human being. It seems that the concept of the subject of Levinas is crucial for the philosophy of dialogue. Levinas speaks of the otherness as an absolute value, the Other should be listened to, accepted. Thanks to the

<sup>10</sup> Z. Bauman, *O tarapatach tożsamości w ciasnym świecie*, ER(R)GO. Teoria – Literatura – Kultura 2003, No. 1 (6), 9–25.

<sup>11</sup> G. Agamben, *Homo sacer. Suwerenna władza i nagie życie*, Warszawa 2008.

<sup>12</sup> I. Kant, *Uzasadnienie metafizyki moralności*, tłum. M. Wartenber, Kęty 2001, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Excerpts published in the textbook for high school and university students: *Edukacja międzykulturowa. Idee, koncepcje, inspiracje, międzykulturowa*, Jarosław 2018, pp. 39–46.

Other Self, he withdraws from selfish freedom<sup>14</sup>. Meeting with the “Other” is mainly an experience not of an ontological but above all ethical nature. I can make contact with the other, get to know him. “The way of the Other's presence, beyond the idea of the Other in me, is in effect called face”<sup>15</sup>. The person's deepest essence is expressed by the person's face. You can experience the presence of another person, but do not see the face. It is only the Face of the Other that testifies the truth”<sup>16</sup>. The symbol of otherness is the face of a man and the immediate closeness of meeting face to face. However, this is not a physical face. “When you see the nose, the eyes, the forehead, the beard of the other, and when you can describe them, it means that we turn to him as an object. The best way to get to know the other is when we do not even notice the color of his eyes! When we observe the color of his eyes, we are not in a social relationship with the other”<sup>17</sup>. Face experience is a speech experience, where we are talking to each other face to face. “Face is the meaning”<sup>18</sup>.

The symbol of otherness is the face of a man and the immediate closeness of meeting face to face. However, this is not a physical face. “When you see the nose, the eyes, the forehead, the beard of the other, and when you can describe them, it means that we turn to him as an object. The best way to get to know the other is when we do not even notice the color of his eyes! When we observe the color of his eyes, we are not in a social relationship with the other”. Face experience is a speech experience, where we are talking to each other face to face. “Face is the meaning”. Levinas emphasizes that politics and institutions should always be controlled based on an ethical level. “In the Face there is an appeal to give and serve, an obligation not to leave the other, even in the face of inevitability. This is probably the root of the community”<sup>19</sup>. Responsibility for the Other does not come from legal norms, but from ethical norms, empathy and care with the otherness “at the very top of the hierarchy of values possible to be achieved by man”. According to Levinas, “only the foreign source can teach us”. Only man can be absolutely strangers to me – immune to typology, classification, characterization, classifications<sup>20</sup>. The Other in the concept of Levinas is not only the second of the same cultural circle, it is also, and maybe even above all Other, different from us culturally. “Absolutely Other, it's a different person. It is not part of this series that the Other is an alien - it does not fit in my place”<sup>21</sup>. We need others and their view of the world to rebuild our thinking to change fear and hatred for good and cooperation. An access to the Face is immediately ethical, the face is what forbids us to kill<sup>22</sup> but also to neglect and destroy.

Similar inspirations can be found in Józef Tischner. In his opinion, it would be impossible for us to be in a world without the Other, without a word that guides me and shows me things. The world that surrounds me is a great gift of speech, assuming the presence of

<sup>14</sup> M. Żardecka-Nowak, *Relacja między etyką a polityką w kontekście filozofii Emmanuela Lévinasa*, „Filozofia dialogu”, 2003, Vol. 1.

<sup>15</sup> E. Levinas, *Etyka i Nieskończony: rozmowy z Philippem Nemo*, transl. B. Opolska-Kokoszka, Kraków 1991, p.181.

<sup>16</sup> S. Quinzio, *Hebrajskie korzenie nowożytności*, tłum. M. Bielawski, Kraków 2005, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> E. Levinas, *Etyka i Nieskończony...*, p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> E. Levinas, *Całość i nieskończoność: esej o zewnętrznosci*, transl. M. Kowalska, Warszawa 1998, p. 128.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>22</sup> J.A. Kłoczowski, *Filozofia dialogu*, Poznań 2005, p. 13.

the Other<sup>23</sup>. The key role in the “other experience” is analogy. The Other is similar to me, it is another I [...]”<sup>24</sup>. According to Tischner, “the Other – I can be it myself – smiles, cries, expresses wishes, desires, regrets and expectations, sorrows, joys and longings”<sup>25</sup>. The fragment on solidarity is extremely important for reflections on the relationship with another human being. Tischner talks about relationship that creates true solidarity, one that not only confirms the existing community, but above all creates a new one. It is the solidarity of the Merciful Samaritan who turns to the alien “enemy” when the alien “enemy” calls for help. Imagine a Palestinian who today in Israel raises a wounded Jew from the sidewalk, puts him in his own car and takes him to the hospital. The parable of the Good Samaritan is actually a merciless exposition of the truth that a man can be abandoned by “his” and then the only salvation is “stranger” who will respond to his cry. It seems that this symbolic story should particularly accompany us in the discussion on multiculturalism.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Several daring thinkers are in favor of a world with open borders, arguing that it would significantly increase global GDP and the average global level of happiness<sup>26</sup>. Regardless of answers and solutions, we should all feel responsible for the other, especially open our eyes wide to see another who lives next to us and seems to us similar to us and others, which perhaps at first glance do not seem to be close to us. It seems that the Kantian imperative should be particularly close to us today as a criterion for making ethical decisions.

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<sup>23</sup> J. Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości*, Kraków 2002, p. 218.

<sup>24</sup> J. Tischner, *Inny. Esej o spotkaniu*, Kraków 2017, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> <http://openborders.info> [30.09.2017].

**INTERNET SOURCES**

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**HOMO SACER – ETYCZNE PROBLEMY Z WIELOKULTUROWOŚCIĄ**

Wśród współczesnych zjawisk kulturowo-cywilizacyjnych przykuwających szczególną uwagę opinii społecznej znajdują się międzynarodowe migracje ludności. Masowe migracje przyniosły ze sobą realne ale i potencjalne przemiany zarówno w krajach wysyłających, jak i przyjmujących. Zjawisko to jest wielopłaszczyznowe i stało się przedmiotem badań przedstawicieli wielu dyscyplin. Jednym ze współczesnych zagadnień, które dotyka płaszczyzny etycznej, jest zjawisko wielokulturowości, kwestia „innego” w naszej kulturze często definiowanego jako „obcego”. Myślenie binarne pozostawiło szczególny ślad w refleksji nad „innością”, debata od wielu lat przebiega według dychotomicznego podziału: ja – obcy, ja – inny. Dychotomia ta ma szczególnie istotne konsekwencje na płaszczyźnie rozważań etycznych. Celem artykułu jest krótka analiza problematyki wielokulturowości i migracji w ujęciu etycznym. Na potrzebę analizy tych zagadnień chciałabym odnieść się do filozofii dialogu, do tekstów Levinasa i Tischnera u których wprost odnajdujemy analizę etyczną tegoż zagadnienia. Przewodnią myślą tego tekstu są słowa Józefa Tischnera „Nie byłoby mojego bycia w świecie bez Drugiego, bez słowa, które do mnie kieruje i którym pokazuje mi rzeczy. Świat, który mnie otacza, jest wielkim darem mowy, zakładającym obecność Drugiego”<sup>27</sup> oraz Levinasa „Skoro inny patrzy na mnie, to jestem za niego odpowiedzialny, nawet jeśli w jego oczach nie podjąłem żadnych zobowiązań”.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *homo sacer*, współczesna kultura, obcy, inny, etyka.

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<sup>27</sup> J. Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości*, Kraków 2002, s. 35.

