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**Person – Disability – (Auto)biography:
Analysing the Situation of People with Disabilities from the Biographical
Perspective in Wojciech Chudy's Anthropological and Pedagogical
Reflection**

**Osoba – niepełnosprawność – (auto)biografia.
Biograficzna perspektywa analizy sytuacji osoby z niepełnosprawnością
w antropologicznej i pedagogicznej refleksji Wojciecha Chudego**

Abstract: From the biographical perspective, Wojciech Chudy appears as a philosopher, ethicist and educator, who wonders who a person experiencing disability is. Based on his personal biographical experience, he wants to 'think and tell the truth' about the situation of people with disabilities. From the perspective of biographical analysis, it is clear how Chudy's personalistic philosophy of human disability complements the philosophy of reflection and the disclosure of hypocrisy.

Keywords: disability, person, Wojciech Chudy's philosophy, biographical perspective

Translation of the abstract: dr hab. Sławomir Pasikowski

Streszczenie: W perspektywie biograficznej Wojciech Chudy jawi się jako filozof, etyk i pedagog, który – podejmując zagadnienia etyczne, antropologiczne i pedagogiczne – zastanawia się „kim jestem” jako osoba doświadczająca niepełnosprawności. Jest on filozofem i pedagogiem, który w oparciu o osobiste doświadczenie biograficzne, chce „myśleć i mówić prawdę” o sytuacji osoby z niepełnosprawnością. Na perspektywę (auto)biograficzną analiz Chudego zwraca uwagę m.in. Jacek Wojtysiak. W perspektywie analizy

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biograficznej uwidacznia się jak Chudego personalistyczna filozofia ludzkiej niepełnosprawności dopełnia się z filozofią refleksji i demaskacją zakłamania.

Keywords: niepełnosprawność, osoba, filozofia Wojciecha Chudego, perspektywa biograficzna.

His condition made him – like hardly anyone – aware, throughout his life, of the dying process of his body. However, this disease, in a way, ‘made’ him – like hardly anyone – aware of the power of his spirit. It was no accident that he cultivated the philosophy of disability and also the philosophy of reflection as a philosophy of the spirit-person. With his rich creativity and steadfast attitude to life, he proved that the human spirit attains absolute and eternal values.

J. Wojtysiak, ‘Świadek człowieczeństwa. Wspomnienie o profesorze Wojciechu Chudym (1974–2007)’, *Znak*, 2007, No. 626–627, p. 165

Considering the issue of respecting the value of truth in the context of the destructive threats that a lie brings to human life (individual and social), Wojciech Chudy (1947–2007)¹ refers to and ponders the thoughts of Zbig-

1 Basic facts from the educational and intellectual biography of Wojciech Chudy: ‘He graduated from the Secondary School at the Rehabilitation and Orthopaedic Sanatorium in Wrocław. Between 1972 and 1977, he studied philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin. In 1980, he obtained a doctoral degree on the basis of his dissertation *Refleksja »in actu exercito« i jej funkcja w poznaniu metafizycznym* [Reflection “In Actu Exercito” and Its Function in Metaphysical Cognition], written under the supervision of M. A. Krąpiec. In 1983, he took up a scholarship to Friborg... Between 1990 and 1991, having been awarded another scholarship, he conducted scientific and research work... at the University of Osnabrück in Germany. In 1994, he obtained the degree of habilitated doctor on the basis of his dissertation *Rozwój filozofowania a »pułapka refleksji«*. *Filozofia refleksji i próby jej przezwyciężenia* [The Development of Philosophising and the “Trap of Reflection”: Philosophy of Reflection and Attempts to Overcome It]; he obtained the title of professor in 2004; E. Smółka, *Wojciech Chudy*, <http://sapientia.kul.pl/projects/wojciech-chudy/> (accessed: 2 August 2020); ‘Biogram Wojciecha Chudego 1947–2007’, *Ethos*, 20 (2007) No. 3–4, pp. 17–20; A. M. Wierzbiński, ‘Zawsze pragnął służyć prawdzie’, *Ethos*, 20 (2007) No. 3–4, pp. 5–7.

niew Herbert (1924–1998), a poet to whom he was very close: 'It is an intellectual's duty to think and tell the truth. ... To think is... to reflect on who we are and what the surrounding reality is like. It means... responsibility for the word.'² Chudy experienced a physical disability and was also a penetrating thinker. He took on the duties of an intellectual, as pointed out by Herbert, as his own. In his anthropological and pedagogical reflections, he fulfils the obligation to 'reflect on who we are and what the surrounding reality is' and to honestly 'think and tell the truth', also referring to the truth discovered in his own existential experience and autobiographical reflection.

Pointing to the very important – also in the pedagogical dimension – role of reflection in personal and properly directed human fulfilment, Chudy postulates that every human being (as far as possible) should 'develop reflection':

Development primarily through cognition. Self-cognition. Recognising the truth about oneself 'from within' in a dynamic reflection that is not immersed in one's own interiority but still follows the constant tendency of man to transcend oneself is at the same time 'binding oneself' with 'the truth learned' within. Developing one's own reflexivity is also developing oneself – a human being.³

- 2 W. Chudy, *Esej o społeczeństwie i kłamstwie*, Vol. 1: *Spółeczeństwo zakłamanie*, Warszawa 2007, p. 369; Zbigniew Herbert's quoted statement comes from: Z. Herbert, 'Pojedynki pana Cogito', A. Poppek and A. Gelberg's interview with Zbigniew Herbert, *Tygodnik Solidarność*, 11 November 1994, p. 1.
- 3 W. Chudy, 'Rola refleksji w osobowym spełnianiu się człowieka', *Ethos*, 7 (1988) No. 2–3, p. 77. 'It can be assumed that due to the lack of conceptual, linguistic and methodological tools, it was only in the 20th century – after the accomplishments of phenomenology and other philosophical trends – that the concept of reflexivity, and thus human subjectivity, was developed. Still, in the philosophy of man, the highest task is this balance between the truth about the world and the reflection of man's individuality; between human nature and making a difference to the world, which was also indicated by St Augustine, St Thomas and John Paul II'; *ibid.*, p. 68. Cf.: *idem*, 'Rola refleksji w epistemicznej i ontycznej strukturze osoby ludzkiej', *Studia Philosophiae Christianae*, 20 (1984) No. 1, pp. 7–29. 'From the methodological point of view, ethical personalism can be defined as a modification of metaphysical personalism (by including a reflective element) or as a modification of liberalist personalism (by shifting the emphasis from freedom to truth).' *Idem*, *Pedagogia godności. Elementy etyki pedagogicznej*, Lublin 2009, pp. 34–35. See: A. M. Wierzbicki, 'Filozofia refleksji i refleksja nad filozofia', *Ethos*, 20 (2007) No. 3–4, pp. 91–101; E. Dubas,

Chudy not only theoretically justified this programme of ‘developing reflection’⁴ and, in particular, ‘self-developing reflection’⁵ from the point of view of axiology, recognising the role and power of the truth discovered, but he also gave an example of its implementation in his reflective inquiries about human disability.

From a biographical perspective, Chudy appears as a philosopher, ethicist and educator who – spending many years dealing with various ethical, anthropological and pedagogical issues – wonders ‘who am I?’, makes subsequent acts of self-knowledge: ‘who am I as a person experiencing a disability?’ and continues his considerations: ‘what is the attitude of the surrounding reality towards this fact?’ Based on his personal biographical experience, he wants to ‘think and tell the truth’ as honestly as possible about the situation of a person with a disability.

Jacek Wojtysiak,⁶ an expert on Chudy’s output, has aptly pointed out the clearly outlined (auto)biographical perspective of Chudy’s analyses. He expresses this – using words taken as a motto – in the form of an existential paradox:

Refleksja autobiograficzna jako aktywność edukacyjna w kontekście całonocnego uczenia się, in: *Wyzwania współczesnej edukacji dorosłych: Aktywność społeczna, kulturalna i oświatowa dorosłych*, (eds) A. Fabiś, S. Kędziora, Mysłowice-Zakopane 2009, pp. 41–53; A. Wąsiński, *Autokreacja małżonków bezdzietnych do wielowymiarowego rodzicielstwa adopcyjnego. Perspektywa pedagogiczno-antropologiczna*, Łódź 2018, pp. 80–90; *idem*, *Konstruowanie własnej biografii w świetle autoedukacji i autokreacji seniorów*, in: *Edukacyjna przestrzeń starości. Wybrane konteksty refleksji i badań*, (eds) E. Dubas, A. Wąsiński, Katowice 2012, pp. 43–55.

- 4 W. Chudy, ‘Podstawy filozoficzne pedagogiki samowychowania’, *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych*, 35 (2007) No. 2, pp. 19–30.
- 5 W. Chudy, ‘Podstawy filozoficzne pedagogiki samowychowania’, *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych*, 35 (2007) No. 2, pp. 19–30.
- 6 ‘I remember him from the first year of my studies, which I started in 1986. On Thursdays between classes, in the narrow corridor of the “philosophical alley”, it was impossible not to notice a small figure in a wheelchair. With his inherent attributes: a black cape and a book on the desktop. Often surrounded by a group of excited debaters who sat in a half-squat to hear his words well’; J. Wojtysiak, ‘Świadek człowieczeństwa. Wspomnienie o profesorze Wojciechu Chudym (1974–2007)’, *Znak*, 626–627 (2007) p. 169. ‘An authentic teacher is the one who will show their life; to be a student, in turn, is to be open to this testimony.’ Then W. Chudy states: ‘This, in a sense, final definition of education... goes beyond the sphere of words, transcends them. This is where life meets life – through exposure or imitation; the relation of meeting, dialogue, assistance, presence and implementation in one’s life become the basis of it’; W. Chudy, *Esej o społeczeństwie i kłamstwie*, p. 352.

His condition made him – like hardly anyone – aware, throughout his life, of the dying process of his body. However, this disease, in a way, ‘made’ him – like hardly anyone – aware of the power of his spirit. It was no accident that he cultivated the philosophy of disability and also the philosophy of reflection as a philosophy of the spirit-person.⁷

The biographical perspective of analysis reveals even more how the strong existential commitment the personalistic⁸ – deeply and even relentlessly personalistic – philosophy of human disability developed by Chudy is complemented by his theoretically mature philosophy of reflection, his personal reflection affirming the truth and his multidirectional analysis aimed at exposing various kinds of hypocrisy.

Chudy’s text entitled ‘Kłamstwo jako korupcja antropologiczna’ [A Lie as an Anthropological Corruption], published in *Ethos* in 1992 and constituting a programme for his original research on the phenomenon of lies, included a footnote about a peculiar disturbance – indeed a falsification and distortion – in the publication of an earlier version of this text. Namely, due to a double typo, the desired meaning had been changed: ‘[t]he article ... was supposed to be entitled ‘A Lie as the Corruption of Truth, Man and Society’; as a result of an extremely... unfortunate mistake by the editors, it was published under the title: ‘A Lie as the Concept of Truth, Man and Society’.⁹ Due to this unintentional change of two letters, in this fundamentally changed title, ‘the world has collapsed’, as the orderly world of values in which truth has and should have a fundamental meaning ‘fell into ruin’. Although nowadays – in the era known as the ‘post-truth era’ – the title ‘A Lie as the Concept of Truth, Man and Society’ may sound quite credible when a properly prepared lie defines, for some reason, the desired concept of truth, man and society. Such a lie may also apply to the condition of a person with a disability, proving, for example, that they are

7 J. Wojtysiak, *Świadek człowieczeństwa*; E. Dubas, *Uczenie się z (własnej) biografii – wprowadzenie*, in: *Uczenie się z (własnej) biografii*, (ed.) E. Dubas, W. Świtalski, Łódź 2011, pp. 5–9.

8 W. Chudy, ‘Podstawy filozoficzne pedagogiki samowychowania’, *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych*, 35 (2007) No. 2, pp. 19–30.

9 W. Chudy, ‘Kłamstwo jako korupcja antropologiczna’, *Ethos*, 5 (1992) No. 1 (17) p. 88. Previously published text: *idem*, ‘Prolegomena do filozofii kłamstwa’, *Znak*, 35 (1983) No. 10, pp. 1542–1563.

not – according to the accepted scale of assessing quality of life – an adequately valuable person and that sustaining their life turns out to be a waste of other people's efforts concentrated on this person. Thus, in axiological issues (a lie concerning the value and meaning of life), a lie may appear as a disastrous anthropological corruption concerning the fate of a person with a disability.

Referring to the common experience, which is sometimes inscribed in the everyday lives of many people and destructively marks their biographies, Chudy states:

A lie does not avoid us. We meet it every day, we often participate in it, sometimes it strikes us... . Question: is it inevitable? Practical question: what to do with a lie in and around us? These are questions with metaphysical, theological and ethical components. The answer is complex. There is a lie, it must exist in a world where there is evil, especially social evil, because there is Satan. But it does not have to exist in us. This is the simplest expression of the attitude of defending oneself and the world against lies, an attitude based on moral and Christian premises. There is a real threat of a lie: the corruption it brings lies in its ranks, in gradually sinking into it. A lie is like a plague: easy at the beginning, profitable and advantageous, and ultimately it becomes a lethal disease. ... It is a progressive and contagious disease. Therefore, the most important thing is not to get caught up in a lie. ... The only weapon that man has against lies is the truth spoken by man – that is, truthfulness, and the truth about man, on which a truly human community is built.¹⁰

10 W. Chudy, *Kłamstwo jako korupcja antropologiczna*, p. 96. When discussing (in 2007) Chudy's analyses of lies, Anna Głąb wrote: 'Professor Wojciech Chudy was one of the most creative philosophers of the Catholic University of Lublin. The two-volume *Esej o społeczeństwie i kłamstwie* [Essay on Society and Lie] is his second work on lying. The first one entitled *Filozofia kłamstwa. Kłamstwo jako fenomen zła w świecie osób i społeczeństw*, (2003) [Philosophy of Lies: A Lie as a Phenomenon of Evil in the World of People and Societies] had a primarily philosophical and theoretical dimension. His *Spółczesność zakłamane oraz kłamstwo jako metoda* [The Hypocritical Society and a Lie as a Method] is primarily a philosophy of social lying, written primarily from a sociological and anthropological perspective. Chudy was one of the authorities of the democratic opposition at the Catholic University of Lublin in the late 1970s. He was a lecturer at the Trade Union University in Gdańsk in 1981 and one of the three Solidarity thinkers (in addition to Rev Józef Tischner and Leszek Nowak) who formulated its experience in philosophical terms. In his Lublin apartment, the quarterly *Spotkania* was edited beyond official censor-

The analysis of the situation of a person with a disability in Chudy's anthropological and pedagogical reflection from a biographical perspective aims to conscientiously and reliably show the multifaceted truth about this person and to express it accurately and responsibly. This truth, which is primarily of cognitive value, is practically utilised and used as a weapon. An endangered person with a disability, even when their biological existence is threatened, reaches the truth – also discovered in reflection on their own existential experience – against the repeated lie about the lack of value and the pointlessness of their existence.

Many of Chudy's texts reflect these intellectual and, at the same time, very personal struggles for the truth about the fate of a person with a disability. The most important – including the title that sounds like the title of the programme text – is an insightful dissertation *Sens filozoficzny kondycji człowieka niepełnosprawnego* [The Philosophical Meaning of the Condition of a Man with a Disability].¹¹ However, his earlier text entitled *Granice bezradności. Sytuacja niepełnosprawnych w Polsce: opis – diagnoza – postulaty* [The Limits of Helplessness: The Situation of People with Disabilities

ship from 1977. Confined to a wheelchair and struggling with a serious illness since childhood, Chudy said: 'they will not arrest an invalid'. His book, which is a great apology for the truth, is also an attempt to account for communism. As he writes..., 'I came ill out of that epoch, like millions of other ordinary people who became its victims.' And he adds: 'I'm afraid that the injuries I suffered then are incurable'; A. Głąb, 'Choroba na kłamstwo', *Książki w Tygodniku*, 6 December 2007, <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/choroba-na-klamstwo-138528>, (accessed: 2 August 2020); A. Lekka-Kowalik, 'Powstrzymać kaskadę' [a review of W. Chudy's work *Filozofia kłamstwa*], *Ethos*, 17 (2004) No. 1–2, pp. 530–539.

- 11 W. Chudy, 'Sens filozoficzny kondycji człowieka niepełnosprawnego', *Studia Philosophiae Christianae*, 23 (1987) No. 2, pp. 5–24. This is a source text for his subsequent publications: *idem*, *Sens życia a sens trudu. U podstaw rozważań nad problemem sensu życia osób niepełnosprawnych*, in: *Osoby niepełnosprawne w życiu społeczeństwa i Kościoła*, (eds) A. Bartoszek, D. Sitko, Vol. 1, Katowice–Ruda Śląska 2003, pp. 31–45; *idem*, *Wartości i świat ludzi niepełnosprawnych (Przyczynek do aksjologii osób niesłyszących)*, in: „Nie głos, ale słowo” *Przekraczanie barier w wychowaniu osób z uszkodzeniem słuchu*, (eds) K. Krakowiak, A. Dziurda-Multan, Lublin 2006, pp. 25–41; *idem*, *Człowiek niepełnosprawny w świetle filozofii*, in: *Filozofia i teologia w życiu człowieka*, (ed.) P. Mazanka CSSR, Warszawa 2001, pp. 113–126 (reprint: *Ethos*, 20 (2007) No. 3–4, pp. 57–80).

in Poland: Description – Diagnosis – Postulates]¹² had significant theoretical values, referred to biographical experience and suggested the systemic improvement of the living conditions of people with disabilities. The article was written in connection with the International Day of Disabled Persons, an initiative announced by the United Nations at that time.

Crossing the boundaries of forced helplessness: Diagnosis, postulates and hopes in 1981 from the perspective of personal experiences

Introducing the issues that should be addressed in particular in the International Year of Disabled Persons, showing the burning relevance and importance of this issue in 1981, which was also the year of Polish hopes aroused by the Solidarity movement, Chudy began by formulating basic tasks that should be urgently fulfilled. The actual situation of people with disabilities, if recognised carefully and realistically, was definitely unsatisfactory. These people were marginalised and excluded in many different situations, experienced helplessness forced on them, and their needs were not properly understood.

This year, which affects... every one of the 400 million people with disabilities on the planet today; in Poland, its main task is to sharply expose the social, moral and religious problems of people with disabilities, and take the first steps towards real improvement in this area. Disclosure – because in many societies the problem of invalids is still an embarrassing topic. Taking the first steps – because the façade of declarations, institutions, ... legal norms in this field covered the void of apparent actions and the misery of this social and cultural reality.¹³

12 W. Chudy, 'Granice bezradności. Sytuacja niepełnosprawnych w Polsce: opis – diagnoza – postulaty', *Znak*, 33 (1981) No. 326 (8), pp. 1015–1035.

13 W. Chudy, p. 1015. On understanding helplessness in the context of the situation of people with disabilities see. Z. Gajdzica, 'Dwa wymiary bezradności społecznej jako wskaźniki (utruty) jakości życia osób z lekkim upośledzeniem umysłowym', *Chowanna*, 1 (2008) pp. 83–95. Zenon Gajdzica notes: 'Helplessness is a concept that is willingly and often used in descriptions of the social, educational and mental states of people. In the colloquial and scientific meaning, it designates a phenomenon and/or state defined in a variety of ways. Usually, it indicates the inability to cope, particularly in a difficult situation, the loss of the sense of agency, impotence and powerlessness. Thus, it is a phenomenon that is of interest to psychology, sociology,

Based on research from the 1970s and in line with his own experience, Chudy stated that the two million people with disabilities, 'a huge human community in Poland is internally disintegrated, isolated from the rest of society and *de facto* external to it'.¹⁴ It is not only a distanced description of facts but, above all, an indication of a negatively assessed situation that requires a deliberate and systemic change. The 'shallow, *ad hoc* journalist activity preferring the model of the "lonely heroism" of invalids', which Chudy unambiguously negatively assessed, strengthened the pathological situation of several million 'people with disabilities' in Poland, who were surrounded by a wall of silence and incomprehension, and exposed to the 'emptiness of apparent actions'.¹⁵ This exaggerated, sentimental model is very far from the existential, everyday experience of people with disabilities, as Chudy testified himself by sharing his reflections based on his own experience.

Demonstrating awareness of the acute shortcomings and omissions in the necessary actions for the benefit of people with disabilities is not supposed to be Chudy's 'last word' and final pessimistic conclusion. His primary goal is to effectively shape the desired state of affairs: 'We allow ourselves to hope that under today's conditions it is possible to begin removing this wall'.¹⁶ The hope that, in accordance with recognised ideas and values – primarily taking account of the dignity of the person – it is possible to change the situation of people with disabilities accompanies Chudy's intellectual and moral involvement in considering this situation.

The above-mentioned argument shows that the International Year of Disabled Persons also touched Chudy personally as one of the 400 million people to whom that year was dedicated. Also based on his own biographical experience, which allowed him to see the matters under consideration 'in full sharpness' and in various aspects, Chudy took up those issues which remained a 'shameful topic' and were burdened with an archaic odium of hiding or

pedagogy and philosophy'; Z. Gajdzica. *Dwa wymiary*, p. 86. Cf. *Bezradność interdyscyplinarne studium zjawiska w kontekście zmiany społecznej i edukacyjnej*, (eds) Z. Gajdzica, M. Rembierz, Katowice 2005.

14 W. Chudy, *Granice bezradności*, p. 1018.

15 W. Chudy, p. 1015.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 1015.

eliminating people with disabilities. Therefore, it is even more necessary to reliably and thoroughly assess and boldly disclose the actual situation of people with disabilities in various spheres of human activity, including the religious sphere, where there are still serious negligence, silence and challenges. Therefore, it is necessary to uncompromisingly expose the 'void of apparent actions', which bring about additional damage. It should be mentioned that after forty years, Chudy's approach to the issues in question remains valid because it was a substantive approach made from a biographical perspective, due to the existential situation of the author of this approach.

Demonstrating his knowledge of research and debates on human disabilities conducted at that time and recognising that they largely concerned him personally, that he would respond to them not only as a scholar with an extensive intellectual background (an analyst of these issues, as well as a philosopher and ethicist sensitive to them), but also as someone struggling with difficulties resulting from his disability and its social perception on a daily basis, Chudy recalled and analysed an expert opinion from 1978:

The expert opinion of the Committee for Human Rehabilitation and Re-adaptation of the Polish Academy of Sciences, prepared under the supervision of Professor Magdalena Sokołowska, PhD and entitled *The Situation of People with Disabilities and the State of Rehabilitation in the People's Republic of Poland* is the most comprehensive... This three-volume work, consisting of over 800 pages of painstaking and detailed analyses... is an extremely vivid and insightful (though incomplete...) report on the situation of people with disabilities in our country. It is mostly black... . The work is preceded by an introduction by Professor J Szczepański, the Chairman of the Committee... . The publication gives... a meticulous... and most often factually accurate analysis based on the empirical situation of people with disabilities and invalids. The analysis is even more valuable as it does not lose the general perspective on the matter.¹⁷

Revealing his own preferences and highly appreciating the development and maintenance of the 'general perspective', Chudy – based on his own religious beliefs – made a factually accurate – meaningful for him personally and

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1017.

from his point of view – reservation: ‘A significant deficiency of this work, which makes it incomplete in relation to the real life dimension of people with disabilities in Polish society, is the absence of the problem of these people in the community of the Catholic Church in Poland.’¹⁸

Chudy noted that ‘after the shock of World War II’, the rule that the quality of social life is expressed with due care for the weakest, including the well-being of people with disabilities, was recognised and developed in (Western) Europe as a principle shaping interpersonal relations. Between the states that respect and implement this principle and the states that do not implement it, ‘the difference in concepts of a person with a disability is significant. These concepts result from deep philosophical and systemic premises, and result in a specific social life...’¹⁹ In expressing this opinion, Chudy revealed his personal conviction that the differences in the concepts of a person with a disability are not only superficial, but concern fundamental philosophical and axiological differences as well as preferences as to the proper model of social life. He advocated giving a ‘green light’ allowing people with disabilities to undertake various activities in social life: ‘This priority, which is manifested in comprehensive technical and institutional facilities – from architecture to the activity of Churches – is the basis for a specific social ennoblement of invalids and their full participation in the culture of their country.’²⁰

Considering the obstacles faced by people with disabilities in social life in Poland in the 1970s, Chudy quoted one of the conclusions of the analysis from the aforementioned expert opinion: ‘We conclude that disability is determined primarily from the point of view of the possibility of performing work’ (Vol. 1, p. 107).²¹ As an axiologist, he clearly saw the conflict of values between ideologically promoted productivity, economic profitability and the inability to work (also officially stated in medical assessments), which marks – socially stigmatises – people with disabilities as unproductive individuals, disturbing and lowering economic profitability. By reconstructing the ‘socio-legal concept

18 *Ibid.*, p. 1017.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 1019.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 1019.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 1020.

of a person with a disability implemented in the People's Republic of Poland',²² Chudy entered into an axiological dispute with the socialist system of officially rewarded values in the People's Republic of Poland in the 1970s. People with disabilities could not effectively implement these values, which even seemed to lower their value as 'full-fledged' citizens. Postulating a change in attitude in 1981 – the year of the Solidarity movement – Chudy saw the role of the Catholic Church and trade unions as those social entities which, in particular, should strive to change the situation. This appeal also revealed a biographical perspective, as Chudy was then very much involved in various forms of Church and trade union activity (Solidarity).

As a philosopher who highly appreciated the logical and methodological culture, Chudy put forward suggestions that should be included in the development of new definitions of a person with a disability and an invalid. He wanted to develop such approaches that would contribute to increasing the well-being and activation of these people. This theoretical work on proper definitions, which requires logical skill, is of great practical importance because – according to Chudy – 'most of the "most endangered" spheres of life of people with disabilities in our country are conditioned by the nature of the general premises of the concept of a person with a disability. These premises have a negative social impact.'²³ This belief also revealed a biographical perspective in the field of Chudy's intellectual formation shaped in the Lublin school, which also emphasised the *dictum* that there is nothing more practical than a good theory, and bad theory often results in bad practice.

As a philosopher, teacher and 'University Man', Chudy drew attention to the issue of obstacles in the accessibility of people with disabilities to various forms of education: 'Only 1.6 % of people with disabilities have higher education. In this area, the disproportion in relation to the general population is particularly striking. In Polish society, 4.1 % of Poles completed higher education. Students with disabilities account for less than 2 % of the total number of students.' Reflecting on the 'meaning of these numbers', Chudy opted – also for axiological reasons – for increased accessibility to higher education for peo-

²² *Ibid.*, p. 1020.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 1021.

ple with disabilities. He quoted the expert opinion: 'The type of work requiring higher education is particularly well suited for people with permanent disabilities because it is more individualised work, requiring less physical effort, and easier to adapt to the lifestyle of a person with a disability' (Vol. 3, p. 618).²⁴ If higher education is not opened to people with disabilities and the obstacles blocking them are not overcome, there will be – as Chudy wrote dramatically – 'the cultural agony of these people in our country'.²⁵ In order to prevent this, relying on his own experience as a student and lecturer with a disability, Chudy proposed specific solutions enabling and making it easier for these people to study. Chudy pointed out – also in a detailed way – the 'social conditions adapted to the individual needs of students with severe disabilities (blind or in wheelchairs)'.²⁶ He somehow shared his biographical experience, having an in-depth sense of the difficulties that he had to struggle with as a student and lecturer. As a teacher and 'University Man', he concluded dogmatically: '[s]olutions in this field should be implemented immediately'.²⁷

Appreciating the value of work and the values generated through work, as well as referring to the disturbing data from the expert opinion, Chudy stated: 'The negligible percentage of working people with disabilities is not the result of their dislike for work. Invalids want to work',²⁸ but there is no work for them. The inability to work and earn independently causes further marginalisation and pauperisation of people with disabilities.

Strongly opposed to this marginalisation in various spheres of life, Chudy negatively assessed the attitude of Poles towards people with disabilities at that time:

The negative attitude towards people with disabilities, which prevails in Polish society, plays an important role in this obstruction. This attitude manifests itself particularly sharply in the process of employing invalids. ... The reaction of rejection often arises from irrational reasons; the mechanisms and psychological structures that always occur in the case of the mechanism of discrimination play a role here: the implicit belief

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1023.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1024.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1024.

in the lower value of an invalid in the environment of 'normal' people, moral taboos, Puritan mentality and aesthetic considerations.²⁹

In this judgement of attitudes considered by Chudy to be dominant, the biographical perspective, personal experiences and the clash with stigmatising and excluding prejudices outlined here seem to 'shine through'.

According to his own religious beliefs, Chudy completed the expert opinion with a short, problematic outline of the role of the Catholic Church, giving it an ideological justification that 'the presence of [the Church] in the community of people with disabilities testifies to the truth of the Church's social mission in Poland, the truth that once again turns out to be the truth of the weak'.³⁰ Among the areas also requiring exposure and research was 'the educational influence of the Church in the aspect of making society morally sensitive to the issues of the disabled and the ill'.³¹ Chudy postulated that these and other activities of the Church require research and studies to obtain a more complete picture of the situation of people with disabilities.

The postulates that Chudy put forward in 1981 included that of 'establishing a new magazine building the integration of people with disabilities with society'.³² In the very wording of this postulate, in the background of the call to 'build integration with society', there is an undesirable opposite state, that is, 'being outside society'.

Summing up the analyses of the situation of people with disabilities in Poland at that time, Chudy returned to the negative experiences that touched people with disabilities, which – from the biographical perspective – seemed to affect him personally and painfully hurt his human dignity:

It is necessary to formulate an unpopular thesis, which is true in its sharpness: the vast majority of Polish society presents a repressive attitude towards people with disabilities. ... the same mechanism of repression and rejection is the source of both the attitude of exaggerated 'euphoric protection' and the attitude of distance and coldness towards a man who is not fully fit. This

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1027.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1029.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1029.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 1033.

state of social culture – which is not illuminated globally by the often occurring, authentically compliant and beautiful attitudes – is deepened towards darkness by the consistent pauperisation of the community of people with disabilities, the policy of professional unification and the education barrier that has arisen in Poland and is faced by these persons.³³

This call for a joint examination of conscience with respect to attitudes and actions for the benefit of people with disabilities, which was so emphatically and convincingly formulated by Chudy, seems to retain its impact even today. To what extent does this vividly depicted intensive darkness dominating in Polish society exist forty years later, and how and to what extent does it disappear?

Chudy, however, did not finish his arguments in 1981 by showing the dark sides that required discernment and needed to be effectively overcome. In the conclusion that closed all of his deliberations like a buckle, he expressed ideas and obligations, which are a concise and clear manifestation of a personalistic approach to a person with a disability:

We must all turn to people with disabilities. It is a fundamental duty, the source of which is rooted in the simple and obvious fact of human reality...: a person with a disability is also and above all the person. In human society, they are the person among other persons. They are a weak person and they manifest themselves particularly in this weakness, yet the status of human dignity determines their equality: the person among persons.³⁴

Chudy consistently developed and reinforced this personalistic position in his reflection, making it the basis for the anthropology and pedagogy of human disability.

Existential experiences of a person with a disability in the light of personalism

Chudy also expressed the conviction that it is necessary to constantly take account of the reflection on the situation of a person with a disability in his text entitled *Kapłan – uczeń – przyjaciel – wychowawca* [A Priest – A Student –

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 1031.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1035.

A Friend – An Educator], dedicated to his friend, priest Professor Tadeusz Styczeń, SDS (1931–2010). Referring to the memories of the crimes and atrocities of World War II, the Nazi occupation and the Stalinist era, the memories of two ethics and clergymen, who were intellectually close to him, Fr T Styczeń and Fr Karol Wojtyła (1920–2005), Chudy made – in the form of clearly formulated questions – important references to the constant presence of people with disabilities in human history:

But is it really possible to speak of the unique atrocities of history at some point in time? Are there no evil and rape today that surround man every day? Do the objectification of human persons, the manipulation of their deepest dimensions of emotions and spirit, indifference to another human being, and finally contempt towards another person, particularly the one who is helpless, weak or ill, constitute an ‘extraordinarily clear and legible’ message showing the way for every new priest?³⁵

Sensitivity to the fate of every human being ‘who is helpless, weak or ill’ and the memory of the permanent and indelible presence of people with disabilities in human history – regardless of its more or less dramatic course – is a characteristic feature of Chudy’s deliberations on various issues. It can be concluded that it definitely brings to the fore his personal biographical experience of a person with a disability who was marginalised and excluded, and whose existential needs were not sufficiently noticed. At the same time, he draws attention to the world of values that was revealing itself then:

... the life of a person with a disability in its essence revolves around a range of values more simple than those constituting the axis of the life activity of a healthy and fit person, involved in complex structures or cultural and social systems. The attention and activity of a person with a disability necessarily focuses on the basic life values, often ignoring or not reaching the values mediated in many ways by culture. In the area of these people’s activity, values and needs such as helping others, solidarity between people, a sense of security, peace, joy, goodness, love, friendship and caring are more common than values such as profitability, protection, tac-

35 W. Chudy, ‘Kapłan – uczeń – przyjaciel – wychowawca’, *Ethos*, 18 (2005) No. 3–4, pp. 270.

tics and career. People with disabilities are closer to simple and basic values. ... The context of these people's lives, largely limited or simply different compared with the context of healthy people's lives, reveals values, feelings and reflexes that are essentially human. The life of the handicapped reveals the basic dimensions of humanity, undisturbed and, most importantly, not covered by the multitude of cultural influences. Contact with a person with a disability, popularly known as 'moomin', can teach today's man a lot about the basic values of human nature and about the authentically human experience of the world.³⁶

This argument contains an element of Chudy's axiological manifesto, which indicates the positive values he appreciates.

Situations of experiencing inconvenient limitations of the human condition, very clearly revealing the fragility of the human condition marked by inefficiency, pain and suffering – as Chudy puts them – '... constitute a difficult but special occasion for human transcendence in truth. This dimension of human existence and, at the same time, the human contingency that suffering reveals also shows a special inner strength of man.'³⁷ However, it is not

36 W. Chudy, 'Człowiek niepełnosprawny w świetle filozofii', *Ethos*, 20 (2007) No. 3–4, p. 78. Continuing, Chudy states: 'The objective meaning of the condition of a disabled person's life includes – paradoxically – a series of simple and healthy cultural patterns: axiological, moral and social. The confrontation of the manifestations or behaviours of actual contemporary culture with these patterns, their clash in the specific situation of the life of people with disabilities leads to a conclusion that negatively assesses some dimensions of contemporary culture'; *ibid.*, p. 79. See M. Rembierz, *O splocie problemów i badań pedagogiki specjalnej z refleksją metodologiczną, aksjologiczną i antropologiczną*, in: *Wybrane zagadnienia metodologii i metodyki badań w obszarze niepełnosprawności i codzienności osób z niepełnosprawnościami*, (eds) Z. Gajdzica, M. Bełza, D. Prysak, Katowice 2016, pp. 15–38.

37 W. Chudy, 'Czas człowieczy. Od Redakcji', *Ethos*, 12 (1999) No. 3, p. 7. Chudy points out the value of bravery: 'According to Plato, bravery is one of the elements that define a human being. Without this virtue, an authentically human culture will perish. Man, whose destiny in this world is to defend values, will perish'; *idem*, *O męstwie*, p. 284. The experience of disability may also induce Chudy to discern the traps of the intense experiencing of pleasure, because 'in addition to its stimulating, soothing and felicitous functions, pleasure also attaches us to itself, draws us towards itself, that is, towards pleasure. This creates a temptation to absolutise pleasure'; *idem*, *Śniadanie u Sokratesa, czyli Trzy, cztery rzeczy najważniejsze*, Kraków 1999, p. 29.

the power of the superhuman as a self-sufficient individual, but of the person who is in relations with others, and the situation of their ailments even requires the intensification of such interpersonal relations.

Man with dysfunctions is not self-sufficient because their independence and resourcefulness are – often far – limited. Therefore, other people's involvement is important:

The objective meaning of life of a person with a disability 'obliges' another person to take up a moral call bearing the features of persistence, regularity, toil, patience and often renunciation. The fulfilment of this call, or the lack of it, is the essence of the moral test, which for us is the situation of the handicapped man.³⁸

This constantly present and often strongly voiced moment of the 'moral call' and 'moral test' gives special importance to interpersonal relations, which, from the personalistic perspective (the perspective of personalist axiology), appear to be morally obliging interpersonal relations.

Being a philosopher – and simply, a man – definitely convinced, and at the same time convincing others about the legitimacy and even superiority of the personalistic view of man, he was able to start an argument about the concept of the person without any preliminary reservations: "The concept of the person is the most basic concept in culture; it is virtually present in all its relations, in theories of upbringing as well as in philosophy. There is something special about "being the person"; it is more than just being a human being or a member of society."³⁹ If the concept of the person is so unequivocally recog-

38 W. Chudy, 'Człowiek niepełnosprawny w świetle filozofii', *Ethos*, 20 (2007), No. 3–4, p. 80. 'The meaning of the condition of a disabled person's life can make people aware of the moral essence of the human community and its mission more than a contact with a healthy and independent person. Awakening an authentic moral feeling in man reveals at the same time that our mission in this world is to help bear the hardships of life in solidarity and such participation in the community that aims to create the common good. An opportunity and a chance to see the deepest moral dimension of the community of people is created by a disabled person's life and its meaning, the visualisation of which is a special part of this dimension.' *ibid.*

39 W. Chudy, 'O osobie, która jest dzieckiem', *Ethos*, 9 (1996) No. 1–2, p. 216.

nised as ‘the most basic concept in culture, virtually present in all its relations’, there is also a specific concept of culture and a model of its proper relations, because the person is not the most basic or even permissible concept in every concept of culture. This strong personalistic inclination of Chudy’s reflection means that the phrase ‘a person with a disability’ does not refer to a kind of standardised classification (a certificate of disability), but is strongly associated with the personalistic understanding of the person. Namely, it evokes and contains the most basic concept in culture, and it is to be a culture that meets the high axiological requirements set by the personalistic understanding of the person; it is to be a culture that also strives to provide a person with a disability with the optimum good.

One is not more or less the person in their essence despite the different and changing ways of being a human:

The concept of the human person is defined metaphysically, that is, not temporarily. Man is the person throughout the entire time span of their life. Of course, personal characteristics are updated in adulthood. Then man is the most rational, the freest and the most aware (at least they should be so.) In old age, some elements of the person’s manifestation seem to weaken, these personal characteristics become less evident. In contrast, in early childhood, personal characteristics are not yet fully formed. But in fact, regardless of age, man is simply the person throughout their life. A child – a young man – a mature man – an old man are just different aspects of the person revealed in the order of time. In essence, the person remains the same throughout this time span. At its very core, it is endowed with a spark of eternity coming from the act of creation. In the face of eternity, five or a hundred years are the same.⁴⁰

40 W. Chudy, p. 217. Here it is also revealed that there is – as W. Chudy emphasises – ‘a personalistic norm. This is the highest and objective norm of morality. It says that a person deserves moral affirmation for their own sake. So, the source of morality is not primarily an inclination towards one’s own happiness (eudaimonism) or a reflex of theological obedience (deontonomism). The Christian premise of the personalistic norm is one of the principal evidences of the truths of faith; however, in a universal sense devoid of a religious perspective, this norm also has a meaning that is binding on human behaviour’; *idem*, *Światło dla wszystkich*, https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/T/TM/wokol_veritatis2.html, accessed: 2 August 2020.

According to Chudy, this approach, apparently, is also motivated religiously because it refers to the 'act of creation', and is a manifestation of 'metaphysical optimism', because 'man who is bedridden and does not display any intellectual functions is also the person because of that which touched them – their ailment is associated only with the manifestations of being the person, and does not affect the essence. Science (for example, medicine) is also only based on the manifestations, symptoms and sensory expression of man, and does not reach their essence.'⁴¹ Chudy's constant sensitivity to the situation of a person with a disability, including a deep intellectual disability, is manifested again when he emphasises with all his might, to avoid any doubt, that 'a person who is bedridden and does not display any intellectual functions' is the person and is – in their essence – fully the person. In conclusion, Chudy emphatically states:

This is the meaning of this metaphysical optimism that no matter how a particular person is manifested: whether they are a wise or mentally retarded person, they are the person, because only the manifestations of the person's activity, not their essence, can be disturbed. On account of personal dignity, both a philosopher and a mentally retarded person have the same value. They are the persons. Their essence is a kind of mystery and only God can accurately determine its value.⁴²

As a philosopher of human dignity and disability, Chudy invokes the 'divine point of view' that allows for absolute decisions: people with disabilities are the persons and have the same human dignity. His argumentation made it clear and even indisputable that it is not in human power to judge what man should accept and recognise in the face of this situation. Accepting and recognising this entails specific obligations to affirm the person and respect their personal dignity regardless of whether the person deals with philosophy or suffers from a mental disability.

41 W. Chudy, *O osobie, która jest dzieckiem*, p. 217.

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 217–218; cf. A. Szudra, 'Pedagogia godności. Etyka pedagogiczna w ujęciu Wojciecha Chudego', *Ethos*, 20 (2007) No. 3–4, pp. 117–129.

The vocation of a PERSON with a disability in the teaching and life of John Paul II – up to the ‘final pedagogy’

Frequently, in his inquiries about human disability, Chudy considers the statements of Pope John Paul II, which were close to him anthropologically and axiologically, his attitude of openness to the experience of people with disabilities and his own experience of disability. On this occasion, Chudy uses theological discernment and the description of the situation of a person with a disability in order to strengthen the line of personalistic argumentation. This is clearly visible, among others, in his text entitled *Powołanie osoby niepełnosprawnej w nauczaniu papieża Jana Pawła II* [The Vocation of a Person with a Disability in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II].⁴³ With regard to the situation of a person with a disability, Chudy uses the category of vocation, which also has its religious and theological interpretative tradition, as if in defiance of the belief that the situation of such a person is an unfortunate coincidence of ‘blind’ circumstances or even a ‘curse of fate’. The category of vocation gives the opportunity to positively recognise and assess the situation of such a person but, above all, assumes the affirmation of such a person as the person.

Chudy interprets the teaching of Pope John Paul II as the teaching of a ‘teacher of life’, particularly in relation to people with disabilities. Although John Paul II emphasised the role of school ‘in the development of the human spirit’ and ‘the right of every human being to education’, he consistently emphasised that ‘the greatness of man is not determined by their education... and financial status..., but by personal dignity – the inherent value given to every

43 W. Chudy, *Powołanie osoby niepełnosprawnej w nauczaniu papieża Jana Pawła II*, in: *Osoba niepełnosprawna i jej miejsce w społeczeństwie. Materiały z sympozjum „Wartość osoby upośledzonej i jej miejsce w społeczeństwie”*, KUL, 1985, (ed.) D. Kornas-Biela, Lublin 1988, pp. 123–149. Cf. also: W. Chudy, ‘Między „początkiem” a zmartwychwstaniem. Dzieje człowieka i ludzkości w oświeceniu Jana Pawła II teologii ciała’, *Roczniki Filozoficzne*, 35–36 (1987–1988) No. 2, pp. 53–95; idem, *Jan Paweł II – nauczyciel kultury. Osoba ludzka znakiem trudu i nadziei*, in: *Osobowy wymiar kultury. Materiały XV Ogólnopolskiego Forum Szkół Katolickich*, Jasna Góra 18–20 November 2004, (ed.) J. Dobrzyńska, Warszawa 2004, pp. 29–47; A. Szostek MIC, ‘Inspiracja myśli Karola Wojtyły–Jana Pawła II w twórczości naukowej Wojciecha Chudego’, *Ethos*, 20 (2007) No. 3–4, pp. 111–116.

human being with their existence'. He also stated 'that every person has a personal dignity which is their fundamental value, unchanging from conception until death' and that dignity 'constitutes the truth of the human person'.⁴⁴

When in full strength 'in the 1970s and 1980s, when – as Chudy recalls – there was a widespread cult of ease, use and pleasure, John Paul II often drew attention to the important role played by toil and suffering in the development of the human person'.⁴⁵ Based on these personalistic beliefs:

From the beginning of his pontificate, the Pope showed sensitivity to the problems of ill, disabled and old people. After just a few years... it was possible to reconstruct the Pontifical vision of the ethos of suffering people and to read his clear theological and pastoral programme for people who were most physically and mentally burdened.⁴⁶

This vision of ethos and this programme merged with Chudy's life and his reflections on his own experience. Therefore, he analysed this vision and sympathised with this programme, disseminating it and bringing it closer to others. Not only in developing ideas and theories, but also – in accordance with the ideas that were close to him – in the order of life, 'The Pope raised us through his toil, suffering and finally, his death'.⁴⁷ Although his health deteriorated more and more:

... inexhaustible energy, enormous strength of spirit, perseverance... were manifested against the background and in the context of His illness, weakness and suffering. The White Pilgrim... was associated... with a bent fig-

44 W. Chudy, 'Nauczyciel', *Ethos*, 2005 (special issue), p. 105. 'He emphasised the inextricable relationship between respect for human dignity and the value of truth. This relationship is readable in the heart of every person, although for a believer it also results from revealed sources. Respecting this relationship is the primary demand for Christian education. ... Dignity is a central human value, independent of any 'have': wealth, talents, abilities, religion, tradition, titles and merits. The dignity of the person is a God-given value related to the similarity of the human creature to the Creator. In the teaching of John Paul II, the foundations of which are in Christian personalism, "to be" means to exist according to personal dignity'; *ibid.*, pp. 105–106.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 109; cf. K. Uzar, 'Fenomen nadziei w Wojciecha Chudego filozofii wychowania', *Roczniki Pedagogiczne*, 2009, No. 1(37), pp. 51–66.

ure leaning on a crosier or leaning on a cane, supported... while climbing the stairs, ... sitting in an armchair or in a wheelchair.⁴⁸

According to Chudy:

the death of John Paul II was also a lesson – for each of us. The dying person... taught... that death – perhaps the most decisive moment in human life – should be accepted with the fullest possible awareness and courage. Contrary to popular opinion, one should not wish for death to come suddenly because man should mature to it and enter this period of the final toil with the intention of hope and faith.⁴⁹

The time of the ‘final toil’ inscribed in human life is to be a special task into which one should grow. From this perspective, looking at the end of the Pope’s life, Chudy stated: ‘[t]he dying and death of John Paul II became that part of his teaching that can be called the ultimate pedagogy.’⁵⁰ What is more,

48 *Ibid.*, p. 109; cf. O. Czerniawska, ‘Wymiar czasu a przeżywanie starości’, *Ethos*, 12 (1999) No. 3, pp. 76–83.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 109. The dying and death of John Paul II were very personal experience for Chudy (expressing solidarity with the dying Pope), which is confirmed by his statement in his text *Drogi nadziei* [Paths of Hope]: ‘The joy revealed by him at the end of his earthly life was not caused by the feelings of fatigue, weariness and discouragement with the life sometimes felt by people subjected to a particular experience of suffering. The Pope’s joy at the moment of dying was the mystical state of mind of a man convinced of the existence of a better world ruled by Love. Revealing his joy in the last period of his life, the Pope shared with everyone his strong belief that, even in a humanly unhappy and tragic situation, the return to the Father fills one with joy and hope. “Their hope is full of immortality”, says the Book of Wisdom about believers (3,4); W. Chudy, ‘Drogi nadziei’, *Verbum Vitae*, 9 (2006) p. 163; cf. R. Skrzyniarz, ‘„Czas i odległość, jakie znamy nie istnieją” – doświadczenia śmierci w biografii’, *Biografistyka Pedagogiczna*, 1 (2016) pp. 177–191.

50 W. Chudy, *Nauczyciel*, p. 109; cf. *idem*, ‘Odchodzenie z nadzieją. U podstaw pedagogiki umierania’, *Ethos*, 20 (2007) No. 3–4, pp. 21–42. K. Uzar-Szcześniak, *Wojciecha Chudego pedagogia umierania*, in: *Rodzina w sytuacji straty bliskiej osoby*, (ed.) D. Opozda, M. Parzyszek, Lublin 2017, pp. 93–108; J. Binnebesel, G. Godawa, *Luminarze tanatopedagogiki*, in: *Septuaginta pedagogiczno-katechetyczna. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Księdzu Profesorowi dr. hab. Zbigniewowi Markowi SJ w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, (eds) A. Walulik CSFN, J. Mółka SJ, Kraków 2017, pp. 463–492.

Chudy perceived the papal 'ultimate pedagogy' as his own, recognising that with its help people can and should shape themselves and mature at the time of the 'final toil'.

Conclusions: with a sense of humour...

Chudy's biography has one more important dimension, to which Wojtysiak rightly points: 'Mr Wojciech's testimony, so rare in the context of contemporary domination of naturalism, was a joyful testimony. Preached with a sense of humour.'⁵¹ It cannot be ignored in order to not deform the axiological experience to which Chudy testified. A good example of the existential reflection of a person with a disability expressed with a sense of humour is the following description:

Well, as he [Chudy] recounted, a tap in his house broke before Christmas. A plumber came and repaired it. Grateful, Mr Wojciech wanted to talk for a while with the 'guest'... . He held out his partially paralysed hand, saying 'I'm Chudy' [In Polish, 'chudy' means 'skinny' – translator's note]. 'No problem', he heard in reply, 'I don't mind', and felt the strong hand of the plumber who understood personalism without philosophical studies. Chudy the columnist commented on this fact in one sentence: there are situations when a soul is born in man.⁵²

This kind of event, marked by positive humour, in which personalism unexpectedly manifests itself 'without philosophical studies' and in which 'a soul is born in man', can make every human being present. One needs, however, the aforementioned development, self-development and self-knowledge so that such events do not escape from the field of attention, so as not to pass them by indifferently. By reading Chudy's analyses of issues related to human disability from the biographical perspective, one can learn to see, in the course of one's life, those events marked by humour in which personalism manifests itself 'without philosophical studies' and in which 'a soul is born in man'.

51 J. Wojtysiak, *Świadek człowieczeństwa*.

52 *Ibid.*; cf. *idem*, 'Chuda filozofia', czyli o felietonach filozoficznych Wojciecha Chudego', *Ethos*, 20 (2007) No. 3–4, pp. 130–137.

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