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Doctoral dissertation abstract

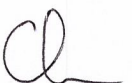
Title: "Meaning and epiphany. A culture-forming dimension of the sacred architecture of Stanisław Niemczyk"

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The aim of the dissertation is to recognize the cultural and culture-forming dimension of the churches designed (and built) by Stanisław Niemczyk, as well as to indicate the relevant interpretation categories for these projects. The work adopts the ontological (or meta-ontological) perspective of reflection, presenting a number of arguments in support of the thesis that taking into account the relationship between architecture (the way it is built and understood) and the concept of being specific to the culture/culture trend in which a given project arises, contributes to the adequate interpretation of the building. The proposal of such a study of architecture had not been systematically elaborated before, which affected the volume of the work, among others, due to the necessity to explain the ontological conditions of the terminology used in it. This also applied to such basic concepts as "architecture", "culture", "symbol", "similitude", "art", "beauty", "history", "style", due to the "shifts" of meaning which took place in the course of the formation of modern times. The axis of the work, and at the same time the main point of reference, is the fundamental difference between:

1) an analogous notion of being, defined by participation, and thus pro-community, that can be found



a) in antiquity, in Plato's dialogue "Parmenides", where, unlike in the early stage of the theory of ideas, the source reference between the phenomenon and the idea is adopted (the concept of *methexis*),

b) in the Middle Ages - in the concept of Thomas Aquinas, assuming a relational identity composed of essence and existence,

c) nowadays - in Catholicism (and Eastern Orthodoxy), in the understanding of the Church as a *universal* community (not general) and the theology of sacraments based on mediation, from which the ontological understanding of the symbol arises (metonymy);

2) and derived from Duns Scotus (and having an ancient "patron" of Aristotle), dominating in modern times, "abstract", unambiguous understanding of being that favours:

a) problematizing the issue of existence (the so-called "dispute over the existence of the world") and framing reality in an anti-essence and "infra-time" manner [questioning the legitimacy of anything that would be independent of the passage of time (and of the knowing subject)],

b) the so-called "disenchantment" of the world, which in the ontological aspect means the rejection of the relational concept of being, and thus the rejection of the understanding of community and participation as based on internal kinship,

c) replacing the so-called "substantial reason" by the so-called "instrumental reason", contemplation by activism, and metonymy by metaphor,

d) "Individualistic", and more precisely "anti-community" understanding of what is cultural, the consequence of which is "splitting" and "juxtaposing" such culture with what is social; contemporary sociology describes this phenomenon as "an attack of culture on the social structure", and its expression can be considered, inter alia, the so-called postmodern "project of culture without symbols".

Based on this difference, as well as:

- analyses presenting the cultural identity of Stanisław Niemczyk, who described himself as a deeply religious Catholic, and emphasized attachment to Poland as his homeland,

- a detailed reconstruction of the "paradigm" of the architect's creativity (including the definitions proposed by him – among others, architecture and sacred architecture, basic categories, values that guided him, the course of the design process)

- and showing that this "paradigm" grows out of the world-image typical of Niemczyk,

the dissertation presents arguments supporting the thesis that the temples designed by him - as well as other projects - constitute a "material image" of metaphysical culture, which assumes a true bond between God, man and the world, and understands reality as an "ontic

community". Thus, the architecture of Stanisław Niemczyk can be considered a real alternative to projects, which reflect the "abstract" concept of being, which lies at the foundations of "modern" trends in culture, defined by terms such as "modernity", "modernism", as well as "postmodernity" and "postmodernism". It is also a testimony to the availability in the contemporary world of an integral building culture, being at the service of the community. This is of utmost importance in the face of the crisis of Western culture being diagnosed now, reflected in an alienated and alienating, anti-organic architecture that cuts us off more and more from reality and ourselves.

The research carried out as part of the work allows us to state that while architecture, which is a "material image" of cultural trends based on an "abstract" concept of being, wants to – identifying what is real with what is abstract – "deal with" being in its concreteness, "tangibility", "reality", "presence", in the buildings designed by Niemczyk, on the contrary, we encounter an epiphany of being: they reveal being as presence. At the same time, the temples designed by Niemczyk, being recognizable as churches, are focused (and focus one's attention) on the Presence of the Supreme Being - hence they become clear signs of this Presence.

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