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Maciej Woźniczka and Marek Perek, Eds.
*Toposy (w) filozofii. Filozofia i jej miejsce
w doświadczeniu kulturowym Częstochowa:*
Wydawnictwo im. Stanisława Podobińskiego
Uniwersytetu Humanistyczno-Przyrodniczego
im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie, 2018,
pp. 541

The book under review is another publication in a series of publications initiated by Maciej Woźniczka. The main theme is the *topoi* in/of philosophy, with an addition *Philosophy and Its Place in Cultural Experience*. What deserves recognition is the fact that the competent authors have made an intellectual attempt to face this interesting, yet at the same time ‘esoteric’ problem. The problem of *topoi* in/of philosophy and its place in cultural experience, presented from various points of view, leads to—and even provokes—a deeper reflection on the meaning and value of philosophy, on the ways it is practiced and on its functions in various spheres of human activity. The *topoi* in/of philosophy and the ways of defining its place in cultural experience include the reflection of philosophy on itself. It was already Aristotle who wrote about the fact that an element of practicing philosophy is thinking about it. Therefore, *to philosophize* means both “to think about whether or not we should philosophize” and “to give in to philosophical inquiries” ([*Protrepticus, or Encouragement to Philosophy*], frg. 6). This duality of subjective and meta-object philosophical inquiries, which also seeks to decide “whether or not we should philosophize,” forces us to reiterate and radicalize questions about the role of *topoi* in/of philosophy and its place in cultural experience.

After all, is it true, in philosophy, that what in general seems to be a topos (a common place, a repeating motif) does not appear to be different each time and is not (only) a repeating motif? Does it not mean this intellectual dynamics of meanings, this constant transformation and deconstruction of topoi (occurring in a fairly permanent form in other areas of culture), distinguish a philosophy that is itself as if it is at the same time and, even more so, is not a common place? It is worth recalling that Boethius personifies philosophy as a woman who appears in many different ways: “with a venerable face, eyes [...] above the ordinary measure of people’s brightness, [...] and the strength of life, albeit [...] at such an advanced age that [...] it could not be considered as modern to us. Her height could be judged in various ways, because once she had an ordinary measure common to people, and another time [...] when she raised her head higher, she [...] hid in heaven and [...] became invisible” (*De consolazione philosophiae*, I, 1). Going into hidden and invisible places is also one of the cultural experiences that philosophy brings with it.

Some of the great philosophers postulate that when practicing philosophy you cannot let yourself be seduced by the hereditary role of topoi in/of philosophy and the hitherto understanding of its place in cultural experience. In recollecting the seminar, where together with Roman Ingarden we analyzed the paragraph entitled “The Necessity of a Radical New Beginning of Philosophy” from Edmund Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*, Danuta Gierulanka remembers one of the sentences that Ingarden said: “Whoever wants to be a philosopher, he must start his intellectual life once on his own responsibility—otherwise it is not worthwhile to get down to philosophy at all.” Is this not a permanent topos of the right attitude of a philosopher liberating himself from the embarrassing topos? Is it not a kind of ‘commonplace’ of philosophers who, in the name of superior cognitive values, go beyond commonplace and expose the apparent obviousness?

When considering the issue of topoi in/of philosophy and its place in cultural experience, one has to confront Leszek Kołakowski’s perverse remark from *Horror metaphysicus*: “A modern philosopher who has never experienced the feeling of being a charlatan is such a shallow mind that his work is probably not worth reading” (Kołakowski, 1988, p. 1). Is the feeling that he is an impostor not one of the topoi in/of philosophy and one of the factors determining its place in cultural experience? Does not it also reveal here a peculiar horror of topoi in/of philosophy, affecting the forms of its presence in cultural experience?

The reviewed monograph, showing the existing and possible new places of philosophy, while broadening the scope of cultural experience, stimulates the reader to make an independent discovery of the meaning and role of the topoi in/of philosophy, and encourages him to continue the investigation of the place(s) of philosophy in cultural experience.

The volume opens with an Introduction entitled “Wstęp. Język toposów. Toposy w języku” [The Language of Topoi—Topoi in the Language], written

by the editors of the volume, who have laid out the assumptions and research analysis of the present book. They also explain the reasons for their interest in the topos-place, that is, “the Greek *topos*-place was chosen not by chance, and even with a certain amount of premeditation. Its semantic field is so primitive, rich and internally diverse that for centuries it has been explored word-for-word in different directions that it is also subject to all three paths of conceptual revitalization in modern times. This is proven by the palette of texts in this collection, which will be discussed below. However, just to realize that this is the case, supplemented at most by a ‘summary’ list of contemporary applications of this notion with the function of a universal pick, would not be enough. We would not be philosophers if we did not try to find an answer as to why the *topos*-place, apart from its mundane function of being a common word denouncing what it is called, has become such an efficient tool for organizing various areas of experience and describing things and phenomena that are not places in the source, i.e. spatial, meaning of the word” (Introduction, pp. 13–14). The Editors recognize and show the traces of intellectual research on topos issues. Stimulating intellectual curiosity, the Editors point out the currently developing branches of mathematics among various research fields. “Even more promising possibilities in exploring the issue of ‘place’ seem to lie in fractal mathematics. This very young section of mathematical sciences, associated with spectacular fractal visualizations and links to the theory of chaos, has opened with its achievements quite new perspectives on the category of place, also—as one can suppose—in the senses considered in the works of the presented collection” (Introduction, p. 24).

In their presentation of the texts comprising the book, the Editors notice the following: “And there’s a topos hidden in the texts in this book. The authors seem to be aware of the difficulty of the procedure. Sometimes one could get the impression that they preferred to stay within their intuition circle rather than to identify the topos too nonchalantly (the clarity of the task set before them was not in doubt). The topoi express something that is impossible in other theoretical concepts. They refer to something fundamental, but also secret. They clearly perform the function of transboundary entities (they do not care about the division into e.g. literature, art or philosophy and religion) and supra-cultural entities. They establish and pass on content that is considered most important in any axiological hierarchy. They express the full range of human dilemmas: from existential and moral anxiety, through social and communication concerns, to really inalienable questions about supernatural reality (sense of suffering, interpretation of border experiences). That is why the diversity of statements about the broadly understood philosophical topic can be an example of the importance of philosophy in contemporary cultural experience too” (Introduction, p. 25). In the last section of the Introduction, the Editors discuss the volume’s construction and the issues dealt with in each article.

The first part “Topos i jego literacko-kulturowe konteksty” [Topos and Its Literary and Cultural Contexts] contains a series of texts selected according to themes discussed therein. It begins with a systematizing and thorough study competently written by Jarosław Eichstaedt entitled “Od toposu poetyckiego do toposu kultury” [From Poetic Topos to Cultural Topos].” The subsequent texts consider further aspects of the topos, namely, Jarosław Bedyniak: “*Poesia – sapientia prima. Miejsca wspólne filozofii i poezji w renesansowych teoriach literatury*” [*Poesia—Sapientia Prima. Places of Common Philosophy and Poetry in Renaissance Theories of Literature*], Adam Regiewicz: “Między miejscami. O teorii literatury i filozofowaniu” [Between Places. On the Theory of Literature and Philosophy], Artur Żywiołek: “‘Tam nie ma tam’. Poetyckie myślenie (o) przestrzeni Leśmiana Merleau-Pontym” [‘There is Not There.’ Poetic Thinking (about) Space in Merleau-Ponty by Leśmian], Marta Ples-Bęben: “Od piwnicy po strych. Dom jako przestrzeń wyobrażona w ujęciu Gastona Bachelarda” [From Basement to the Attic. Home as Imagined Space in Gaston Bachelard]. The first part duly sets the scene for the whole volume.

The second part of the book “Topos filozoficzny jako problem badawczy” [The Philosophical Topos as a Research Problem] shows different images of topos in philosophical and ethical thought. It begins with interesting analyses put forth by Stanisław Buda entitled “Poza mitem – pierwotny topos filozofii” [Beyond Myth—The Original Topos of Philosophy]. The subsequent articles present the valuable and noteworthy research—Marcin T. Zdrenka: “Domostwo i widnokrąg. Na marginesie rozważań o toposach filozoficznych” [The Home and the Horizon. On the Margins of Reflections on Philosophical Topos]; Wojciech Rechlewicz: “Miejsca filozofii w świetle teorii czynności i wytworów Kazimierza Twardowskiego” [The Places of Philosophy in the Light of the Theory of Activities and Products by Kazimierz Twardowski]; Michał Płóciennik: “Doświadczenie skończoności jako uniwersalny topos wydarzania się w człowieku tego, co filozoficzno-religijno-pedagogiczne” [The Experience of Finiteness as a Universal Topos of the Philosophical, Religious and Pedagogical Events in Human Being], and a text of a significant theoretical significance written by Maciej Woźniczka: “Topika filozoficzna—terra incognita?” [The Philosophical Topic—Terra Incognita?], whose conclusion reads as follows: “After the topos has been given new meanings and new methodologies have emerged, the philosophical topos is under reconstruction. This new philosophical topos is probably waiting for its true explorer. ‘The arsenal of latent powers,’ even naturally associated with the topos, is for philosophy too...” (p. 181). The reader’s attention is caught by M.T. Zdrenka’s expressive statement: “I believe that a special role is played here by the colorful metaphor of the ‘brainwasher,’ which aptly illustrates the long-lasting process of pushing individual ‘brainwashers,’ who—penetrating the constantly colliding and mutually changing circles—feed over again on the sources they encounter in its field—personal experiences,

resistance encountered, moral triumphs and failures, exerting and succumbing to persuasion, that is, permanent confrontation with differently thinking and valuing subjects. These external [...] insistent signals are transferred to a natural and personal moral ‘laboratory’—to the topos/surroundings, and therefrom they radiate into the interior, from where they draw their strength for change and personal development, and thus also for rebuilding their ethos. This unceasing process has a particular cognitive, but above all, moral value when subjective judgments and external rules clash in the field of the ‘neighborhood,’ which is neither an intimate home nor an alien distant outside, where what is intuitively moral meets what is socially or institutionally ethical; where personal interest must be reconciled with the interests of other subjects who are within our reach (p. 142–143).

The third part of the book bears the title “Topos filozoficzny—między klasyką a meritum” [The Philosophical Topos—Between Classics and Essence]. Wiesława Sajdek, in his article “Współczesne próby zrozumienia starożytnej kategorii miejsca” [Modern Attempts to Understand the Ancient Category of Place]” very dexterously considers the category of place. In conclusion, she says: “The experiences that have become a part of the West, apart from the history of battles and revolutions, including cultural ones, include everything that concerned the development of sciences and arts, but which somehow persists in its cultural tradition, which is as powerful as it is nowadays. On the other hand, ‘space itself’ certainly ‘has a history,’ namely, the one inscribed in the history of Western philosophy” (p. 228).

Stanisław Ciupka, on the basis of the literature of the subject, sheds light on the topos of inculturation of the Christian proclamation into the Hellenistic world in the philosophy of Clement of Alexandria. Noteworthy is also the study in which Paweł Milcarek knowledgeably examines the topics in the medieval school education program in his text “Tam, gdzie rosną argumenty. Topiki w średniowiecznym programie edukacji szkolnej” [Where arguments grow. Topics in the Medieval School Education Program]. Anna Kopeć writes about different approaches to rationality and the accompanying teleology in her article “The Topos of a Wise Man-Ironist,” where she notes that “the topos of the wise man-ironist is strongly present in the history of philosophy. Since ancient times, rationality has been associated with an attitude of distance toward reality. The proof of this (rationality) was the gesture of opposing oneself to the world. Irony, which was manifested by distance and constant negation, enabled—as it was believed—privileged cognitive access to reality, and also resulted in freedom. The sage, in the perspective of stoicism or scepticism saw his special dignity in independence, in distancing himself from reality” (p. 264). The third part is completed by the first part of the discussion-provoking triptych, that is, Dorota Halina Kutyla’s “Tryptyk rewolucyjny. Część I. Polski archetyp rewolucji – *Nieboska komedia* Zygmunta Krasieńskiego” [The Revolutionary Triptych. Part I.

The Polish Archetype of the Revolution—*The Non-divine Comedy* by Zygmunt Krasiński].

Part four focuses on the topic “Topos filozoficzny i jego konteksty” [The Philosophical Topos and Its Contexts]. Mirosław Murat discusses the topos of wandering and wandering through topoi. Daria Chibner proposes a reflection on what is the philosophical geography, the topos of place and object. Wiesław Wójcik expertly analyses the place of philosophical notions in mathematics. In his analyses, the author notes that “in the development of science we can observe two conflicting tendencies. The first of them is the divergence of the ways of mathematics and philosophy. It seems that in order to see the relation between these fields of knowledge, one should go back to [...] the beginnings of the development of European science. Then [...] mathematics, as a young field, needed philosophy [...] as a methodological background. However, with time, when mathematics developed [...] strict structures, concepts and methods of command, philosophy seemed to be unnecessary or even harmful. The second tendency points to the philosophical roots of the main concepts and methods of mathematics [...] and examines those moments in the history of mathematics in which cooperation with philosophy was necessary” (p. 343–344). Thanks to such an approach Wiesław Wójcik is able to present the place and role of philosophical concepts in mathematics in a competent and interesting way. He recalls, among others, René Thom’s views: “An interesting argument for the possibility of the flow of meanings between philosophy and mathematics is the concept developed by René Thom. He criticizes the principle of extensiveness and the multifaceted point of view, which forgets the meaning of the concept and limits itself only to its scope. It was a liberation from the philosophical and colloquial understanding of concepts which seemed to be a ballast preventing the efficient development of mathematics. Thom doubts whether achieving accuracy at the price of losing meaning was not a Pyrrhic victory for contemporary mathematics” (p. 346). At the end of the text, Wójcik points out that “especially at the level of this common area of influence of philosophy and mathematics,” the discussed concepts (harmony, similarity, and symmetry) “interact intensively with one another, although they still retain their distinctiveness,” and he stresses that an interesting example of the interaction of these concepts is the concept of probability (something that is similar to the truth)” (p. 365–366).

In the next text comprising the fourth part of the book, Dorota Halina Kutyla makes Descartes’s great dreams on the quarters near Ulm the subject of her reflections. Paweł Lechowski offers his own variations on meta-philosophical issues, such as “Scjentyzm albo metafizyka—dwa oblicza ekspiacji filozofii” [Scientism or Metaphysics—Two Faces of Philosophy’s Exposition], exposing the role of myth.

Part five “Współczesne interpretacje toposu—poszukiwania” [Contemporary Interpretations of Topos—Exploration] consists of three texts. Maksymilian

Czaja considers the location of Bruno Latour's studies on science and technology in the laboratory space. Iwona Krupecka shows what is the relation of Walter Mignolo's "pluritopical hermeneutics" with the history of European philosophy, whereas Paweł Nowicki writes on the transformations of the notion of space and on social imaginaries in the philosophy of Charles Taylor. It is good that the volume contains references to the views of Bruno Latour, Walter Mignolo, and Charles Taylor.

In Part six, "Topos czy już posttopos? [Topos or Post-topos?], Sebastian Gałęcki provides his reflections on the burning issue today, namely, "(Post)filozofia na (post)uniwersytecie?" [(Post)philosophy at the (post)university?]. Similarly, Grzegorz Trela treats about the post-philosophy in post-culture. Danuta Żak ponders on the figure of the lost, that is, the "personal model of a human without a place." Iwona Stachowska makes self-constraint an object of her reflection in "Samoograniczenie: identyfikowanie terytorium" [Self-constraint: Identification of the Territory]. Closing the transition from *topoi* to 'post-topoi,' she has been aware of the condition and dilemmas of contemporary culture.

According to the publishing tradition of the series, the whole is complemented by part seven which is the Appendix, "Appeal to the Authors" (a text documenting the research program in which the invited authors have been included) and short notes about the authors.

The reviewed volume also reveals a peculiar topos of Częstochowa's philosophical circles where Professor Maciej Woźniczka is one of the leading figures. Professors of the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa, Wiesław Sajdek, Maciej Woźniczka, and Wiesław Wójcik, as well as junior academics, contributed their valuable texts to this volume, showing the topos of their own environment.

This carefully edited book is part of a research program consistently implemented at the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa by Prof. Maciej Woźniczka, which is also convincingly proved by the volumes he has edited and co-edited so far. Let this book, which is part of the series of Częstochowa's publications in philosophy, serves well the development of Polish intellectual culture and may it inspire further research and discussion.

I highly recommend this valuable and interesting book, well-edited by Maciej Woźniczka and Marek Perek.

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